Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Professional Dissertations DMin

Graduate Research

2010

Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Membership Retention in the Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Richard Sithole
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>

Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sithole, Richard, "Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Membership Retention in the Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (2010). *Professional Dissertations DMin*. 548.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/548>

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/548>

This Project Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Professional Dissertations DMin by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

ABSTRACT

**ASSESSING RETENTION PATTERNS AND IMPLEMENTING
STRATEGIES FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE
ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS**

by

Richard Sithole

Adviser: Walt Williams

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: ASSESSING RETENTION PATTERNS AND IMPLEMENTING
STRATEGIES FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE ZIMBABWE
UNION CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Name of researcher: Richard Sithole

Name and degree of faculty chair: Walt Williams, DMin.

Date completed: July 2010

Problem

This research project has investigated, identified, and assessed member retention patterns of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe, an entity usually referred to as the Zimbabwe Union Conference (ZUC). What prompted the research are two quinquennial reports (1998-2002; 2003-2007) which, as will be seen, show high baptisms as well as high membership losses (see Appendix B). Findings were made through surveys and questionnaires to pastors, elders, members, and former members; the researcher then designed an intervention program which was tried in two churches which were fast growing and at the same time poor in retention. The program was deliberate,

evaluated, and reported so that it can be replicated in other entities and communities in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID).

Method

Reasons for the research were to identify existing member retention patterns at the local church level, to assess their effectiveness, and to suggest and try out further strategies for member retention. The researcher combined both the qualitative and quantitative methods in this research although the findings lean more on the qualitative. The vehicles used in this research were surveys and questionnaires (see Appendix C for copies), in which pastors, elders, established members, and former members of the church are respondents. Using the above as respondents was to ensure relevance of the study because the respondents are people at the local church level, where the initial problem of loss originates, and corrective measures can be taken. Most questions in this study are open ended, while some are closed/structured, depending on the outcome required.

Results

The willingness on the part of pastors, elders, and established members of the church to participate as respondents made this research a success. Former members, on the other hand, were not easy to convince in responding to questionnaires; however, what is pleasing is that all the 35 former members who eventually agreed to participate made a meaningful contribution to the findings. They shared their experiences in the church, and what exactly caused them to leave. From all the four types of respondents, varied reasons for membership loss, factors that militate against retention, and factors that contribute to

it were identified, and a special intervention program was designed for use in facilitating retention (see Appendix D). As will be seen later, findings from the research resulted in meaningful recommendations on what the church in Zimbabwe needs to do to improve on retention.

Conclusions

First, the pastor-member ratio of 1:3,500 poses a problem. This was revealed by interviews with conference leadership who indicated that there are eight to fifteen congregations per pastor (see Appendix E), making the needed shepherding, training, and monitoring of work at the local church difficult to accomplish. Second, most of the elders have no training on church leadership and administration. It is the pastor's role, therefore, to see to their training at the local church level, along with several other congregations to attend to. The findings in chapter 4 of this project, also reveal that love is lacking among members of the church and towards the newly baptized, and indecency of, or non-existent worship structures in some places.

Place of Survey and Population

The study was conducted among members and former members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe, a country with an estimated population of 13 million, and an Adventist membership of 642,840 and 3,488 congregations.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

ASSESSING RETENTION PATTERNS AND IMPLEMENTING
STRATEGIES FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE
ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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

by

Richard Sithole

June 2010

© Copyright by Richard Sithole 2010
All Rights Reserved

ASSESSING RETENTION PATTERNS AND IMPLEMENTING
STRATEGIES FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE
ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

A project
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Richard Sithole

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser,
Walton Williams

Director of DMin Program,
Skip Bell

Tankiso Letseli

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary,
Denis Fortin

Stanley E. Patterson

Date approved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Project	2
Justification of the Project	2
Description of the Project Process	2
Expectations From this Project	4
Delimitations.....	5
Limitations	5
Methodology	5
How the Survey Was Implemented	6
The Procedure of Sampling	8
2. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBER RETENTION.....	10
Introduction.....	10
Retention Through Relational Ministry in Jesus' and Paul's	11
Jesus' Model	12
Paul's Model	16
Retention Through Equipping of Pastoral Leadership.....	17
Retention Through Discipling.....	20
Involvement Leading to Retention.....	22
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	24
Introduction.....	24
Importance of Member Retention.....	24
Factors That Promote Member Retention.....	27
Positive People Relations.....	27
People Oriented Leadership.....	29
Discipleship.....	33
Member Involvement.....	35

Factors That Militate Against Retention.....	37
Unresolved Conflicts	37
Gossip	38
Poor Leadership	38
Negative Attitudes	38
Lack of a Positive Nurturing Atmosphere	39
Conclusion	40
 4. ANALYSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH AND MEMBERSHIP RETENTION PATTERNS IN ZIMBABWE.....	 42
Part A: Questionnaire for Pastors and Elders	43
Analysis of Questions 1 & 2	46
Visitation of New Members.....	47
Conducting of Bible Studies.....	47
Nurturing of the Newly Baptized.....	47
Construction of New Churches.....	48
Interesting Church Programs	48
Prison and Hospital Ministry	49
Bible Studies.....	49
Shopping Center Evangelism.....	49
Helicopter Proclamation	50
Summary of Findings From Pastors and Elders	55
Membership Survey of Four Churches.....	56
Membership Survey Report.....	56
Background Information.....	57
Part B: Questionnaire for Regular Members	58
Rating of the Welcome by Members of the Church	60
Number of People Known to Have Left the Church.....	60
Factors Viewed by Respondents as Major Contributors to Membership Loss.....	61
Respondents' Views of What the Church Should Do to Retain Members.....	65
Personal Copies of Books	67
How Often the Respondents Read	68
Programs That Respondents Like Most.....	69
Five Programs That Could Spiritually Impact.....	70
Summary of Findings From Current Members.....	70
Part A of Questionnaire for Former Members.....	71
Part B of Questionnaire for Former Members	76
Wake Up Call for the Church	79
Intervention Program and Assessment of Its Effectiveness.....	79
Intervention Program	80
Evaluation of Program	81

5.	SUMMARY OF REPORT, EVALUATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	85
	Introduction.....	85
	Summary of Report.....	85
	Pastors and Elders	86
	Membership Survey	87
	Former Members.....	87
	Evaluation of the Research	88
	Evaluate Purpose.....	89
	The Method.....	89
	Relevance of the Research to the Situation in Zimbabwe	90
	Challenges Faced During the Research	91
	Lessons Learned.....	93
	Contribution of Study to Ministry/Scholarship.....	94
	Factors That Impacted Positively to the Research.....	95
	Conclusions.....	95
	Recommendations.....	100
	Conclusion	103

Appendix

A.	PROJECT PROPOSAL	105
B.	LETTERS AUTHORIZING THE RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED.....	110
C.	GENERAL CONFERENCE APPEAL ON CONSERVING MEMBERSHIP GAINS	116
D.	SURVEYS/QUESTIONNAIRES TO PASTORS, ELDERS, REGULAR MEMBERS, AND FORMER MEMBERS	118
E.	INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB).....	163
F.	CLOSING THE BACKDOOR—EXTRACT FROM ADVENTIST.....	169
G.	INTERVENTION PROGRAM	170
H.	EVALUATION INSTRUMENT FOR INTERVENTION PROGRAM....	175
I.	INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	181
	REFERENCE LIST	183
	VITA.....	187

LIST OF TABLES

1. Church Growth Strategies Viewed as Prevalent in Zimbabwe.....	45
2. Church Growth Strategies Viewed as the Most Effective	46
3. Percentage of Respondents With Close and Warm Friends	66
4. Members Who Read Church Literature Daily	68
5. Programs Respondents Liked Most	69
6. Five Potential Programs.....	70
7. District A, Church A1	81
8. District B, Church B1	82
9. Questionnaire Distribution.....	92

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing this project dissertation, I owe a debt of gratitude to the following individuals whose support in various ways has been an inspiration and encouragement to me:

My academic adviser, Dr. Walt Williams, and the second reader of the document, Dr. Tankiso Litseli, who in their busy schedules found time to guide and advise me in my research.

My wife Effie, who gave me all the moral support, and other forms of assistance when I needed them most. She together with the children patiently stood by me and were patient with my long absence from home because of this research.

Zimbabwe Union Conference Administration for affording me the time to work on this dissertation project.

Charlene, Nhlonipho, Hannah, Magnolia, and Nomuhle who put in a lot of their time in typing this dissertation project.

I dedicate this work to my wife Effie, and the children who have patiently borne my absence and the loneliness of my long hours of study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe, an entity usually referred to as Zimbabwe Union Conference (ZUC), has been seen meeting and breaking, time and again, its baptismal goals set by the church leadership in the country. Plans for church growth have been discussed and implemented at different church levels, but so far there has not been any move towards closing the back door through which members are escaping. What prompted this research is two quinquennial reports which, as will be seen, showed very high baptisms as well as very high losses of membership which occurred during the same period. This research intends to make a contribution towards reducing or curbing membership loss.

Statement of the Problem

Two quinquennial reports of 1998 to 2002 and 2003 to 2007 show that although the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe may be baptizing massive numbers the losses are equally high. The first of the two quinquennial reports shows a total of 151,614 baptisms and 22,299 losses (6,234 through apostasy and 16,065 missing), and the second quinquennial report shows 186,352 people admitted into membership through baptism, and 20,679 removed from membership (1,414 through apostasy and 19,265 missing; see Appendix E). There was no explanation in either report as to why there was such a high

degree of loss of membership. This lack of membership retention is seriously compromising the ability of the church in Zimbabwe to achieve organizational stability, financial health and to accomplish its mission objectives. If nothing is done to close the 'back door', members may continue to lose their connection to the church.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to discover reasons for membership loss and to develop programs that can contribute to membership retention at the local church and lower the overall church rate of missing and apostatized members. Such programs will be deliberate, evaluated, and reported so that they can be replicated in other entities and communities of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID).

Justification of the Project

The missing and apostasy rate in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe reflects a serious downturn that necessitates investigation to determine, if possible, its cause.

The cause of this lack of membership retention must be understood in order to suggest possible solutions and more effective strategies for retention.

Description of the Project Process

The project discusses theological reflection of member retention which centers on five biblical themes/models. First, the example of Jesus' method of discipling, how He revealed love for His disciples (John 15:15) and related to them as friends, and how He patiently taught them to love one another (John 13:35). Second, how the Lord targeted 'outcasts' and those 'looked down upon' (John 4:39, 5:5-11) and empowered them.

Third, how Jesus retained those He already had. Fourth, Paul's expertise in training (2 Tim 2:2) and discipling, for example, Timothy and Silas and several others will also be discussed. Finally we will address Paul's deliberate follow-up activity (e.g., in his second and third missionary journeys) of visiting where he had previously evangelized and planted churches.

A review of current literature on church growth is made and this includes books, journals, previous dissertations, etc., and a study of articles that relate to retention and discipleship.

The major primary sources used as the basis for this study were the Zimbabwe Union quinquennial records which reflected baptisms and significant membership losses in two five-year periods of 1998–2007 (see Appendix B). The record shows the number of those who apostatized and those missing in the above periods. Through the help of conference leadership two districts were selected. Two district pastors of two fast growing churches with poor records on retention were identified and two churches whose growth is marginal in each of the two districts were studied. This resulted in a total of four churches selected for the study. Retention strategies and loss of membership for each were identified as a way of seeking factors that contribute to non-retention.

The secondary sources were surveys carried out through interviews to pastors and elders country-wide, and questionnaires to members of the four churches regarding existing retention patterns in their districts. With the help of pastors and regular members, former members were also given a chance to participate as respondents. By use of ideas from theological reflections in chapter 2, literature review in chapter 3, and outcomes from responses to interviews/questionnaires, a retention program was designed by the

researcher (see Appendix D). In May 2009, two newly baptized groups were identified in each of the fast growing churches for use in testing the applicability of the intervention program.

The effectiveness of the program was evaluated in four-monthly periods each ending in August 2009, December 2009, and April 2010 (see evaluation instrument in Appendix G). At the end of each of the above periods, the program was modified as a response to each evaluation. Chapter 4 of this project has a detailed report of the program, evaluations, and the findings. The outcomes reveal that it is possible to retain up to 100% of the newly baptized if a program of this nature is properly implemented, monitored, and evaluated.

Expectations From this Project

This research project is expected to help pastors and local church leaders in implementing and developing programs that have a potential to curb, or to reduce membership loss at the local church. The exercise will contribute to a transformed church growth vision for membership retention in the congregations willing to participate in the program, providing a lasting new life of discipleship for the Zimbabwean congregations in all churches. As a researcher, the project will help me develop my leadership and equipping skills as a union officer in charge of evangelism and church growth. For other pastors and church leadership, the findings make available strategies to guide members to an effective relational community, genuine discipling, and effective ministry, which will result in members being aware that retention has to do with God's people loving one another (John 13:35)

The findings will help the church in Zimbabwe to attain, or realize sustained church growth, by forming relational communities that foster membership retention.

Delimitations

The research is confined to four groups; the pastors, elders, current, and former members for whom questionnaires were designed and distributed. On members, the research was further confined to two districts in which a fast growing church and one whose growth is marginal, were identified. The focus is on retention strategies, that is, the church's strengths and weaknesses.

Limitations

While it would be desirable to include more churches, the size of the project allows for only what has been done. This allows for the research to be more precise, and focus on specific problems in a local church. As mentioned earlier, getting the former members to participate as respondents was a challenge; it was an even more difficult challenge to convince each one of them to respond to the questionnaire.

Methodology

Because of the nature of the project, the researcher has used both the qualitative method and the quantitative. As will be seen in Chapter 4 of this research, the surveys and questionnaires required two types of responses. Those that are a result of a qualitative method, which is descriptive and assesses attitudes and behaviors; and also the quantitative, which is numerical and factual in its approach. The use of the two methods in this project can be seen as from Chapter 2 of the project where Jesus as a role model is seen to work with people who could be counted and their attitudes and behaviors also

dealt with. On the quantitative side, the Lord had 12 disciples whom He not only taught, but mentored for three and one-half years. Only one, Judas, was lost (John 17:12). The Lord also preached to, and related to multitudes on various occasions (Matt 5:1).

Further, on the qualitative, while the Lord loved his disciples, He also taught them the importance to have love for, and to relate to one another (John 13:35). The apostle Paul, on the other hand boasts about following a divine model when he says, “follow my example as I follow Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). The book of Acts and the epistles show how Paul lovingly worked with people, and how he taught and related to them. In the literature review, as will be seen in Chapter 3, both the quantitative and the qualitative methods are given prominence. Various scholars and writers discuss and suggest how to deal with people and how to retain them.

The dissertation topic itself begs for comparing and contrasting, as in this case, retention strategies in the four selected churches A1, A2, B1, and B2. Retention patterns in these four churches are identified and compared to see which ones are effective and which ones are not. The research therefore is intended to establish what causes, or what has caused such high losses in the SDA church in Zimbabwe so as to necessitate investigation.

How the Survey Was Implemented

The survey was implemented in the following five steps which became a guide on what needed to be accomplished. Steps outlined below are essential and necessary for any desired outcome, especially if followed in the order in which they are listed, prior to implementation of data collection and data analysis. Each step prepares room for the next, until actual data collection is made and analyzed. It is from the results of the

responses that conclusions were drawn, recommendations made, and a retention program designed for implementation at local church level.

Step 1: *Choosing the research subject.* This was done as a basis for the study and was the researcher's own choice although it was influenced by membership loss in the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe (see Appendix B). Grunde (1987, p. 34) describes this kind of research as "fact finding and goal oriented," with findings that are factual rather than opinion oriented. Fortunately, the outcome of this research produced findings that are usable and have a potential to reduce or curb membership loss at the local church, as in this case, in Zimbabwe.

Step 2: *The sampling unit.* This was drawn from members of the Adventist church in Zimbabwe and those who were once members. Pastors, elders, regular, and former members of the church were randomly selected as respondents so as to make sure the study is relevant and usable since each of the above groups respond to what actually happens at a local church resulting in lack of retention.

Step 3: *The sampling frame.* The researcher designed questionnaires for each of the above groups of respondents. This is "some selection of who or what to study" (Haralambos & Holborn, 1996, p. 830), as in this case, this sample was dictated by the need, as in serious membership losses experienced by the Adventist Church in Zimbabwe.

Step 4: *The type of sampling selected.* Random sampling was the type selected and used for the research. The procedure is stipulated later in this section.

Step 5: *Translating responses into concrete terms.* After the factual surveys were done through questionnaires as indicated above, the next step was to translate the

responses into concrete terms. According to Haralambos and Holborn (1996, p. 834) factual surveys have an advantage over others as they give descriptive information about the sampling unit selected.

The questionnaires designed for this research favored open-ended questions which according to Haralambos & Holborn (1996) “allow respondents to compose their own answers rather than choosing between a number of given answers” (p. 836). To balance the research, however, there were a few closed/structured questions which required responses that covered or included specific areas.

The Procedure of Sampling

The procedure was simple. One hundred percent of the 30 pastors randomly selected at a seminar and a workers meeting responded. This was so because the researcher personally supervised the exercise and collected all the questionnaires. Another was from a total of 120 elders attending an elders’ seminar where 30 people were randomly selected as respondents to questionnaires, with 27 responses received.

The third group was regular church members from the four churches of the two districts. However, in order to get a general overview of the situation, 200 questionnaires were initially distributed through pastors with 163 returned. This resulted in a general overview of what the situation is regarding retention strategies in Zimbabwe. When the researcher flipped through the questionnaires it was realized that the responses were somewhat similar, so it was decided to narrow it to two districts, and two churches in each of the selected districts. This was because of what the size of the research allowed for.

Fifteen samples were randomly selected resulting in a total of 60 respondents in

the churches A1, A2, B1, and B2 identified for the research. The research was done in small samples as observed by Haralambos & Holborn (1996) that “qualitative research often has to be confined to smaller numbers because of practical limitations. It is more suited to providing an in-depth insight into a smaller sample of people” (p. 829).

The fourth group was former members who were very difficult to reach, let alone convincing them to respond to the questionnaires. However, with the help of pastors and some members, the exercise became possible because the above knew where to find the former members, and how to entice them to respond. A total of 35 responses were received out of the 100 sent out, and all were used for the research. At this point of the research, though late, a few more responses have been received from this group. The researcher intends to keep late responses for all groups for future research.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBER RETENTION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss what the Bible says, if anything, about membership and member retention. The question of member retention in the Bible implies the existence of a group of worshippers in the early church who could be regarded as members of the church. Jesus' ministry is presented as a role model for ministry that leads to retention of members, and Paul's ministry as an example of those who followed after and emulated Christ's model. Paul's words, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1), confirm this.

According to Warren (1995, pp. 311-12), member retention is a system of assimilation and keeping of new members in the faith. An article in the *Adventist Review* (June 2007, p. 6) by Lowell Cooper and Mark Finley, describes member retention as "closing the back door," or reducing loss of membership in a church. This latter source further observes that, although more than 5 million people were baptized into the Adventist church from the years 2000 to 2005, nearly 1.5 million members left the church, constituting 28% of member accession (see Appendix H). This is a challenge for any congregation that seeks sustainable growth to be pro-active on retention strategies.

There are various models of member retention in the Bible, and of these, this project will focus on the following four drawn from Jesus' and the apostle Paul's ways: (a) retention through relational ministry as seen in Jesus and Paul's models, (b) retention through equipping of pastoral leadership, (c) retention through discipling, and (d) involvement leading to member retention.

The discussion will also draw from other fields other than the Bible, such as, social and behavioral sciences in its bid to analyze behavior and how that behavior can result in member retention.

Retention Through Relational Ministry in Jesus' and Paul's

Relating to members in a positive way has the potential of increasing chances of them remaining within the group. Examples of relational ministry will be drawn from Jesus' and the apostle Paul's ministries. Warren (1995, p. 339) refers to positive relations in the church as "glue" that keeps people connected to the church. This paints an image of members so closely knit together that any attempt to separate them would meet with resistance, or else cause irreparable damage if forced on them. In this sense, relational ministry, correctly applied, should achieve 100 percent retention of members.

Examples of relational ministry in this section will focus on love and friendship as seen in Jesus' compassion, acceptance, and forgiveness of wrong doers, sacrificing Himself for the sins of the world, loving the 'unlovable', regarding disciples as part of His family, caring and expressing love for them. Paul's examples of relational ministry will also be mentioned briefly. By making reference to practical examples of this love and friendship, the discussion will show that both Jesus and the apostle Paul did not only

talk about love, but practiced it in their ministry. Practical love and friendship should cause its recipients to prefer remaining within the group.

Jesus' Model

The Jesus way of loving is a principle much higher and grander than a mere feeling of love, which can come and go as all emotions do. As an emotional feeling such as anger or sadness, it would have to be caused by circumstances and, as such, it would not make sense for Jesus to command His disciples to love without cause: "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34 NIV). The Jesus way of loving is unconditional and constant; it is love 'in spite of', rather than 'because', hence Jesus can command His disciples to practice it: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12 NIV).

Britten and Britten (1999) differentiate between love as a feeling and love as a principle in the following words: "The feeling of love comes and goes. A person can have a strong feeling of love today, but tomorrow it may disappear, and after that it can return, and then it may disappear again, and later reappear . . . because the feeling of love is just a feeling, and, our feelings change" (p. 16). If the Jesus way of loving were a mere feeling, it would not result in retention of followers since it would be as changeable as the weather, here today and gone tomorrow. Britten and Britten (1999) further define the principle of love as an action word, such as "doing kind deeds and saying kind words . . . giving and forgiving . . . helping, thanking, smiling and complimenting" (p. 14). Such love is a deliberate and conscious choice one makes. This must be the type of love Paul was referring to in 1 Cor 13:4-8 when he said, "Love is patient, love is kind . . . it is not

self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. . . . [Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes.”

This is not to say that the feeling of love is unimportant, because it is. According to Britten and Britten (1999), the feeling of love comes as one practices love in action: “Love is something we do, and after that it is something we feel! When we choose to do loving actions, we soon find we have loving feelings” (p. 19). Therefore, if the disciples followed Jesus’ command and loved in action, they would soon feel love for one another. Such fulfilling love would influence them to want to remain together, enjoying each other’s company, forgiving, and liking, helping, and comforting one another. Jesus’ ministry was characterized by this type of love for humanity which expressed itself in acts of kindness, compassion, acceptance, and forgiveness of the undeserving, to mention a few. Following are a few examples of this type of love as demonstrated by Jesus in His ministry. As stated above, the apostle Paul will also receive brief mention.

The Bible says that it was compassion, deep sympathy and sorrow for the suffering, that moved Christ to heal the leper (Mark 1:40, 41; Matt 8:1-4), a disease which made the victim ceremonially unclean as well as physically afflicted (NIV footnote on the text); raise the son of the widow of Nain to life (Luke 7:11-15); and open the eyes of the blind (Matt 9:27-30). Obviously, people who have experienced such compassion, either as recipients or observers, would want to identify with the Person who is the source.

Jesus’ love was also expressed in acceptance and forgiveness of wrongdoers. One such example of this characteristic of His love was His reaction to the woman who was caught in the act of adultery (John 8:4-11). Despite the wishes of her accusers to stone

her as was the practice, Jesus accepted her and set her free in the following words:

“Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:11 NKJV). Another example is His forgiveness of Peter who had denied Him three times at a critical time in His life (John 18:17, 25-27). Jesus did more than forgive Peter: He reinstated him by singling him out and giving him charge over His lambs and His sheep (John 21:15-17). By affording offenders a second chance, Jesus must have boosted their sense of self worth. According to Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, self worth would lead to self-efficacy, “The perception that one is capable of doing what is necessary to reach one’s goals—both in the sense of knowing what to do and being emotionally able to do it” (Lahey, 1998, p. 411). With self-efficacy comes confidence and boldness in one’s performance. The accepted and forgiven are also bound to be committed to the goals set by the Forgiver.

Jesus’ kind of love was such that “he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). His sacrificial death for the sins of the world demonstrated this quality of Jesus’ love—self-sacrifice. By overcoming death, He proved beyond any doubt that His words: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25), were true, and that following and serving Him were worthwhile activities. The promise of an eternal, painless life beyond the grave is attractive enough to cause one to remain within the fold.

Loving the ‘unloved’ and the ‘unlovable’, thereby giving hope to the hopeless, was one other strong quality in Jesus’ relational ministry. He crossed social and racial barriers to relate to people like tax-collectors, a practice which earned Him the label “a friend of tax-collectors and sinners” (Matt 9:9-13; Mark 5:46); the Samaritan woman, who had questionable morals (John 4:1-26); and Mary Magdalene, who had seven

demons removed from her (Mark 16:9). Touched by Jesus, none of these people was ever the same again. Matthew became one of Jesus' disciples (Matt 9:9), the Samaritan woman boldly went to invite the whole city to come and listen to Christ, and Mary Magdalene became the first person to see Jesus after His resurrection (Mark 16:9). What a great honor! Touched by the Master when one knows themselves to be undeserving, should generate long lasting loyalty for Him, and a sense of purpose that is directed towards His goals.

Statements such as "I am returning to my Father and to your Father" (John 20:17), and "Our Father who is in heaven" (Matt 6:9), show how Jesus identified with His disciples to the extent of referring to them as His siblings. Such bonding is bound to lead to a long term relationship. Jesus' ministry was also characterized by caring, which caused Him to act with spontaneity to a need or situation. For instance, when Peter cried out, "Lord save me," He reached out His hand and saved him from drowning (Matt 14:29-31). Admonishment would come later. He showed empathy when He wept with the grieving family of Lazarus (John 11:33-35). It must have been this caring and empathy for the people that moved Jesus to save the hosts from an embarrassing situation by turning water into wine at a wedding feast (John 2:1-11). Always, His intervention was exactly what was needed to save the situation.

Verbalized expressions of love and friendship, that is, calling His disciples 'friends' (John 15:15), and urging them to love one another as He had loved them (John 13:34), was a way of reinforcing the relationship. Such affirmation would further strengthen the bonding between them. When He said they would be known as His disciples if they loved one another (John 13:35), Jesus showed that He expected love to

be their identity. Since God is love (1 John 4:8), lack of love for one another meant the absence of God in their lives.

Jesus showed that humility was a necessary ingredient for relational ministry when He washed His disciples' feet (John 13:3-9). This was a menial task, meant to be performed only by a slave to a Master (Nichol et al., vol. 5, p. 1028), and through it Jesus demonstrated the Christian virtue of service to others. According to Greenleaf (1997, p. 27), such servant leadership inspires those it leads, because it leads by demonstration, consensus, and motivation.

Some highlights from Jesus' relational ministry discussed above, which could lead to retention of the followers, are captured by White in *Ministry of Healing* (2004, pp. 9-13): Jesus' work was not restricted to time or place, His compassion knew no limits (p. 9), He devoted more time to healing than to preaching (p. 10), He presented the truth in the context of the people's own experiences (p. 11), He recognized no distinction of nationality, rank, or creed (p. 12), He sat "at the table of publicans as an honored guest, by His sympathy and social kindness showed that He recognized their dignity as humans, and they longed to become worthy of His confidence," and also mingled freely with the Samaritans, deliberately disregarding the Pharisaic customs and prejudices of His nation (p. 13).

Paul's Model

Paul's ministry emulated that of Jesus' in various ways, such as crossing racial and cultural barriers by including Timothy and Silas, non-Jews, as partners in his ministry (Acts 16:3, 22); showing compassion by freeing a girl from demon possession (Acts 16:18), pleading with Philemon in a letter on behalf of Onesmus, a runaway slave

who had even stolen from his master but now converted, to accept him back and treat him as a brother; affirming and commending churches for their faith and commitment (Rom 1:8). On relationships, he referred to Timothy and Titus as his sons in the faith (1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4), and to Philemon as a fellow worker, making him aware of how much he prayed for him (Phil 1).

Retention Through Equipping of Pastoral Leadership

The way Jesus equipped His disciples, and what the apostle Paul did to emulate Jesus, will be the main focus here as an example of how the local church can be equipped. As will be seen, proper equipping enhances competency because relevant skills will have been acquired in a given profession or trade enabling one to be proficient in their work. With proficiency comes job satisfaction, one of the major causal factors in member retention. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2000, p. 276), equipping gives one the necessary tools or knowledge, and prepares them mentally for a situation. Equipping in this section will cover dependence on prayer and empowering members through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus set an example of reliance on prayer (Matt 14:23; Mark 6:46), at times praying throughout the night (Luke 6:12). The disciples who were with Jesus during the transfiguration knew firsthand what could happen when Jesus prayed, “As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning” (Luke 9:29). None could doubt the power of prayer. Even when he was raising Lazarus back to life Jesus prayed aloud for the people’s benefit so that they could see where His power came from, and also, in the words of Jesus, that they might believe that God sent Him (John 11:41, 42). Jesus demonstrated to His disciples the value of

prayer. When they asked Him to teach them how to pray, Jesus did (Luke 11:1), thereby arming them with the same tools He Himself used in the face of temptations. It is important to note that Jesus taught the disciples to direct their prayers straight to God (Matt 6:9), and that whatever they asked in the name of Jesus, would be granted (John 14:13-14). Such assurance would empower them to come boldly to the throne of grace in prayer, and to remain attached to Him as the provider.

Many are the biblical accounts where the apostle Paul showed his reliance on prayer too. He even advised members to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). One example of God intervening when His children pray was when the prison doors fell open as Paul and Silas prayed in prison (Acts 16:25, 26). God rewarded their prayer of faith. Paul also prayed for the different congregations (Col 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2-3; Phil 1:4-6), and communicated to them what he had said to the Lord on their behalf. In a way Paul was teaching them to approach God with anything, and to know that God is always there for them.

The second aspect of equipping the disciples by Jesus was through the Holy Spirit. Just as He had promised them “and you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), the Lord did equip them through the Holy Spirit such that their influence was felt worldwide. Mounce (1993, pp. 412-13) explains that the ‘power’ the disciples were to be equipped with can be referred to as ‘dunamis’, meaning, I am powerful, ‘I am able’, drawn from the Greek word ‘dunamai’, meaning power or miracle. This power can also be seen as “the ability to do something; the power of

speech; the ability to influence people or events; the right or authority to do something” (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2000, p. 655).

This divine equipping transformed these unschooled disciples (Acts 4:13) to powerful preachers (3,000 people baptized in one day—v. 41), performers of wonders and miracles (Acts 5:12), brave martyrs such as James (Acts 5:12) and Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), willing to die for the cause. Even persecution would not deter them from preaching and witnessing after they had been equipped with the Holy Spirit (Act 4:3-4, 8-16). Peter and John are examples of those who continued to minister even after torture and imprisonment. The Holy Spirit was also going to convict the world of sin, guide them into all truth (John 16:8), teach them all things and remind them everything Jesus had taught them (John 14:26). The presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives made a difference in their ministry by giving them a sense of mission. A sense of mission can be a positive factor in member retention.

The apostle Paul promotes the idea of equipping members by referring to equipped members as “one body with many parts” (Rom 12:4), and that those parts complement one another by performing different functions. Although all the parts “may function differently according to their gifts, “they are mutually dependent on each other,” comments Burrill (1997, p. 70). Therefore without unity of purpose in the different parts, the survival of the body (the church) would be compromised. Absence of any of the members would negatively affect the rest. Because of their interdependence, no part of that body would choose to be detached from the body, nor would the rest of the members ignore losses. A church with this kind of unity would concern itself with the retention and usefulness of every one of its members.

Retention Through Discipling

Discipling is a Christian virtue that is closely related to but not synonymous with equipping. While equipping is concerned with furnishing one with the necessities for an undertaking for effective performance of the task at hand, discipleship is more to do with attachment of a novice to a master in the trade for purposes of being instructed, trained, and mentored by the master. According to Burrill (1996) discipling involves “attachment to someone in discipleship . . . living in a relationship with the One who is discipling you. In this relationship, one is to be constantly learning more about that person” (p. 29).

Discipling, therefore, is a process, not an event. It is exposure to the life and teachings of the Master and mentorship by Him. Examples of discipling in this section will be drawn from the way Jesus and the apostle Paul taught and mentored believers.

Teaching was one of the methods of discipling that Jesus used very effectively. Some of the teaching methods that He used were parables, imagery, and demonstrations. In His presentations, He would draw lessons from familiar objects and practical everyday life experiences. In the parable of the vine and the branches (John 15:1-8), for example, He vividly illustrated the effectiveness of a ministry which depended on Christ as a source of livelihood. According to the NIV footnote on verse 4, the believer would be fruitless and lifeless unless he maintained union and fellowship with Christ. This has implications for retention: a member who detached himself from the other believers would also be detaching himself from the Source of his being. The imagery of the “Bread of Life” (John 6:22-9), illustrates the Lord’s caretaker responsibility, and that in Him sustenance is sure. On demonstrations such as the casting out of demons (Matt 8:28-34) and healing of the sick (John 14:43, 54), the Lord demonstrated that divine power was

ready to intervene on behalf of those who requested or surrendered to it. Such practical demonstrations of power by being attached to Christ would motivate an individual to want to remain firmly attached to Him.

On mentorship, Jesus lived by example, especially when He went for personal prayer in the mornings (Mark 1:35). He also prayed for the disciples (John 17:6-19) and with them (Mark 14:32-41). He demonstrated by His own reliance on prayer how absolutely necessary it was for them to remain on their knees if they wanted victory over the devil. The lesson on humility was demonstrated by the Lord when He washed His disciples' dusty feet (John 13:4-12). Greenleaf (1977:21) observes this act of humility as demonstrating a leadership style that inspires those it leads, because "the great leader is seen as servant first", which then becomes a key to his greatness, for it ensures that other people's needs are served first. In this sense, servant leadership creates an environment where people care for, and about one another's needs and problems.

On the other hand is Paul, whose mentorship of Timothy and Silas developed them into trustworthy, focused fellow workers for the Lord. The apostle Paul and Silas later suffered imprisonment together in Philippi (Acts 16:19-29), where they strengthened one another through prayer and singing of songs of praise. On the part of Timothy, the apostle urged him to teach all that he had taught him to other disciples (2 Tim 2:2). Writing about Timothy and Titus, Hays (1996) observes, "They are symbols for those who carry on the mission after Paul's time, preserving and interpreting the gospel that has been entrusted to them" (p. 61). Maybe if they had not been mentored the way they were, the story would have had an unimpressive conclusion.

Involvement Leading to Retention

Involvement here will be discussed as a way of affording a candidate a chance to participate in an activity, event, or situation (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2000, p. 437).

Involvement is one of the ways that brought success to Jesus and Paul's ministries. The two afforded their disciples/associates chances to participate in the work of ministry. To illustrate involvement/participation of members, reference will be made to a few activities or situations where the disciples were given a chance to participate. The Bible has numerous examples of them being involved in preaching, healing of the sick, feeding of the multitudes, sourcing for food, performing miracles, to mention a few.

After the Lord called the twelve, he sent them to preach and to heal the sick (Luke 9:1-6) and they did this from village to village. This gave the disciples practical skills and a chance to make a positive contribution to the work of ministry. The disciples were also involved in the feeding of the multitudes (Luke 9:12-17): they identified the boy who had five loaves and two fishes (vv. 13-14), they organized the people into groups of about fifty, and that's no easy task where such huge numbers are involved (vv. 14-15), they distributed the food to the people (v. 16), and at the end, they picked up the leftovers and counted twelve basketfuls of them (v. 17). They sourced for food (John 4:7), and were with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane where they participated in prayer (Mark 14:32-34). By being involved one tends to assume ownership of the program and to have a sense of purpose. Involving people in the program, allowing them to strategize and problem-solve, has a tendency towards retention.

Paul also involved members in ministry. For example, he took Timothy and Silas on his second missionary journey to minister with him (Acts 16:1-3, 16), he sent Timothy

to settle a problem in Corinth (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10), Timothy led the church in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), Paul referred to his two associates, Timothy and Silas, as co-workers and co-writers (1 Thess 2:1; Phil 1). Involvement, therefore, made them realize that they could also contribute something to the well being of the organization or to others. Properly done, involvement leads to retention of the participants

In a nutshell the four biblical models discussed above reveal that it is possible to retain members in the church. Relating to people in a positive way, equipping pastoral leadership, discipling and involving members in ministry, have the potential of keeping them attached to the group. Jesus has been presented as the role model, while the apostle Paul stands as an example of what the present-day church can do to emulate Christ.

Some of the lessons in this chapter that have implications for retention are love and friendship (John 13:13, 15); loving people in spite of who they are and where they come from; loving others as self (Rom 13:9); creating a caring environment; joining together constantly in prayer (Acts 1:14); equipping members and church leadership for competence in the Lord's work; discipling through teaching and mentorship; and involvement of members in ministry.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two focused on theological aspects of member retention, that is, factors that make Jesus' ministry a model for retention. This chapter looks at how scholars, theologians, and other writers view, define, and describe member retention. The discussion is divided into the following subheadings: importance of member retention, factors that promote member retention, and factors that militate against member retention. The intention is to summarize and synthesize the ideas and arguments of others in order to see if they apply in a local church.

Importance of Member Retention

Member retention is an important part of church growth in that it ensures the newly baptized remain in the faith. As will be seen later, the newly baptized should not only be kept, but nurtured in their new found faith, a ministry that demonstrates one of the church's reasons for existence as Warren (1995) suggests. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2000), 'to retain' is "to continue to have; to keep possession of; to absorb and continue to hold, a substance." In addition to keeping new members, this definition adds the element of their absorption into the existing fold. White, in *Evangelism* (1946) suggests that new member retention should be one of the key

responsibilities of the church. In this sense, all the church members should be involved in facilitating a welcome, pleasant, and nurturing environment for the new members. Cress, in Arrais (2007), on the other hand, broadens the concept of retention to include old members as well: "One of the many things that can concern a church leader . . . is the sight of members, new and old, departing via the 'back' door while new converts come in the front." Cress places the responsibility of retaining both old and new members squarely on church leadership. Effective retention, therefore, should be possible when all the members feel responsible for one another.

Fernando (2002) warns that without a deliberate strategy for retention, even old members may suffer burnout and discouragement, which may result in them quitting the church. Arrais (2007) suggests that lack of creativity or lack of innovation on the part of leadership can cause losses to happen in a church. 'Creativity' in this sense "is the ability to do something new," or "to view an idea in a new way" (p. 15), and innovation is "thinking of new options and different solutions" (p. 16). This source further observes that such qualities are needed in a leader as they enable him to find new ways, or develop new ideas to keep high the interest of those he leads.

Another important point about member retention is one by Dudley and Cummings (1983): "Church growth then has both an internal spiritual and an external numerical quality. Both go together, and both are absolutely essential to the fulfillment of the Great Commission" (p. 21).

Numerical growth is not enough if there is no spiritual growth of the members. This same source points out that for the church to grow both numerically and spiritually factors that contribute to retention should be identified and promoted, while those that are

negative should also be identified and attended to. Such strategies should result in church growth. In fact, it would be pointless to talk of retention if the church is not growing, because there would be nothing to retain, except maintaining what is already there.

When the church is purpose driven, one of its major goals will be to retain its members by helping them to understand the reasons and need for belonging to the group. This, according to Warren (1995, p. 11-12), should be a church which goes beyond just winning people into faith, but moving a step further, that is, “turning attendees into members” (p. 309), “developing them into mature Christians” (p. 331), and “turning them into ministers” (p. 365). Therefore, retention can be accomplished by a church which is warm through fellowship; which grows stronger through worship; and deeper through discipleship (p. 49).

Arrais (2007) writes about how members’ reputations are sometimes destroyed in meetings such as church boards or nominating committees. A “good name in the church” may lead to retention (Arrais, 2007, p. 24) and the opposite may cause people to detach themselves from the group. People want to remain attached to a group who love, respect, care, and protect one another. According to this source, this is possible, especially if “hurtful practices” are weeded out; leaving people feeling they are loved and appreciated.

Support for one another is said to be one other reason why congregations stick together. Mallison (1989) observes that Christians who relate to one another in a positive way do various things together, such as studying the Bible together (p. 103), praying together (p. 115) and eventually getting acquainted with one another as friends. Likewise Warren (1995) observes that “Christian life involves more than just believing, it includes

belonging, being part of a group.” This should result in the newly baptized growing in Christ by being in relationship with other Christians.

The apostle Paul also advises that we should “be devoted to one another in brotherly love” (Rom 12:10), and that “in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all others” (Rom 15:5). Nichol et al. (vol. 6, pp. 620, 642) make two observations on the texts. First, they suggest brotherhood as referring to the Christian family, where tender love exists between near relatives. Second, the use of the term brotherhood is in reference to a close bond that exists between the members of a Christian church. It makes a lot of sense for anyone to want to belong to a group which creates, and keeps a loving and tender environment among its members.

Factors That Promote Member Retention

Out of many factors that contribute to member retention at a local church—positive people relations, people oriented leadership, discipleship, and member involvement—have been selected for discussion in this section. The intention here is to show how a focus on people, especially their welfare, has a tendency towards retention.

Positive People Relations

Regarding positive people relations, especially towards the newly baptized, Sheldon (1981) suggests that we should not let the ‘new babes’ die (p. 102), but love them (p. 133), because they are spiritually helpless (p. 103). This implies the need to provide a loving, caring environment for the newcomers in the faith. According to this source, this will be characterized by tolerance, even as they fumble, and make mistakes in

their new-found faith. Such can be done by a simple intentional greeting and appreciation, an affirming and encouraging remark, and making them feel wanted.

White (1946) in *Evangelism* gives some tips on how positive people relations can be achieved. She recommends that the atmosphere of meetings should encourage acquaintance with one another, “showing the utmost courtesy and kindness, and tender regard for their souls” (p. 156). This is in line with God’s original plan when He said, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen 2:18), identifying humankind as social beings, who need others for interaction and support. Absence of the above attitudes and attributes would very likely cause many to want to avoid belonging to the group.

Cress in Arrais (2007:11), states that one of the reasons why people leave the church is a lack of positive, nurturing atmosphere, which should be provided by the members. He also observes that “people come to church not only to worship the Lord,” but “to feel part of a spiritual and loving family.” The term ‘family’ implies being there for each other, sympathizing and caring for one another. Warren (1995, p. 338), says that as people fellowship and or worship together, they grow in their relationship. One can safely say, therefore, relationships to one another, if properly nurtured, will result in retention.

Fellowship, discipleship, worship, and ministry, are some of the activities that give the church groupings their identity. Reiterating on this, Warren (1995, p. 48) says being “warmer through fellowship, deeper through discipleship, stronger through worship, and broader through ministry,” gives the church a reason for existence. The church, therefore, must offer members something they cannot get anywhere else, to the extent that they would want to continue being part of the group. Concurring with this is

Wagner (1986) who observes that “true religion is expressed in deeds of compassion and tangible action on behalf of humanity, and that compassion is a characteristic that knows no boundaries” (p. 59). This is the type of compassion that is neither selective nor is it limited to any groupings or settings.

The apostle Paul urges unity in diversity when he says, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though its parts are many, they form one body” (1 Cor 12:12). In other words, just as it happens with parts of a human body, each member of the church likewise has a role to play in ‘the body of Christ’, the church. When members are united in purpose, their efforts complement one another, and this leads them to appreciation of their uniqueness and diversity.

Cress, in Arrais (2007, p. 11), suggests “the church should not be a place where negativity is allowed free reign. Instead, the church must be a place where the weary saint can find rest and restoration,” it must be “a positive oasis in this negative world.” Such a church is a place of healing, refuge, and restoration. It is clear that reference to a church in this quotation has nothing to do with a building, but everything to do with the members therein, and their attitude towards one another. The same author advises that for healing and restoration to be achieved, there is need to stay positive even in the worst situations. This is a daunting task which can only succeed with the Lord’s help.

People Oriented Leadership

A people oriented leadership is one whose focus is on people’s needs, and how such needs can be met. It is one with qualities such as those found in Christ when He was here on earth. He had people’s interests at heart (Mark 8:1-9), as seen in healing the sick and the demon possessed (Matt 8:14-17), and praying for those he related to (John 17:6-

12). In addition, the Lord mingled with the people freely, and demonstrated servant leadership (John 13), which will be discussed later in this chapter.

White, in *Ministry of Healing* (2004, pp. 9-13) cites Jesus as a model for people oriented leadership when she says that Jesus was not restricted to time or place, knew no compassion limits (p. 9), devoted more time in healing the sick than preaching (p. 10), presented the gospel in the context of people's own life experiences (p. 11), and recognized no distinction of nationality, or rank, or creed (p. 12). This demonstrates that it is in good deeds and positive attitudes that a people oriented leadership gains credibility and success. Reiterating this, Rhodes (1977) suggests that a pastor should have qualities that include being a shepherd (p. 95) as well as being a good public relations person (p. 143). The point here is that people will always want to remain attached to a person, or group in which there is a caring and loving attitude.

According to Samaan (1990, p. 47), one of the greatest needs in our world is the type of social mingling that Christ displayed in His life, which resembles that of salt. He associated with people because he loved them, and had their best interests at heart; people were His most important program. Mingling, according to Christ is what salt does to a substance (Matt 5:13). Samaan (1995) elaborates that "as salt permeates and changes the food, so God calls us to infiltrate our world and transform it for Christ." This type of social mingling is essential for any local church because it calls on members to have attitudes that are catalysts for change.

Another quality found in a people oriented leader is mentorship, which, according to Horst (1998, p. 114), cannot be acquired from a training seminar, but is a relationship. This is a method in which a beginner acquires knowledge by attaching or being attached

to another who is seasoned, mature, and experienced in the trade. Commenting about mentorship, Fernando (2002, p. 153) suggests that time should be spent with the student who is being nurtured and trained, helping them to grow and to mature. The way the apostle Paul mentored Timothy and Silas are good examples in that he (the apostle) eventually referred to each of the two as his children. The following statement is another example of a close relationship that had developed between Paul and Timothy; “I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you that I may be filled with joy” (2 Tim 1:3-4). Such love from a teacher/leader would be irresistible to one being loved or mentored, leading to bonding between the two. Horst (1998) alludes to this when she suggests that in mentorship people look for friendship in which to learn as in apprenticeship. In other words, social mingling, pastoral visits, forgiveness, and prayer are among virtues which bear fruit when taught by example.

Servant leadership is another quality that is found in a leader who is people oriented. This is demonstrated by Jesus when He washed His disciples’ feet prior to the Last Supper (John 13). According to Nichol et al. (1980, p. 1028), Jesus is here demonstrating that it is in serving rather than being served that a leader reaches out to others. Second, it is an act of love and a demonstration of humility. This kind of attitude enhances retention because no one would want to disconnect themselves from those who love and care.

Greenleaf (1977, pp. 27, 29) concurs with this when he articulates on a leadership which serves. To him, what is important is for one “to serve first, and then lead.” The implication is that leadership is not rulership but service. With this kind of leadership,

those being served should be drawn to the leader because they realize that he or she has their best interests at heart. On the other hand, the one serving gets self-fulfillment and satisfaction because of something being accomplished. This same source, further suggests that a servant leader is one who “initiates, provides the ideas and the structure, and takes the risk of failure along with the chances of success.” This should inspire those being led, to the extent that they would want to emulate what the leader does. The one leading would become their role model. This is in line with what Jesus said to His disciples: “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). Commenting on this, White (1940), in the *Desire of Ages*, makes the following observations: Jesus washed His disciples’ feet “as a perfect exemplification of unselfish ministry” (p. 644).

In the same book, White (1940, p. 651) plays with words as she presents Jesus as a servant leader:

Jesus, the served of all, came to be the servant of all. Because He ministered to all, He will again be served and honored by all. And those who would partake of His divine attributes and share with Him the joy of seeing souls redeemed must follow His example of unselfish ministry.

The simple lesson drawn from this is that anyone who serves the Lord should put the interests of others first by serving or facilitating their being served, especially on the part of leadership.

A people-oriented leadership, therefore, is one which trains and mentors those it leads, involving them in programs and being exemplary in servant leadership. According to Fernando (2002), there is “need to identify with the people to whom we minister”

(p. 1). Such leadership has the people's interest at heart; its objective is to develop people, helping them to reach their maximum potential in all they are expected to do.

Discipleship

Discipleship is a term whose meaning and description have strong implications for retention. Its origin is not very clear although its use can be dated as far back as the time of the early church. According to Bosch, in Sheink (1983, pp. 232-233), being a disciple of Jesus differed from that of the Jewish rabbis. The latter is where someone attached himself to the rabbi, ending in the person himself becoming a rabbi too, which made discipleship a transitional stage. The above source points out that being a disciple of Jesus meant that Jesus Himself, and not the Torah, became the center of the relationship. This further asserts that 'discipleship' is a description of a permanent relationship with Jesus, "a commitment to both the Master and to each other" (1983, p. 233). Such a commitment has the potential of keeping people belonging to a group.

Burrill (1996) brings up an additional observation that discipleship is "an acquiring of practical and theoretical knowledge" (p. 29). This, he says, can be achieved through attachment to a teacher, and the development of a relationship between the two. Referring to this, the Lord said to His disciples, "I no longer call you servants, but friends, for all things I have known from the Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). The Lord's words clearly revealed the extent to which the relationship and acquaintance with His disciples had grown. When one has acquired knowledge and skills, he has confidence in what he sets out to do, and also, when a relationship is established, it is unlikely that one may decide to leave or detach themselves from the group.

Proper discipling can bring about boldness and fearlessness in proclaiming what

one knows to be true. This is seen in Jesus' disciples after Pentecost, where they displayed such boldness that they were willing to suffer, and even die for their faith (Acts 4:3; 12:2). Proper discipling, according to Bailey (1979, pp. 20-22), results in loyal support for Christ and His cause. This author also describes discipleship as "clinging to Christ" that results from effective tutorage and mentorship, a submission and reshaping of character. This, according to him, is following of another experienced and seasoned disciple of Christ who can guide, guard, and nurture the new disciple in his crucial first days. Such discipleship, according to Samaan (1990, p. 125), can raise the disciple's level of knowledge to that of his teacher and help him to emulate the life of his teacher.

When members disciple for Christ, Christ's value system and His life become a model for them. When people are in Christ, Paul describes them as "a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), who have acquired a new lifestyle. Referring to himself, the apostle Paul says, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:10). Such a statement paints a picture of a commitment to the Lord that is so close that one's life is controlled and influenced by Him. Saying the same thing but in a slightly different way is Burrill (1996, pp. 25-26), whose use of the term, "perfecting of the saints," refers to a restoration of human beings to the image of God (p. 93). Discipleship, therefore, should lead to total surrender and commitment to Jesus Christ.

Discipleship is imperative for every Christian, says Hendrichsen (1974, p. 9), where the disciple is modeled after Christ, both in character and mission, and influences others to do the same. Discipleship, therefore, is a specialized kind of mentorship that very often results in a person developing a permanent relationship with the Lord.

Member Involvement

Involvement in a program affords one a chance to experience, or to participate in an activity, allowing him or her to make a contribution to the cause; if such a person is recognized, or appreciated, the tendency is for them to keep on. According to Mallion (1989, p. 63), involvement provides opportunity for the participants to express themselves and allows them to share problems and answers from their experiences. If properly done, involvement has a tendency to create a situation where bridges of friendship can be built, and a non threatening environment is provided, for example, potluck, sports, etc.

Involvement ensures repeated participation which is useful in perfecting skills and increasing knowledge. This is possible in activities such as hospital visitations, praying together, teaching, and witnessing in which one, or a group is afforded the chance to participate repeatedly to the extent that they enjoy doing what is expected. Enjoyment and identification with the group could lead to members wanting to remain within the group.

Financial and material support for the Lord's work is another way members can be involved. Commenting on Christian fundraising, Jeavons and Basinger (2000, p. 114) observe that giving is an opportunity for donors to participate in the work they support.

Although these authors were writing about donors who are outside the church, their ideas can be borrowed for use within members to encourage generosity and support for church projects by the members. What this does to the member who gives is to create a sense of social responsibility and an obligation to support church projects which may include care for widows (Acts 6:1) and orphans (Jas 1:27). The person gets to understand

that what he or she has, they hold in trust (Ps 24:1), and that God expects them to give (Matt 18:28). In the process, the person who feels the obligation to give is retained within the group, and the results of giving motivates that person to continue giving even more.

Retention is also possible through the way meetings run. If not properly treated in meetings, people can be absent, boycott, or resign. This is highly possible since church is a voluntary organization. According to Tropman (2003), to keep the interest of members high in committees or board meetings, the following should be taken note of: pre- and post-meeting tasks must be handled well (p. 51) and emotional elements sensitively managed (pp. 75, 77). This, according to the author, results in active attendance and a multiple flow of ideas and proposals that are openly discussed and given a fair hearing (pp. 55-56). In this kind of environment, people's interests are nurtured, with feelings and emotions managed as people are given a fair chance to speak. Participation, therefore, makes people feel they can meaningfully contribute, hence, they are retained. In a church setting, Warren (1995, p. 309) suggests that people should be helped to talk about "our church," leaving them with a sense of ownership and not mere consumers.

Member involvement that has a potential of leading to member retention should enable members to "maximize their contribution" (Hagberg, 2003, p. xxi), through encouraging more involvement, emphasizing workplace freedom, and enhancing a trusting environment. This same source rules out a top-down leadership which he says, has a tendency of forcing compliance which does not give the followers a chance to make a contribution. Involvement, in this case, is allowing for participation, where leadership listens to people and asks for suggestions without damaging anyone's ego. It is a way of minimizing control, and helping people to work things out for themselves.

White, in *Evangelism* (1946, pp. 334-367), suggests methods of establishing and holding new converts. Among her suggestions are the following: making follow-ups, integrating new believers into the church, assigning spiritual guardians to new converts, helping new believers to win souls, guarding new members against error and fanaticism, and reclaiming backsliders. With such an approach, new converts are thoroughly instructed and local talent developed. In this sense, the spiritual guardian patiently and tenderly helps the newcomers to grow spiritually. Paul's ministry serves as an example of a ministry that is characterized by follow-up ministry, such as in the second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16-20) and the epistles written to the churches.

Factors That Militate Against Retention

Contrary to factors that contribute to member retention, are those that militate against it. The following factors will be discussed in this section of the project: unresolved conflicts, gossip, poor leadership, negative attitudes, and lack of a positive and nurturing atmosphere. According to Harris (1967, pp. 14-15), these are some of the key factors that can militate against fellowship and retention.

Unresolved Conflicts

According to Fernando (2002), conflicts left unresolved, or an overreaction in the face of a crisis, rejection, or hostility can lead to unpleasantness and pain (p. 26), resulting in anger (p. 68). The apostle Paul gives counsel on this when he says we should not let the sun go down while still angry (Eph 4:26), meaning, "no anger should outlast the day" (NIV footnote).

Gossip

Alluding to this, Arrais (2007) observes that if issues are left unresolved, the results will be gossip, listening to and spreading rumors, and drawing unsupported conclusions about others (p. 32). Gossip is destructive in that it puts the object of gossip in bad light, yet does not bother to verify the information as factually correct or not. This is destructive to another's reputation and may cause repulsion in the new comer to the faith. Paul warns against gossip and malicious talk when he says, "If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other" (Gal 5:14-15). These could be some of the reasons why Samaan (1990, p. 34) recommends the Jesus way of loving and caring, a method which won people's confidence and inspired the faith of those He led.

Poor Leadership

Poor leadership is another factor that can militate against retention in that the leader either does not know what to do, or is just not capable although he knows what should be done. According to Fernando (2002, p. 26), such a person can 'ignore' problems and go 'ahead with work' as if nothing happened. Concurring with this is Arrais (2007, p. 31) who observes that "if you don't know where you are going, you might wind up some place else." A confused and directionless leader who lacks vision may frustrate the members into abandoning the group.

Negative Attitudes

Negative attitudes towards one another, if not stopped have a potential of creating a negative environment. According to Arrais (2007, p. 34), negative attitudes among the

group can repel or causes others to leave or to distance themselves from the group. He suggests that association with a gossip should be avoided as alluded to in Prov 20:19 which says, "A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much."

Lack of a Positive Nurturing Atmosphere

Cress, in Arrais (2007, p. 11) ranks "lack of positive and nurturing atmosphere" among the top reasons why people leave the church. Lack of a positive nurturing atmosphere can lead to fragmented fellowship, which in turn, can result in an uncaring spirit among members. If this is left unattended to, the church's image may be so tarnished that members may want to either detach or distance themselves from that kind of group or church.

Wagner (1986) observes that "caring is not a spectator sport," implying that there has to be a deliberate effort of retaining members. According to her, 'true religion' takes the form of tangible actions on behalf of humanity (p. 69), and for it to happen it (true religion) is to be expressed in 'deeds of compassion' (p. 69). She quotes Mother Teresa's ministry as an example of compassion and love in ministry. Tangible actions of love to one another showed people that they are loved and appreciated for themselves.

As a summary of this chapter, the various sources cited in this chapter affirm the importance, and necessity of member retention in a church and that retention is part of what gives the church its reason for existence. Some of these sources identify, while others discuss factors that promote or militate against member retention. According to Warren (1995), the member becomes committed if the value of membership is clearly communicated to them (pp. 312-313). There is need also for the church to have structures

to assimilate and keep those that it reaches to help them grow by involving them in ministry so that they may develop a sense of ownership (p. 310).

Samaan (1990) places emphasis on members being 'the salt of the earth', that is, mingling with people, which is likely to bring about virtues such as those found in the beatitudes (meekness, thirst for righteousness, mercy, and purity of heart, peacemaking, and many others). It is only when salt has penetrated a substance that it can preserve it, hence the need for members to mingle in order to infuse positive virtues on each other.

Johnson and Johnson (1964) raise the following observations about the need for group interaction: no man is an island, hence the need for group interaction and communication. According to this source, therefore, member retention succeeds when people remain involved, and as they perceive themselves as belonging to a group that appreciates them. As the people value being part of a rewarding group, people gravitate toward interactions that follow expected norms, resulting in quality, uplifting relationships.

Building relationships and caring for one another lead to bonding of group members and commitment to one another. As caring increases, so do feelings of personal responsibility for one another, and as relationships grow, so does unity (Johnson and Johnson, 1964, p. 104).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed contemporary thought regarding member retention. First, its importance is revealed and discussed, showing how pointless it would be to evangelize or expect meaningful church growth without putting into place strategies for member retention. Second, various sources have been allowed to state, suggest, discuss,

and identify factors that contribute to, and those that militate against member retention.

The chapter, therefore, shows that it is possible to retain members at a local church if appropriate steps are taken. For retention to take place, leadership at the local church should play a major role. It should not only be programs, but appropriate implementation of these—positive attitudes towards the newly baptized and love for one another that can lead to meaningful member retention. Local church leadership should also be proactive and be effective on matters of member retention. In essence, literature review is the voice of those who have researched and come up with ideas, and some who draw from their own experience on matters of retention and church growth.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF CHURCH GROWTH AND MEMBERSHIP

RETENTION PATTERNS IN ZIMBABWE

The intention of this chapter is to investigate, identify, and analyze factors that contribute to and those that militate against church growth and membership retention in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe. Current retention patterns will be identified and analyzed with the view of establishing the church's strengths and weaknesses at member retention, and recommending possible solutions to the weaknesses identified.

As mentioned in Chapter one, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe is characterized by very high baptismal rates and equally high membership losses through apostasy and those whose whereabouts are not known (see extracts from the two quinquennial reports of 1997 to 2002 and 2003 to 2007 in Appendix C). It is as if the church is experiencing an "easy come, easy go" scenario, yet one is aware that membership loss may not be limited to the newly baptized only. The two quinquennial reports mentioned above serve as a backdrop to this study and, as mentioned earlier, the intention of this study is to make a contribution towards closing the "back door" through which these massive numbers are escaping. It is possible that some of the 'missing' members may have actually apostatized but decided to simply disappear, yet others may

have crossed over to the diaspora to seek 'greener pastures' because of the dire economic situation being experienced in Zimbabwe.

Propelled by this challenge of high membership loss, questionnaires were sent to pastors, church elders, members, and any number of former members who were willing to respond to the questionnaires. (It has to be noted that because of the tendency of former members to distance themselves from practicing members, and to be angry with the church, it is not an easy task to get any to respond to questionnaires). The aim was to identify current factors that lead to, and those that militate against retention. In addition to this, retention patterns of some fast growing churches and those whose growth is marginal were compared and contrasted to identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to member retention.

The chapter is divided into two parts: Part A is a presentation, interpretation, and analysis of data from questionnaires completed by pastors, elders, members, and former members as a way of establishing the current situation on retention. Part B closes this section with a report on a retention program and its effectiveness. It was deliberately designed by the researcher, and tried out on two newly baptized groups in the two fast growing churches mentioned above. The researcher closely monitored the implementation process of this program.

Part A: Questionnaire for Pastors and Elders

Although this was meant to be an interview guide as its heading suggests (see Appendix D), it was treated as a questionnaire in order to reach the desired number of respondents and have them respond to the questions without allowing them time to consult each other or to share ideas. It was important for this study that each person

expresses their own original view on the raised issues or questions. It was for this reason that all but one question (Question 9) were open-ended, allowing the respondents freedom to speak their minds. It was interesting to note that there were those respondents who refused to be constrained by the suggested items in Question 9, but added their own views outside the suggested ones.

It will be noted that the focus of Questions 1, 2 and 3 is on church growth rather than on retention. This was deliberately done in order to find out what strategies were used to pull these converts into the church since the same strategies are likely to keep them attached to the church if continued.

Question 1: *What church growth strategies do you view as prevalent in Zimbabwe?*

Both the pastors' and elders' views are presented in table form in Appendix D. This being a qualitative study, it made more sense to show the actual responses made by the respondents and the numbers that made those responses. Pairing the responses of pastors with those of elders clearly showed the picture on the ground, with the pastors presenting what they felt should be happening, and the elders presenting what is actually happening in their individual churches. This I say because the elders are the ones who are always there in their local churches to implement and monitor programs, and to see to the day-to-day needs of their individual churches, while the pastors move around the various churches they pastor. In fact, this could account for some of the variations in the views of these two groups.

Table 1

Church Growth Strategies Viewed as Prevalent in Zimbabwe: Variance in Response to Question 1 by Pastors and Elders

	Pastors Responses	Elders Responses
Public evangelism crusades/efforts/campaigns/etc.	100%	100%
Small group witnessing from door-to-door	70%	10%
Voice of Prophecy enrollments	65%	60%
Bible studies	35%	0%
Community service, e.g., feeding and clothing the needy	30%	25%
Guest days and other special programs	25%	40%
Visitation of new members	20%	0%
Building church structures	15%	0%
Nurturing the newly baptized	10%	0%
Prison and hospital ministry	5%	0%
Enrichment seminars	5%	20%
Distribution of books	5%	0%
Pentecostalism/healing	5%	0%
Interesting church programs by all departments	0%	60%
Reclamation programs	0%	15%
Church schools	0%	10%
Children born and raised in the church (SDA parents)	0%	10%
Dividing big congregations and planting new churches using nucleus members	0%	10%
Knowledge of church history	0%	5%
Prayer bands	0%	5%
Mobile clinics	0%	5%
Women participation, e.g., women's ministries	0%	5%
Preaching at funerals	0%	5%

Note: Analysis of Questions 1 and 2 will come after Table 2 which presents data from Question 2).

Question 2: *Which ones (church growth strategies) do you view as most effective?*

Only three strategies are worth mentioning here since they are the only ones which received significant numbers/choices.

Table 2

Church Growth Strategies Viewed as the Most Effective: Variance in Response to Question 2 by Pastors and Elders

	Pastors Responses	Elders Responses
Public Evangelism (Crusades/Efforts/Campaigns/etc.)	95%	80%
Voice of Prophecy enrollments	60%	50%
Small Group witnessing from door to door	45%	5%

Note: This is according to responses to question 2.

Analysis of Questions 1 & 2

An interesting picture emerges from the responses to these two questions. Both groups of church leaders (i.e., pastors and church elders) see public evangelism as not only the most commonly used strategy for church growth in Zimbabwe, but also the most effective.

The pastors (45%) seem to think very highly of small group witnessing from door to door, whereas only an insignificant 5% of the elders are of the same mind. This poses a serious problem since small group visitation is expected to be done by members led by their elders, not the pastors who have several churches to take care of. It leaves one questioning if the pastors did not suggest this based on their book knowledge of how effective small groups are supposed to be as a soul winning strategy, or their experience from districts or churches other than the ones involved in this study.

The pastors also think highly of Bible studies, visitation of new members, nurturing of the newly baptized, and construction of new churches as strategies that are

prevalently used for church growth in Zimbabwe. None of the elders (0%) suggested any of these strategies. This scenario begs the question: How much ground can the pastor cover on his own? It is, therefore, safe to assume that these strategies are not being fully utilized by the churches. See further discussion of Visitation of New Members, Bible Studies, Spiritual Nurture of the Newly Baptized, and Construction of New Churches.

Visitation of New Members

The fact that none of the elders suggested visitation seems to imply that after baptism the churches leave the newly baptized alone to find their own way around. This speaks of coldness on the part of the church. 'Chilling temperatures' towards especially new converts could easily account for high member losses, as new members distance themselves from the chill, and no one in the church cares enough to look out for them or to know their whereabouts. The voices of the apostate members should help clarify these issues as their questionnaire is analyzed later in this chapter.

Conducting of Bible Studies

None of the elders suggested this as an effective strategy, yet 35% of the pastors did. If Bible studies are conducted by only the pastors, the converts who come into the churches through the Voice of Prophecy program which has Bible study as its key component, are bound to feel short changed being in churches that are not interested in conducting Bible studies. This may lead to their loss of interest in the church.

Nurturing of the Newly Baptized

The term 'spiritual nurture', a loaded term so commonly used in pastoral seminars and sometimes church pulpits by pastors, may not be so easily understood by the

members, especially where it is not reduced to simple action words. The fact that the elders omitted mentioning it may very easily mean that they did not know its meaning, or that nurturing was not happening in their churches.

Construction of New Churches

In this region, construction of new churches is always left to the local congregations, except where there is a donor. The current economic situation in Zimbabwe makes this a heavy burden for congregations to carry; hence, it is not an uncommon feature in Zimbabwe to find congregations meeting under trees, in open pieces of land allocated by city councils for church structures, or within structures at different stages of completion. It is understandable that the pastors would see this situation as a threat to church growth and member retention, while the elders and members try to act cheerful and content (a state of denial) in a situation that robs them of their dignity, where passers-by laugh and jeer at them as they worship in the open.

Interesting Church Programs

Sixty percent of the elders said interesting church programs by all church departments is a powerful strategy for church growth, while not even one pastor made any mention of it. This could be the result of the elders' focus being micro and the pastors' being macro, hence missing day-to-day needs of given congregations. Closely related to interesting church programs are guest days and other special programs with 40% elders and 25% pastors suggesting them. In other words, church programs are seen by the elders as highly effective tools for church growth and member retention.

Question 3: *Suggest/recommend other strategies that can be used for outreach in the Zimbabwean congregations.*

Other strategies suggested for outreach: The pastors and elders suggested various strategies for outreach, a few of which are discussed below. The full lists which appear in Appendix D should benefit the churches, especially because of their practical nature.

Prison and Hospital Ministry

The elders suggested this as an additional strategy, whereas the pastors had mentioned it earlier, under Question 1, as an ongoing program. Maybe the pastors are the ones making those visitations to the prisons and hospitals and not the elders.

Bible Studies

The elders also suggested Bible studies as a new strategy to be introduced, whereas 35% of the pastors said Bible study was an ongoing program (see responses to Question 1). It would seem, then, as if the pastors are the ones who conduct Bible studies whenever they visit churches or members, while the churches themselves do not do that on their own.

Shopping Center Evangelism

Another interesting response is where pastors suggested open evangelism at shopping centers, not for themselves but for lay persons. It is not easy to get passersby and shoppers to stop long enough to listen to a sermon. If such a strategy is adopted, it would require very careful planning in order to be effective. The pastors' involvement would be imperative.

Helicopter Proclamation

Helicopter proclamation, suggested by some as a strategy for outreach that could be explored, may sound like a far-fetched idea, yet it brings to mind a time in this country, just after independence in 1980, when a civil war was threatening to break out, and the icon of freedom in Zimbabwe, the late Dr. Joshua Nkomo, was flown over cities in a helicopter, his voice booming from the air, begging his “children” to calm down and reminding them that killing each other was not what they had gone to war for. Another time when helicopters were used for purposes of communication was in the 1970s, where helicopters flew low over settlements, scattering leaflets with special communiqué or warnings from the government to the people. Probably those who suggested helicopter proclamation had such memories of their effectiveness at communicating. However, prohibitive costs of hiring helicopters for evangelism would render the suggestion impossible.

Question 4: *What in your view are the most prevalent retention strategies in Zimbabwe?*

Retention strategies viewed by pastors and elders as the most prevalent in Zimbabwe: None of the strategies suggested was popular enough to be mentioned by up to 50% of the respondents. Highest in the elders’ list was involvement/participation in church activities with 45% respondents mentioning it. Strategies with the highest percentages in the pastors’ list had over 35% each, and these were visitation teams, teaching of fundamental beliefs/church doctrines, and spiritual guardianship or mentorship by trained spiritual parents.

Five percent of the elders mentioned spiritual parenthood, but said nothing about

training those spiritual parents. It is highly possible that the elders know no more than what is happening in their churches regarding spiritual guardianship.

Ten percent of the elders mentioned the local television station as a retention strategy. This could be in reference to the SDA sponsored program, “The Bible Speaks,” which is screened every Sunday morning on the local TV channel, showing SDA pastors preaching and music groups singing. However, it is not clear how this could qualify as a retention strategy when its impact on retention cannot be assessed or monitored.

Twenty percent of the elders and the pastors did not respond to question 4, giving an impression that they either did not understand what the question demanded or that they were not aware of any retention strategies in use in the churches.

Question 5: *Which ones have you tried in your church/district and found most effective?*

Retention strategies tried (by pastors/elders) and found to be most effective: Teaching of fundamental beliefs to post baptismal classes scored the highest (35%), followed by small group evangelism or action units with 25%. The next responses were four strategies: visitations—20%, spiritual guardianship—30% of newly baptized members, holding of guest/music days—20%, and family fun days—20% (social/sporting activities).

The pastors’ suggestions included both spiritual and social activities, but not so the elders’ suggestions, which focused only on spiritual activities. The strategy suggested by the highest number of elders (35%) was involvement of newly baptized members, followed by the Voice of Prophecy and visitation with 20% choices each. These were the

only strategies with significant numbers of responses. The spiritual activities suggested by elders seem to be the kind that takes them to the people in their homes.

Question 6: *What methods of retention have not worked? Explain.*

A large number of respondents left this question blank (25% of the pastors and 40% of the elders). This could mean that all the methods they tried worked, or that this question was not applicable to them since they had never tried any.

Another interesting response was that of the pastors, 20% of whom answered “none” to this question, implying that all was well, that all the retention strategies worked. Yet the rate of membership loss tells a totally different story.

Both the pastors and the elders expressed dissatisfaction in the way spiritual guardianship was happening. They related the following: members lack commitment; hence, they lose their ‘children’; sometimes the church assigns to a newly baptized person a mentor much younger than their spiritual ‘child’, which results in failure to bond; also migration of people causes lack of stability in the relationship.

Although a very high number of the respondents rated public evangelism as the most effective strategy for church growth (see responses to questions 1 and 2 above), in this question (question 6), a dissenting voice among the elders pointed out that evangelistic crusades, popularly known as efforts had become too many, such that they had lost value. If indeed this is so, the question would be why the others were silent about it. Also, one can imagine that if evangelistic crusades are run back to back that would leave the members with no time for other programs such as retention strategies.

Question 7: *Suggest/recommend any other retention strategies that can be effective if tried on the above congregations.*

Suggestions of Additional Retention Strategies: (see Appendix D for a full list): Some pastors (25%) mentioned involvement of new members in the church programs as an additional strategy for retention, while 35% of the elders mentioned 'involvement' earlier, in question 5, as one of the most effective strategies for retention they had ever tried. This study should inform the pastors, therefore, that what they suggested as an additional strategy to be tried was already happening in the churches.

Thirty percent of the pastors and the elders did not respond to this question, giving an impression that the retention strategies they were using, if any, were met with satisfaction.

Question 8: *What elements or tendencies in the local church do you view as destructive to retention?*

Elements or Tendencies Viewed as Destructive to Retention: (see Appendix D for a full list). Scoring the highest among both the pastors and the elders was lack of love from old members (lack of hospitality/unfriendly or unwelcoming churches), with 65% pastors and 30% elders mentioning it. Closely linked to lack of love were cliques and shutting other people out of 'our' groups. This was mentioned by 25% of the pastors and 35% of the elders, raising the percentages above to 90% pastors and 65% elders.

Question 9: *What do former members state as their reasons for leaving the church? Is it doctrine, attitudes, lack of love among members or just lack of interest, or were they mistreated?*

What Former Members Say Caused Them to Leave the Church: In response to question 9, lack of love was rated the highest again with 90% pastors and 65% elders citing it. Closely related to this reason were the following, cited by either or both groups

of respondents: hatred in the church, unwelcoming church, lack of friends, lack of hospitality, lack of fellowship and warmth. Comparing this information with information from former members themselves as will be done later in this chapter, should be enlightening.

Lack of interest appears in both the pastors' and elders' responses. This suggests that when there is no deliberate move to keep people interested in faith and worship, they will gradually lose interest.

It is very doubtful that lack of doctrinal teaching (mentioned by 15% of pastors), actually came from former members. It is very likely that this came from the pastors themselves, in response to the need they saw.

There were certain points that were raised by the elders, but not the pastors. These included: the dress standard is too high, there is too much emphasis on offerings, the church is too legalistic, there is no prophesying in the Adventist church, and there is too much focus on baptism at the expense of nurturing. This last point seems to be the voice of an insider who lacks a platform to express his views, than someone who has left the church. The rest of these responses have a certain liberal tone, such as one would use with someone of the same level or status. If this is true, then it would explain why these same views had never been expressed to pastors, who are seen as belonging to a higher status.

Question 10: *What do former members suggest should be done to reclaim them?*

What Former Members Suggest Should be Done to Reclaim Them: Some of the pastors' responses to question 10 seem to have come from the pastors themselves. For example, there were responses such as, "let us love them and pray for them," "let us

adequately explain doctrine,” “the church should visit them to show that they love and miss them.” It is very unlikely that such responses came verbatim from former members. Similarly, some of the elders’ responses fall in this category. Examples of these include: “we should assure them that God still loves them,” “the time has come for us to pray without ceasing for them.”

Question 11: *If given a church that lacks retention, what strategies would you employ to introduce, or activate retention?*

Strategies That Can be Employed to Introduce, or to Activate Member Retention at the Church Level: The message that comes through very loudly, clearly, and repeatedly is love for members, relating to one another, teaching the church how to exercise love, loving the Jesus’ way/loving unselectively.

Another strong point that keeps coming up in the responses is the teaching of fundamental beliefs to the whole church, or grounding the church in truth/doctrine, followed by involvement of members in programs such as witnessing and soul winning.

Summary of Findings From Pastors and Elders

The information gleaned from the two groups of church leaders, the pastors and elders, should help in the structuring of an intervention program to be implemented over a period of one full year. The program will also benefit from information gathered from the four selected churches and the group of former Adventists who responded to the questionnaires from the researcher. It is only when one knows what and where the problem lies that it can adequately and effectively be addressed.

Membership Survey of Four Churches

It is important that after hearing the church leaders' voices concerning member retention, the researcher turns to the general laity to learn from them what it is that has kept them attached to the church. Such information should be helpful in informing and giving direction to the structuring and implementation of an intervention program to be tried out with selected groups. This section, therefore, is a compilation and analysis of information from the survey forms completed by randomly picked members of four churches drawn from two districts. As stated earlier, the two districts were randomly selected by the researcher, followed by the identification of the four churches with the assistance of the pastors for those districts. The pastors' assistance was required in identifying the two types of churches required for this study—one fast growing and another whose growth was marginal in their districts.

For the sake of anonymity, the two districts are referred to as A and B, and the churches from district A as A1 and A2, and from district B as B1 and B2. A1 and B1 are the fast growing churches in the two districts, and similarly, A2 and B2 are the other two churches from the two districts, which were selected for their marginal growth

Membership Survey Report

The structure of the survey form is such that questions in section A of the form seek for background information such as gender, marital status, age range, highest educational level reached, and length of stay in the church (see Appendix D). This information helps the researcher to know the types of people who make up the four churches, and to identify patterns, if any, in their responses.

Background Information

Gender: In District A, there were significantly more males than females among the respondents, whereas the opposite was true for District B, with more females than males. An examination of church records should clarify whether or not this was caused by having more of one gender than the other in the concerned churches.

Marital status: The two fast growing churches (A1 and B1) show very high numbers of single members (66% in A1 and 53% in B1), whereas there is 33% and 27% in the A2 and B2 churches respectively who are single. Lack of marital attachment tends to go with easy movement from one place to another. Such mobility has serious implications for member retention and loss as members move at very short notice or no notice at all.

Age range: The age range in the fast growing churches are mostly in the 26 to 33 year range (53% in A1 and 34% in B1), much younger than the A2 age ranges, 46% of whom are concentrated in the 41 to 50 year range and B2 with the highest concentration (33%) in the 51 to 60 year range. It is a fact of life that younger adults tend to be more mobile than older folks.

Highest educational level: 60% of the respondents from A1 are holders of Ordinary Level certificates as their highest educational qualification, and only 20% have college or university qualifications, while in A2, 53% have college qualifications and 27% are holders of university degrees, bringing those with professional qualifications in A2 to 80%. Professional qualifications go with specialization and job opportunities, stability and security. Usually it is those without professional qualifications who are retrenched and have to go far and wide job hunting. As can be seen, this has implications

for member loss and retention. The picture is different in District B churches. Unlike in A1 where educational qualifications were very low, B1 has significantly higher qualifications. Those with college diplomas were 33% and 20% with university degrees. In B2, 13% are college graduates and 60% have university degrees.

Length of time in the church: The highest numbers in all the churches were of those who had been in the church since birth, the implication being that they were raised by Adventist parents/guardians.

Baptized/not baptized: Except for 7% not yet baptized in B2, the rest in all four churches were baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Conclusions that can be drawn from this background information are that unlike those churches with marginal growth, the fast growing churches are populated mostly by younger, single members, the majority of whom do not seem to have any job specialization since they only hold secondary school certificates as their highest qualification. If this is so, it would partially explain the reasons for their mobility and disappearance from churches as they migrate to other countries in search of jobs.

Part B: Questionnaire for Regular Members

This section will discuss the potential factors for attracting and retaining members of the church.

Major attraction to the Adventist Church: Scoring the highest (on a scale of 1–5) in three of the four churches was ‘doctrine’. ‘Positive attitude of the members’ only came highest in one church, Church A1, where it scored 85%, followed by ‘doctrine’ with 73%. Generally, then, doctrine seems to be the major attraction into the Adventist church.

Reasons why the respondents have remained Adventist: Again, 'doctrine' scored the highest in this category. Scoring the lowest was 'Adventist by birth'. Although 60% in A1, 60% in A2, 53% in B1, and 60% in B2 reported earlier that they were born Adventist, this fact does not seem to be a strong causal factor for their remaining Adventist. On 'other', some of the comments that came up included "God says so," "very good at funerals," and "music." "Good at funerals" could be in reference to how that particular church (A2) rallies around the bereaved and helps with funeral arrangements and support.

Description of Adventists as seen by the respondents: Except for B2 which had a low score for 'Adventists have a small circle of friends,' and much higher scores for the other three characteristics ('friendly,' 'caring,' and 'people oriented'), the scores from the other three churches were almost similar for all the four characteristics (see Appendix D). It is not clear how Adventists can have a small circle of friends, and at the same time be rated as friendly, caring, and people oriented in equal measures as church B2 seems to suggest.

Two comments made under 'other' showed that there are things that require the churches' attention, and these are "proud" and "shy" to approach new people and to make new friends. One of these comments came from A1 and the other from B1, two districts far apart, yet the two comments bear some similarities. Where one group of people may describe certain behavior as "pride," it is possible for another group to view the same behavior as shyness to approach unfamiliar people in the church and befriend them.

The churches, therefore, need to make a deliberate move to empower, train, and challenge members to be more welcoming to especially new people, not only their own friends (see Appendix D).

Rating of the Welcome by Members of the Church

Ushers, choristers, Sabbath School leaders, elders, pastors, and other members generally scored very high ratings from all the groups. The only group that scored very low points on welcome to people was 'other members'. One notices that the other groups mentioned above are of those people whose roles demand that they address people, run programs, and interact with the members. Where "other members" are concerned, however, it is their choice whether to greet and welcome people or not to (see Appendix D).

Number of People Known to Have Left the Church

In all the four churches, the respondents knew several people who had left the church for various reasons which included the following: loss of interest in the Adventist faith, veiled in-fighting in the church, marriage to non-Adventists, to join other churches. Up to ten were known to have formed their own churches. Comments such as many, very few, once, family, handful on other responses are difficult to quantify although it is an indication that members know a good number that have left, and sometimes even the reasons for leaving. If the pastor felt the need to follow up on those who have left, he could get information from some of the members (see Appendix D).

Factors Viewed by Respondents as Major Contributors to Membership Loss

The question responded to in this section is why people in Zimbabwe leave the Adventist Church. According to the respondents, people leave the church because of and for various reasons. Among those cited by all groups of respondents are negative or indifferent attitudes to or towards the newly baptized; lack of a warm, friendly attitudes; lack of positive environment in some churches; weaknesses on the part of new comers in understanding church doctrine; lack of trained mentors; and lack of involvement of the newly baptized in church programs. In certain churches, some members are inadequately equipped, especially with reading material or books that result in spiritual growth. This research has also revealed a lack of knowledge of what the Spirit of Prophecy is, and even reading of such books (see Appendix D).

Lack of pastoral care, could be a result of what was mentioned earlier, pastor/member ratio, which currently stands at 1:3,500, that is, only 183 pastors for 642,840 members, and 3,448 congregations (see Appendix I). Inadequate or substandard places of worship are cited as other contributing factors. Another critical one is inadequate or substandard infrastructure, resulting in people either worshipping in the open or in incomplete structures.

Interviewing conference leadership and some pastors reveal that almost 100% of incomplete structures, and 60% of undeveloped stands are used for worship every Sabbath. In the latter, the practice is either worshipping in the open, or under some make-shift structure. One would imagine a convert who is used to attending in a beautiful non-Adventist cathedral, and now having to be in an unattractive make-shift structure, or in open air.

Some former members cite what they view as standards that are too high for them to reach. One can only guess that initiation or incorrect mentorship may be a contributing factor as well. According to responses by pastors and elders, they should be trained, meaning those who are usually for spiritual parenting may have no training or even orientation. Where marriage to a non-Adventist, or working on Sabbath cause membership loss, it suggests a weakness in understanding church doctrine. Responses reveal that not even 100% of members owned a Bible or a lesson study guide or reading such essential literature occasionally or just once per week.

This section starts by grouping responses according to the church where they originated, giving a picture of what respondents in each church are saying on matters of retention, and loss of membership. Churches A1 and B1 are fast growing but poor on retention and churches A2 and B2 are marginal in growth, their losses are either minimal or non-existent because baptism or coming in of new people into membership is easily noticeable and can be given close attention, and adequate nurture. Attainment given to new comers in the faith can be more personal than at a church where dozens or scores are baptized at a given time.

Other factors that are worth noting are the kinds of people comprising the congregations, their ages and level of education. Churches A1 and B1 are made up of more young people whose ages range more from 18-35 years old. The levels of education most of them have reached are 'O' levels or less, very few with professional qualifications or some form of training. Being single for some makes them free to move on in life, and a lack of qualification can cause them to start working on Sabbath in order to make a living. A specialized program is necessary for leadership in this group; there

has to be a new approach in an attempt to retain them. Lack of a consistent reading culture is cited as one of the factors that makes this group unstable in the faith.

On the other hand, churches A2 and B2, are made up of elderly people whose ages range more from 35 to over 60 years old. Quite a good number of these have diplomas and degrees, meaning the majority of the group are professionals who are already stable in their jobs and according to the responses, it would seem, their reading culture is better than those in churches A1 and A2. Following is actual groupings of what respondent's in churches A1, A2, B1, and B2 indicate as what in their view are causes of membership loss.

Church A1:

Lack of visits to the newly baptized

Ill treatment by members

Boring Sabbath afternoon programs

No food handouts or paying of fees for them

Dress code

Loneliness

Church A2:

Failure to nurse the weak

Failure to nurture the newly baptized

Dull programs for youth

Failure to give handouts

Unfriendly members

Church B1:

Lack of nurturing

No follow-up on people who have been baptized

Lack of friendliness

Lack of pre-baptism lessons

Shortage of warm welcome

Causing new members to feel lonely and unwelcome

Church B2:

Nurturing inadequate or non-existent

No follow-up after baptism

Lack of caring attitude (no love, no friendship)

Baptizing too early; mass baptism; rushing baptism before learning

Poor welcome

The following seem to be common to all the four churches in districts A and B:

Lack of nurturing of the newly baptized

Lack of hospitality, and people oriented programs

Lack of love and friendship

Reiterating on this, one respondent conveyed that a celebration of baptism lasts one day: hugs and a warm welcome ends after baptism.

Churches A1 and A2 have congregations that are fluid, mobile who still need to get stable jobs and families of their own in order to settle in one place. Church A2 comprises elderly people most of whom are professionals, already established in their jobs and retirees. Church B2 is a Western model where outreach and concern for another

person's welfare is not important. They just come to worship, keep to old acquaintances and family.

Respondents' Views of What the Church Should Do to Retain Members

Respondents suggest the following as what would result in retention: attitudes, standards, involvement of newly baptized in church activities and nurturing them spiritually. Respondents from all the four churches agree on the importance of positive attitudes by members towards one another: friendship, visitations, follow-up programs, and warm welcomes. On standards, the suggestion is that members should not only talk about such standards but be exemplary.

Church A1:

Loving one another

Need for relevant and well researched sermons

Prayer for one another

Visitation

Being friendly

Have follow-up programs

Involvement of members in church activities

Spiritual parents

Church A2:

To have people-oriented programs

Nurture the newly baptized

Fellowship activities

Improve on hospitality

Have programs that meet people's needs

Have programs that emphasize doctrines

Church B1:

Visitation

Warm welcome

Teach people before baptizing them

Make adequate follow-ups

Church be fulfilling to people's needs

Church B2:

Live exemplary lives

Newly baptized should be made to feel at home

Old members to show love and interest to new members

Involve new members in church activities

Friendship to everyone (see more of this in Appendix D3)

Table 3

Percentage of Respondents With Close and Warm Friends

	Church A1	Church A2	Church B1	Church B2
Within the congregation	67%	87%	100%	80%
In another Adventist congregation	53%	87%	73%	67%
Among non-Adventists	67%	67%	67%	

Table 3 shows that the respondents in all the four churches have close and warm friends both in and out of the Adventist church. Close and warm friendship implies quality time spent together, agreeing on a lot of issues, and generally pulling the same direction, as it were. Although the wish of the members, if they have ever thought of it, may be to draw their non-Adventist friends into the faith, there is no guarantee that they may not be the ones being lured and enticed out of the church. One fears that this might be an accident waiting to happen, especially if the affected members are not firmly grounded in the faith.

Personal Copies of Books

More than 90% of the respondents have a Bible, more than 80% a hymnbook and 60% Spirit of Prophecy books. Having possession of the Bible doctrine manual and Sabbath School Study Guide are rated the least, probably because the earlier is mostly used as a teaching manual for the baptismal class or for the newly baptized, and the latter by members for Sabbath School class discussion. One wonders how much each makes faithful use of these for their spiritual growth. When the respondents were asked to state the Spirit of Prophecy books they have, the information shows that quite a number of them do not know the difference between Spirit of Prophecy books and books by other Adventist authors. For example, they claim to have *Daniel and Revelation*, *Revelation of Things to Come*, *Fundamental Beliefs*, the three volumes, *The Bible Speaks*, guides, Amazing Facts, and Spirit of Prophecy books in their library. The question then is how one can be grounded in the Adventist faith without a Spirit of Prophecy background or knowledge. This could be an indication that some Adventists do not know anything about

or the importance of the Spirit of Prophecy, its origin, and its role in the church (see Appendix D3).

How Often the Respondents Read

The percentages from Table 4 below reveal the inadequacy or lack of consistency in reading by members, or the need to establish a reading culture at the local church level, especially of the Bible, lesson quarterly, Spirit of Prophecy books, and denominational history. Second, it is quite clear that churches A2 and B2 read their Bibles more frequently than the other two churches. A few respondents indicated that they read the lesson quarterly, but not the Bible. Reading the Sabbath School lesson without making reference to the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy means that such members base their understanding of the Sabbath School lesson on the writers' and editors' interpretations. A very high percentage also indicated that they had never read any denominational history books either. Such a scenario speaks of a need for a deliberate move by the church to develop a reading culture in the church. Table 4 shows the percentage of those who read Adventist books daily:

Table 4

Members Who Read Church Literature Daily

	Church A1	Church A2	Church B1	Church B2
Bible	53%	73%	53%	73%
Lesson Quarterly	47%	20%	33%	53%
Spirit of Prophecy Books	13%	13%	13%	7%
Denominational History	-	-	7%	7%

With the inconsistency in reading shown in Table 4, members' knowledge base could be minimal, a situation which negatively impacts grounding in the faith. One cannot be fully grounded in their faith, hence the kind of membership losses experienced.

Programs That Respondents Like Most

Respondents' ratings on liking or 'tastes' in church programs are that Sabbath School is liked the most, followed by the preaching service, then lesson study, and witnessing respectively. Music, which was not listed as one of the options to choose from is also cited by some respondents. Table 5 brings more light to this.

Table 5

Programs Respondents Liked Most

	Church A1	Church A2	Church B1	Church B2
Sabbath School	69%	69%	71%	95%
Lesson Study	71%	65%	73%	79%
Preaching Service	65%	73%	81%	79%
Witnessing Programs	55%	49%	59%	72%
Other	44%	53%	40%	25%
	Music Reading Adventist Books	Music Reading Adventist Books	Music Bible Study AY Program Community Programs	Music Bible Study on Prophecy Family Ministries

Five Programs That Could Spiritually Impact

The open ended nature of the question allowed respondents to bring varied responses. As a way of picking those that were ranked highly, the researcher selected five responses that were common in at least three of the four churches. Those answering the questionnaire use to list at least five programs that would spiritually enrich them more if they were either modified or introduced?

Table 6

Five Potential Programs

Sabbath afternoon programs	To be modified	To be made more interesting
Bible Study programs	To be modified	For Spiritual growth
Sabbath School programs	To be modified	
Music Programs	To be modified	For member participation
Witnessing Programs	To be modified	

Summary of Findings From Current Members

Findings from current members of the church reveal that doctrine is the major attraction that has kept them attached to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and that generally the church is slow on hospitality and nurturing of especially the newly baptized. Although these respondents cited doctrine as their major attraction to the faith, further questioning revealed that generally they do not read much spiritual literature. One assumes then that what doctrinal facts they have come to them through sermons or word

of mouth. This is a challenge to the church in Zimbabwe to cultivate and promote a reading culture among its members.

Part A of Questionnaire for Former Members

Out of a big number of former Adventists who were approached with a request to complete this questionnaire, only 35 accepted while the rest declined. The researcher considers the responses of these 35 as first-hand information based on reality than hearsay or supposition. Special attention is paid to all their voices, even where only one or two of them mention a point. Every little thing they say should help explain why people either leave or end up being dropped from church membership. The questionnaire (see Appendix D) seeks to find out what the former members' concerns are, what factors caused their departure, and what would cause their return to church membership. The first part of the questionnaire, Part A, is made up of open ended questions, which enabled the respondents to comment freely, while the second part, Part B, has structured questions.

Question 1: *Why are you no longer a member of the Adventist church and what do you currently do for your spiritual life?*

Reasons why Former Members Left the Adventist Church and What They Currently Do for Their Spiritual Life: 37% of the respondents gave the following reasons for leaving the SDA church: to join those faiths where their parents or spouses attended; or to join Pentecostal churches which had prayed for them with positive results.

Twenty-three percent said they had lost interest for the following reasons: church programs were no longer interesting, there was lack of involvement in programs, a practice which had reduced them to spectators, and no one cared enough to help them not

to backslide. Eleven percent cited what they viewed as hurtful practices such as gossip, fakeness, and dishonesty of Adventists, and lack of support when they were bereaved, as some of the reasons why they left the church. Twenty-nine percent gave reasons which showed their deficient understanding of doctrine. Following are the reasons they gave:

“Baptized too young, and therefore, did not know the demands of the new life.”

“Dual attendance; used to attend an Adventist and a non-Adventist church but now have decided to remain in the other church.”

“Are working on Sabbath.”

“Do not agree with the way Adventists interpret Leviticus 23:4-5.” (Unfortunately this respondent did not elaborate; hence, it is unclear what they mean.)

“Adventists now pray at ‘bus terminuses’ and ‘beer halls’ and this is totally unbiblical.”

“My house was full of evil spirits and the church did not take this seriously enough to help chase them out.”

“Have been away from the church for 8 years being initiated as a traditional healer witch-doctor; now that they have graduated, they plan to rejoin the Adventist church.”

The responses above are a clear indicator of lack of proper initiation and mentorship of the new members in the faith. Another point to note is that the majority of the respondents ignored the second part of the question which sought to find out what they were currently doing for their spiritual life.

Question 2: *What is your current view of the Adventist church and its programs?*

Attitudes of Adventists towards you, in general?

Current View of Adventist Programs and Attitudes of Adventists Towards Them:

Programs—Only 6% of the respondents commented negatively about programs in the Adventist Church. They referred to them as dull and outdated. The rest had positive things to say about programs, such as good, educative, character molding, spiritual, enjoyable, satisfying, and well organized. According to these responses, program quality is obviously not the cause for these people's departure from the church.

Attitudes—Only 23% of the respondents had anything positive to say about Adventists' attitudes towards them, such as: they are generally okay, a few are caring, loving, good, and friendly. The rest of the comments were negative. The researcher feels that it is important for every one of these negative comments to appear right inside this chapter rather than in the appendix section.

"Hatred from people who profess to keep the Lord's statutes."

"A few are friendly but many are full of pride."

"They look down on other people."

"At church they do not greet those they do not know, they just stare and make the person extremely uncomfortable."

"Some are unapproachable and very hard to socialize with."

"They gossip when you are late and in the way you dress."

"They cut contacts with you once you drift away and treat you as an outcast."

"They have never contacted or visited me since I left the church."

"They whisper behind people's backs."

"They are very judgmental."

"I don't care what they think of me, they did not die for me on the cross."

In these negative statements, the message that comes through is that love is lacking amongst members, hence the church needs to make a deliberate move towards training members on relational ministry.

Question 3: *What are the main things you found lacking in the people and in the programs of the Adventist church?*

Main Things Found to be Lacking Among Adventists and Their Programs: On things that are lacking from church members, the respondents had a lot to say. In spite of that, one is left wondering if perhaps they wouldn't have said even more had more space been availed. Most of the responses sounded like an extension of those for the previous question. The respondents did not state what was lacking, but negative practices of those Adventists they knew. Although it is possible to modify their responses so that they respond to the question as it is asked, the researcher has chosen to present them as they are in order to retain the attendant emotion in the statements.

Following are the points they raised: the Adventists lack generosity; they do not help the poor and the sick, they are only kind and smiling on the Sabbath but not during the week; they are leopards in sheep skin, they need to be hospitable and friendly, they lack brotherly love and care; they are not friendly to visitors, they only talk to their friends—I wish you could teach Adventists to be friendly to visitors; they lack unity and fellowship; they gossip about each other; they have the same people leading all the time while the rest are turned into spectators; they are full of boasting and pride, they see themselves as a cut above other denominations, underrating non-Adventists, and talking ill of them; they present poorly planned, dull programs; they all want positions, and those

in positions do not lead by example; they are not supportive when you are in trouble; and they worship clothes, unfortunately some of us do not have those kinds of clothes

Question 4: *What in your own opinion, should the church do to improve on retention of its members? For successful reclamation? Other?*

What the Church Should Do to Improve the Following Retention of Members:

The following are the suggestions given by former members: improve on loving and caring without discrimination; consider themselves as equal to other people and stop being proud; translate their books to local languages; follow the Bible and nothing else; follow up members who have left the church; give warm welcome to new members so that they do not feel lonely; allow for dancing when praising God to attract and retain the youth; build churches and worship the Lord within buildings; visit me and share my problems (name and address provided); stop gossiping and respect each other; greet everyone after services, not just their friends; preach from the Bible, live exemplary lives, and motivate people to live according to the Bible.

Successful Reclamation : Welcome fallen heroes without stigma attached to them; leadership should allow for input of others; improve on communication; support members when in need; work with the members, help them, involve them; visit members in order to develop closer relationships, pray with and for them; treat members with respect and dignity.

Miscellaneous Suggestions: Why don't you people visit the poor, the orphans, and the sick? Visit and talk to fallen members like genuine Adventists should do; listen to backsliders' problems, you never take time to listen; run scholarship programs for our

youth, and give us jobs; I lack faith in Jesus, so how can praying to Him win my soul to Him?

Part B of Questionnaire for Former Members

Question 1: *Length of stay in the church.*

Forty-six percent of the respondents stayed in the church the longest—between 11 and 20 years, 20% stayed between 6 and 10 years, 28% were in the church for a mere 1 to 5 years, and 6% stayed for less than a year. The fact that most of the respondents were those who had been in the church for many years does not necessarily mean that they make up the highest percentages of back sliders; it may simply mean that they turn out to be the boldest when it comes to venting out their anger towards the church.

Question 2: *How old were you when you joined the Adventist church?*

Age When Respondent Joined the Adventist Church: Those who joined the church very young, at ages 8 to 14 years, make up the highest percentage of former members who responded to the questionnaire (57%), followed by those who joined between the ages 15 to 19 (25%), between 20 and 29 years (6%), between 30 and 39 years (6%), between 50 and 59 years (3%), 70+ years (3%). It would seem that commitment and attachment into a belief or faith is not dependent on how old one is when he or she becomes a member, or their length of stay in the church.

Responses to questions 3 and 5 will be presented together.

Question 3: *How many close friends did you have outside the church during your time of membership?*

Question 5: *How many friends did you have in the Adventist church then? (Those you saw at least once a month?)*

For both numbers 1-5, possible answers were: one, two to four, five or more, none, and how many? The respondents were to tick next to their preferred response.

Responses to question 4 were identical to those given in Part A; hence it is not necessary to list them again.

On the question of friends (questions 3 and 5), it is not clear whether having more friends inside or outside the church has any effect on retention. Some of the respondents had more friends outside the church than inside (one actually indicated that he had 10 friends outside the church and only 2 inside), yet others had an equal number of friends inside and outside the church; another set of responses reflected more friends inside the church than outside at the time they were still members. Their departure, therefore, could have been caused by any number of reasons stated earlier.

Question 6: *One a scale 1-5 and in your view, do you see any of the following as having existed in the Adventist churches you associated with?*

Ratings: Following are the total scores received by the different items rated by the respondents as having existed in the Adventist church(es) they used to associate with. The Adventist church is God's remnant (69%), the fellowship was good and strong (51%), I experienced love from members (43%), church standards are based on the Bible (70%), Belief in all church doctrines (54%), the church's teachings and practice matched (39%), and worship and church programs met people's needs (51%).

Scoring the highest with 70% were biblical standards being the basis for the church's standards, followed closely by the belief that the Adventist church is God's remnant, with 69%. Before one asks the question why anyone who could openly confirm these two statements as truth would choose to distance themselves from the church, they

need to scrutinize the other items which did not score such impressive marks. According to these ratings, love was in short supply in the churches, and members did not practice what they taught. These ratings, coupled with the comments made earlier in this section, stand as a challenge to the church to wake up and pay attention.

Question 7: What is the possibility that you might come back into church membership, and what factors would lead to that?

Possibility of any Coming Back into Church Membership: In response to this question, 31% categorically and emphatically said, in rigid and unbending tones, that they were not coming back. A few of their statements were: "I'm satisfied with the church I'm now attending"; "The Adventist Church did not show any concern when I needed them, I have since joined the church which cared"; "God looks at the heart, not the denomination, I'll never come back"; "Interesting question, no possibility whatsoever."

Fifty-eight percent used much softer tones such as: "I might come back since I grew up in the Adventist Church"; "It is possible, but not now"; "I might come back if members stop discriminating and concentrate on worshipping"; "I need to quit smoking first before I come back to the church"; "There is a slim possibility of my coming back if the church members quit dishonesty. "

Only 11% said they will come back. The majority of these respondents ignored the second part of the question which sought to find out what factors would lead them to come back. The few who did respond to it raised factors such as: "I am likely to return if the church helps me to understand the sermons"; "I'll come back if churches shun politics in the house of the Lord"; "I might come back if I get visitation from friendly members."

Question 8: *Have you ever been visited or contacted by the church since you were dropped or left the church?*

Visited or Contacted by the Church Since They Left the Church: 43% said they had been visited by other members and elders, while 57% said they had never been visited. One or two visits reported by the majority of the 43% above is certainly not adequate. The information given here confirms earlier assumptions that the churches do not have deliberate strategies to follow up apostate members.

Wake Up Call for the Church

Information from members should serve as a wake up call for the church, not only what they said is worth paying attention to, but also emotions contained in their responses. The fact that most of them have never been visited by church members, and that those of them who have been visited have only received mostly two visits, stands as a challenge to the church to take member retention seriously.

Intervention Program and Assessment of Its Effectiveness

Data from questionnaires/surveys revealed what strengths and weaknesses the church had, and from this information the researcher designed an intervention program which other Seventh-day Adventist churches can replicate and/or modify to suit their situations.

The fact is that if nothing is done to correct what causes membership loss in Zimbabwe, the situation may remain as it is, or even worsen, because losses may continue to be realized. Research findings should help any researcher to establish the way forward, as in this case, an intervention program that is mentorship oriented. The target in

the following program was the local church itself, as it relates to the newly baptized, using spiritual guardians

Intervention Program

The researcher designed an intervention program (see Appendix J) in May 2009 and tried it out in two newly baptized groups in the two fast growing churches (A1 and B1). The intention of the program was to ensure 100% member retention. Insights for this program were drawn from Chapters 2 and 3 of this research project, and also from responses from pastors, elders, regular members of the church, and former members as reported in Chapter 4. The program was evaluated first in August 2009, then in December 2009, and finally in April 2010.

It started with orientation of all the members on the importance of retention, followed by the newly baptized choosing their own spiritual guardians who are sometimes referred to as spiritual parents. The above mentioned intervention program is used as part of training of spiritual parents. The training focuses on imparting effective nurturing skills to any prospective spiritual guardian, and the church as a whole. At the end of the training program, the spiritual parents are given a charge by the pastor, and committed to the Lord in prayer by the researcher or by the head elder.

The program is to be evaluated at least three times over a period of twelve months. When a newly baptized person is no longer coming to church, effective follow-up is done, checking the reasons for continued absence, or 'disappearance', and making an attempt to of reaching out to the person.

It starts with an acquaintance program which could be a Sabbath outing for church leadership, spiritual guardians, and the newly baptized. This is to enable the above to

spend quality time together in worship, and fellowship that includes lunch together. Tips are to be given on establishing an on-going relationship and friendship. Such tips include: occasional calls and visits, inviting each other (spiritual child and parent) to attend each other's functions, being there for each other in loss, grief, or pain, and making the newly baptized acquainted with the Adventist way of life. The participants were also challenged to take an interest in the 'spiritual child's' church attendance.

Evaluation of Program

The researcher designed an evaluation form to be completed by pastor/elder and spiritual guardians of each of the two churches, Church A1 and B1, every four months—September 2009, December 2009, and April 2010. Since these were the two churches in which the research was conducted, they became the rightful venue for evaluation. The evaluation form was completed by the elder, with the assistance of the church clerk. The information on the form enabled the researcher to assess the effectiveness of the intervention program by checking if the people baptized in April/May 2009 were still in active attendance. The tables below are the results from the assessment forms.

Table 7

District A, Church A1: Number Baptized in May 2009 and Assigned Trained Spiritual Guardians

	September 2009	December 2009	April 2010
Still in active attendance	54	54	54
No longer Attending	Nil	Nil	Nil

In addition to the weekly post-baptismal classes, the newly baptized in Church A1 participated in zonal mid-week prayer meetings, Bible studies, and were encouraged to join existing choirs and singing groups. There was care and support from spiritual parents and involvement in activities. The number still actively attending by April 2010 was 54, that is, 100% of the newly baptized in church A1 were retained.

In church B1, there was a slight difference as indicated below.

Table 8

District B, Church B1: Number Baptized in May 2009 and Assigned Trained Spiritual Guardians

	September 2009	December 2009	April 2010
Still in active attendance	40	42	43 (one is in the process of being transferred)
No longer Attending	5	3	2

The first assessment of the 45 people baptized in Church B1 revealed a loss of five. The church was challenged to find and reclaim the people they had lost.

Investigations were carried out by the church with the following findings:

Two young spiritual guardians migrated to South Africa in search of more lucrative jobs. This resulted in the church losing contact with their spiritual children. Unfortunately they left before their 'children' could bond with the church. However, because of the records and the continued fellowship by the elders, the two spiritual children concerned were reclaimed before the end of the year.

One lady married a man of another faith and is now attending her husband's

church. This happened a couple of months after her baptism. One newly baptized member relocated to another town in the country. His whereabouts have been discovered, and he has since been assisted to identify an Adventist church to worship in. His membership is in the process of being transferred to that church.

The fifth one is a member whose whereabouts are still unknown. He moved from the house he was renting without leaving a forwarding address. Unfortunately, again, his movement came before he could bond with his spiritual guardian. The church claims that it has not lost hope of finding the member.

This intervention program worked effectively in both churches as seen in Tables 7 and 8. Its structure is such that the elders, with the help of the pastors, keep track of the newly baptized through spiritual guardians, who are held accountable for these spiritual 'babies', and are responsible for them until they are fully integrated into the church, and have become confident. It is hoped that active love, care, and attention the newly baptized received contributed towards making them want to stay. Furthermore, it is hoped that they will, in turn, want to do the same for others.

Without this chapter, it would have been difficult, if not impossible to identify the exact causes of membership loss, or lack of member retention in the Adventist church in Zimbabwe. The actual findings form the gist of the research by revealing the crux of the problem and suggesting possible solutions. Pastors and elders, though differing somewhat in their responses, reveal what are seen as major problems of member retention, especially when looking at it from the administrative point of view. According to the findings in this chapter, pastors need to train elders on church leadership and administration, and also find out from them what is happening on the ground at a local

church. This is because the pastor visits the church occasionally as he has other churches to minister to leaving issues of the local church to the elder.

Combining the pastor's knowledge on how to lead a church, with what the elder is experiencing and seeing every week, will result in the two identifying and dealing with what causes lack of member retention at a local church. On the other hand are responses from regular members who are the consumers of the programs crafted, or proposed by the above. Since the members are the ones affected by what happens at a local church, and it is out of them that people apostatize, their views can help those in leadership to find ways to improve on issues of retention. Periodic findings or assessment of programs through them could result in a true picture of what causes membership loss. This group can also be used to follow up on former members because some of them know where they stay, and what they are unhappy about.

Finally, former members' responses are so relevant and useful in that the respondents were members before, and they can state what caused them to leave the church or to be dropped. Their responses reveal the church's strength and weaknesses, and what could be done to retain, and even reclaim those who have left, hence the intervention program suggested in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF REPORT, EVALUATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the entire study, and then draws conclusions based on the findings. Out of the findings, recommendations have been made which, it is hoped, will contribute towards reducing or eliminating membership loss in Zimbabwe. This study came about as a response to two quinquennial reports which showed unacceptably high membership losses in the church in Zimbabwe (see Appendix B). The researcher, as stated in Chapter 1, set out to investigate the causes of such losses in the church in Zimbabwe, and to find out what could be done to retain members at local church level.

Summary of Report

Chapter 2 focused on the theological basis of member retention, showing Jesus' way of ministering, which stands out as a model for retention. Paul's ministry, on the other hand, was presented as an example of those who emulated Jesus' way of ministering, which was characterized by love, care, friendship, and involvement.

Literature review (Chapter 3), explored what theologians and other writers have to say on church growth as it relates to retention. The study centered on the importance of member retention, factors that militate against member retention and those that contribute

to it. Some of what is suggested in these sources are: how the newly baptized should be absorbed into church membership, and how to create a welcoming, nurturing environment for the newly baptized. Outcomes of unresolved conflicts, gossip, poor leadership, and lack of positive nurturing atmosphere, were some of the practices that were said to have negative effects to member retention. On the other hand, putting up attractive structures for worship, allowing for participation in church programs, and creating a friendly and welcoming environment for the newly baptized are some of those factors that were said to have a positive effect on member retention. In Chapter 4, data were presented and analyzed, thereby giving direction and relevance to the intervention program that the researcher was designing.

Pastors and Elders

Pastors and elders completed an identical questionnaire, since both groups are church leaders. Here and there, there were some similarities in their responses, yet there were also some differences. For example, on church growth, both pastors and elders suggested that public evangelism and Voice of Prophecy were very strong church growth strategies. One of the places where the two groups differed was where pastors suggested small group witnessing, Bible studies, and community service as next in line, while elders saw guest days, and 'other interesting church programs' as a very powerful tool for church growth.

Retention strategies viewed by these two groups of church leaders as the most prevalently used in Zimbabwe included involvement of the newly baptized, visiting the newly baptized and former members, teaching fundamental beliefs, and mentoring by trained spiritual parents. Only the pastors suggested that spiritual guardians be trained,

yet both groups initially expressed dissatisfaction at the performance of the spiritual guardians.

Membership Survey

Members of the church who responded to the survey questions, as mentioned earlier, were randomly picked from four churches. They vary in age, levels of education, length of time in the church, and marital status. Following are some of the major attractions they observed in the Adventist church, as well as factors they saw as contributing to membership loss:

Major attraction scored the highest points: Doctrine and positive attitude of members and being Adventist by birth covered the highest respectively. The fact is that one has to do with relations and the other has to do with upbringing.

Factors contributing to membership loss included the following: Findings from the research revealed allegations that Adventists have a small circle of friends, pride, lack in nurturing of the newly baptized, hospitality and people oriented programs, love, and friendship. Another intensity revelation was the lack of a consistent reading culture, even the reading of the lesson quarterly

Former Members

This unique group of respondents gave what the researcher considered as first hand information on attitudes and behaviors by leadership and regular members that could result in people leaving the church or apostatizing, and what could be done to attract them back into church membership. The respondents cited the following as major causes for their apostasy: hatred among church members, unwelcoming attitudes from

members, lack of friends in the church, lack of hospitality, lack of fellowship and warmth, loss of interest, hurtful practices such as gossip, fakeness and dishonesty, joining other faiths, and lack of involvement in programs.

Some reasons they gave showed deficient understanding of doctrine especially when they said they were baptized while too young (and therefore did not know the demands of the new life), maintained dual attendance (Adventist and a non-Adventist church), worked on the Sabbath, and not agreeing with the way the church interpreted some portions of scripture.

A few former members who responded to the question on what could be done to claim them back suggested loving and praying for them, and having members visit them occasionally. What was gleaned from these responses was factored into the intervention program. The fact that some of what is in the intervention program came from respondents could be reason enough to make its implementation such a resounding success. Also, its relevance to the area of a felt need made it a worthy undertaking which the churches took very seriously.

Evaluation of the Research

This is an evaluation of the entire study, which comments on whether the intended tasks of the project were achieved. The main tasks of this study were to find out what caused membership loss in the Adventist church in Zimbabwe, and suggest possible solutions to the problem. The evaluation will also look at the research methodology, to assess its effectiveness in achieving the set objectives.

In short, factors that impacted the study positively and those that impacted it negatively will be identified and analyzed. In addition to checking if the intended goals of

the study were accomplished, the evaluation will also assess the relevance of the study to the situation in Zimbabwe and to identify what factors contributed to its success or failure, if it failed.

Finally, I will comment on whether or not I have learned any valuable lessons from this research and whether or not the research has made any contribution to scholarship in general and ministry in particular. The evaluation exercise seeks to answer the questions on the research accomplished and on factors that made it a success and those that worked against it, the lessons learned from the study and the contributions the study would make to ministry/scholarship.

Evaluate Purpose

Was the purpose of the research accomplished? If so, what factors made it a success? If not, what factors worked against it?

Facts from the findings affirm that what was intended through this research was accomplished. As indicated earlier, the intention was to identify the main causes of membership loss in the Adventist church in Zimbabwe and to recommend possible solutions. Factors that made this research a success include the following:

The Method

The use of surveys/questionnaires to the affected people ensured that the information being collected for use was correct, not coming from some historical period in the past. The inclusion of people who had left the church among the respondents enabled the research to benefit not only from what they said, but the emotion contained in their statements.

People of different age groups, level of education, and statuses in life and in the church as respondents brought in their varied perspectives on the problem of membership loss and its causes.

The open-endedness of the questions, difficult though they may be to analyze and represent diagrammatically, allowed the respondents to speak their mind. This is exactly what this study needed if an effective way forward would be charted. Allowing the findings from the respondents to influence the contents of the intervention program ensured relevance of the program to address the felt needs. Involving the members themselves in identifying the problem, and visiting the former members, should give them boldness to continue doing that, in addition to working towards preventing membership loss. Because the intervention program borrowed heavily from what the respondents had said, it meant that they felt free to adjust and modify it as it suited their individual churches.

Relevance of the Research to the Situation in Zimbabwe

The problem of membership loss through members' whereabouts not being known has often been dismissed by many church administrators. They often attribute to migration of members to the Diaspora for greener pastures. As Executive Secretary of the Union, all membership requests from the Diaspora are received by my office from which they are passed on to the relevant conferences for processing. The insignificant numbers of such requests for transfers, and the massive numbers reported by the conferences as missing did not tally. The findings of this research, therefore, should dispel the assumption that missing members have all migrated. As such, the study confirms that

membership can be monitored effectively at local church level, and by the local church itself, and that disappearances of members can be minimized to the point of elimination, again at local church level.

The study also confirms that it is possible to retain members when a deliberate strategy for retention is put in place. It is therefore relevant to address the situation of member loss in Zimbabwe. The study also stands as a challenge to the church leadership to focus on more than the numbers baptized, but on their retention as well. Because the respondents were pastors, elders, members, and former members, that is, those people who deal with local church issues on day-to-day basis, and are directly affected by such issues, this study is very relevant.

Challenges Faced During the Research

As in any research, there were both positive and negative factors that emerged during the study. Some of the challenges included difficulties with interpretation and evaluation of massive data from open-ended questions, the researcher's other responsibilities whose demands competed with the demands of the research, poor internet, and poor telephone systems for easy communication with the advisors, load-shedding on electricity result in sections of cities having no power, sometimes daily, for periods of up to six to eight hours, use of old computers with their attendant problems, inadequate financial base which was further compounded by the crashing of the Zimbabwean dollar, and lack of financial support from the Union because of financial constraints being experienced. Following are additional details on the above-mentioned challenges:

1. Administering of surveys/questionnaires had its own positive and negative points. First, it was not possible to get all 100% of the responses back, except for pastors where the researcher administered, and collected at a pastors' meeting/seminar. Table 9 shows the number of questionnaires that were given out, and the numbers that were received back from each of the groups. When it came to members and former members' questionnaires, the researcher relied on the assistance of the pastors and elders of the selected churches to distribute and collect the questionnaires from respondents.

Table 9

Questionnaire Distribution

Respondent	# Distributed	# Received	% Returned
Pastors	30	30	100%
Elders	30	27	90%
Members	200	163	82%
Former Members	100	35	35%

Note: Former members were the most difficult to convince to fill the questionnaires, and some of those who had finally agreed to do so, did not.

1. Interpretation of scores from responses: Being so technical, interpreting scores from surveys/questionnaires was a big challenge. For this to be accomplished, the researcher sought someone to coach him to enable him to manage the task.

3. Evaluating the results: What made evaluation of results a challenge was attempt to be as accurate as possible, which meant that each item in every questionnaire

had to be scrutinized thoroughly. The intention was that the outcome communicates what not only the researcher understands, but anyone who reads the document, or makes use of materials in the research.

4. Only urban churches used for the research: The researcher did not have the capacity for anything beyond the churches covered. However, the research could be expanded to cover a wider spectrum of churches, which would include rural and peri-urban churches (half rural and half urban). The cities could also be subdivided into high density suburbs churches, low density suburbs churches, and those of minority groups. What the researcher did, therefore, was charting a way for further research in the area of member retention.

5. Other challenges: The researcher's other responsibilities competed with the research in terms of requiring his time and energy. He is currently serving as Executive Secretary of one of the fastest growing Unions in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Being one of the officers of this kind of a union leaves one with inadequate time for research. The only way around it was to take time off from work. He also chairs Solusi University Board, the evangelism council, quarterly assessment meetings, and also attends various committees and boards of various lower entities of the Union. Time to relax with the family at home was compromised. Other challenges included a poor Internet system (one can spend days if not weeks, without any access to the Internet), poor telephone systems (the telephone system freezes occasionally, sometimes for a full day or more).

Lessons Learned

In spite of the challenges just mentioned, there are lessons learnt from the

research. These include, first, the church should not sit idly and wait for the Lord's intervention when it comes to member loss and retention. Migration by some members to the Diaspora constitutes a tiny fraction of missing members; the church should not assume that anyone who disappears has gone abroad, but search vigorously for them. Second, there should be a deliberate move to come up with programs that have a focus on retention, and that such programs should be monitored and evaluated. Third, only occasionally is member retention a hopeless situation; the remedy lies with an investigation of causes for losses through research findings. Fourth, former members not be viewed as hopeless cases that are not even worth visiting. Their responses reveal that if this group is visited, or some concern for them shown and their cries listened to, they might return to the fold. There are those, however, whose responses reveal burning anger. Fifth, I realized rather late in my study that some of the surveys/questionnaires could have been given to more people had they been translated into the local languages. What is comforting, however, is that the elders assisted those who needed some words translated.

Contribution of Study to Ministry/Scholarship

1. The research is intended for use by the Church in Zimbabwe, and anyone who has an interest on issues of retention as it affects Zimbabwe. It is possible to make the suggested solutions applicable to any setting.
2. The study has broadened my view of member retention and my experience as a shepherd of the flock.
3. The study has also shown especially the church leaders that it is not enough to preach from the pulpit and baptize, without taking an interest on the well-being and continued membership of the people.

4. The entire Division (Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division), should be able to apply findings of this study to any of their other Unions experiencing problems similar to that of Zimbabwe.

Factors That Impacted Positively to the Research

As mentioned earlier, various levels of church leadership gave this research full moral support and facilitated its execution when the researcher needed pastors and elders. They also assisted in identifying the districts A and B which were going to be used to conduct the research. The pastors also participated as respondents. In addition, the two pastors of districts A and B assisted in identifying the churches where the program was going to be conducted, that is, in each district there was a fast growing church, but poor in retention, and one whose growth was marginal. Except for former members, all the respondents showed a willingness to respond to the surveys/questionnaires. Maybe the fact that the responses were required at the Union level could have been a contributing factor to the positive support by the members.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, the researcher is able to draw the following conclusions:

The pastors who are responsible for multiple congregations can only visit a church occasionally, thereby serving them as more of an overseer than a shepherd. This makes the pastor unable to utilize shepherding skills, but to rely on the elders' day-to-day running of the local church and making reports. The responsibility to run the church is

therefore left to the elders, who are untrained and inexperienced in shepherding or church leadership.

This is very much unlike the Jesus model which was emulated by the apostle Paul and those of his time. When the Lord said, “Follow Me, I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19), is one among many examples where Jesus meant He would train or mentor the disciples personally to the extent of transformation. When the apostle Paul says, “follow my example as I follow Christ” (1 Cor 11:1), he is seen initiating Silas (Acts 15:40), Timothy (Acts 16:1-3), and mentoring them (Acts 16:4, 16-19) to the extent that they eventually become co-workers and co-authors with him (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Phlm 1).

The majority of members do not seem to have much say on the formation, implementation, and running of the programs, unless invited by those in leadership positions to participate. Finally, the former members are a unique group in that they were once members of the church but left, or were dropped for one reason or another. Reasons of their departures, and other suggestions mentioned in Chapter 4 have contributed much to this research. In Chapter 4, this group gives actual information on what transpired, and what caused them to quit, and what could be done to reclaim them. The conclusions, therefore, are based on the findings from what the groups said. Insights drawn from theological reflection on member retention and literature review in the previous chapters will be used as support material for some of the conclusions.

There is need for a self-evaluation instrument by the union, conference, and the local church to assess itself and its performance periodically as follows:

- Union: quinquennially, because sessions for this entity are conducted every five years
- Conference: triennially, because their session is conducted every three years
- Local church: yearly, or biennially because the terms of office for local church workers and some of their programs last for one or two years.

The Zimbabwe Union Conference and its entities (three conferences or the local churches) do not have a self-evaluation instrument that takes into account retention. The responses to pastors, elders, members, and former members allude to this where negative attitudes and lack of training of spiritual guardians seem to rank high.

The Union and its entities should develop an instrument to identify factors that contribute towards retention and those that militate against it so as to take corrective measures as they get to know the strengths and weaknesses of each of their entities.

Friendship is lacking in the Adventist churches. Some of the respondents in Chapter 4 cite existence of negativity by members against the newly baptized, and many times against each other. In fact, one even responded passionately by saying, “a loving attitude lasts up to baptism time, and that smiles and hugs end with baptism.”

Possession of sources such as the Bible, hymnbook, Spirit of Prophecy books, a Bible doctrine manual, and denominational history is lacking, let alone making use of them for spiritual growth is lacking. Some of the respondents who are members of the church do not have these essential sources

Responses reveal that there are a large percentage of members who do not know what is meant by Spirit of Prophecy books. Some of what they cite as Spirit of Prophecy

books are those written by some prominent Adventist writers, or produced by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

There is a deficiency in the reading culture. According to the respondents, daily or consistent reading of material or books that are essential for spiritual growth is not 100%, even the Bible, lesson quarterly, and Spirit of Prophecy books. If reading of such essential material is indicated as once per week, occasionally, once per month, and some even indicating that they do not read these sources at all, being a member of the church has no benefit.

Leadership should identify and bring more programs that people like most, or those that spiritually enrich them most. This again is cited by the respondents as a potential for retention.

There is need for social functions at least once per quarter at every local church. These include potlucks, indoor/outdoor games, and any social function that includes the newly baptized. This helps people to get to know and to relate to each other.

Where pastors seem to differ in responses to questionnaires can be interpreted to mean that the pastor does not have a full picture of the situation on the ground in a local church, but responds on the ideal and what he expects. The elder, on the other hand, is fully aware and is probably lacking in experience on how to be effective

Spiritual guardians lack appropriate orientation and training. Since pastors, elders, and members cite spiritual parenting as a powerful tool for retention, and at the same time, point out that spiritual parents have a tendency of losing their spiritual children, training of this group and monitoring their spiritual parenting is essential.

The high baptisms and high losses in membership suggest that Adventists in

Zimbabwe have very outstanding performance in their outreach programs, but poor on retention. This is indicated in some responses from former members that the interest on a person is very high prior to baptism, but once one is baptized, “hugs and celebrations end,” and the newly baptized remains lonely

Are people being baptized too early, before they are grounded in their faith? These are allegations by members of the church. Biblically, baptizing them early is not wrong. As a result of Peter’s sermon 3,000 were baptized (Acts 2:41); another was Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Act 8:26-40)). More examples could be cited on this. The problem, however, is lack of diligence in teaching them what they need to know about their faith as the biblical injunction of the Great Commission (Matt 28:19).

It would seem both members and church leadership do not realize how their negative attitude towards the newly baptized, or towards one another, can cause the newly baptized to leave or apostatize.

How can pastors and elders work together? According to the responses from questionnaires, it would seem they do not work together in planning and implementing church programs. For meaningful church growth and retention, they need to work together so that they would not differ on important issues that pertain to retention.

This seemingly lack of co-ordination between pastors and elders can affect the success of any program that is being planned or implemented.

Since pastors, elders, and members cite spiritual parenting as a powerful tool for retention, these spiritual parents should be trained and guided on how they can be successful in their ‘parenting’ assignment.

Spiritual parenting programs are to be monitored from time to time so as to give the spiritual parents the needed assistance.

There are high baptisms and high losses in Zimbabwean churches. The high baptisms and high losses suggest that Adventists in Zimbabwe are outstanding in outreach programs, but very poor on retention. Some of the responses indicate that the interest of a person is very high prior to baptism, but once the person is baptized the interest dies down. One respondent actually said, the hugs and celebrations end at baptism resulting in one being lonely among a large number people.

Baptizing people too early was cited by some respondents as a weakness, that is, before they are grounded in the faith. This is not biblically wrong; pre- and post-baptismal classes and effective nurturing play a major role in retention. Baptisms for these newly baptized is a recognition of their decision in which teaching and other means of nurturing are to help the person to understand more about what they have decided for, the Adventist way of life, and to reinforce their decision.

It would seem members, or even church leadership, do not realize how their attitude towards the newly baptized or even among themselves as members can have either a negative or positive impact on the newly baptized causing them to either be retained or to leave. This must be taught at the local church level.

Recommendations

Having made the above conclusions, I will now focus on recommending strategies which the Zimbabwe Union and its entities can consider using for member retention in their local churches. According to Cress, in Arrais (2007), it is the responsibility of leadership to be aware of the potential of or notice the departure of members, new or old,

through the 'back door', and find ways to close it. This, according to the Lord Jesus, is a way of not only seeking, but saving that which was lost (Luke 19:9-10). Jesus, again, in the Great Commission reiterated to this when He said, those baptized should be discipled (Matt 28:19). As described by Bosch in Sheink (1983:232-233), discipleship is a permanent relationship with Jesus, a commitment which results in members being committed to each other. This is taken to mean that such commitment has a potential of keeping one belonging to group. In view of the above findings and conclusions, the researcher finds this as the appropriate time to make the following recommendations:

The union and its entities should design a self-evaluation instrument to assess its performance and that of its entities. Once this is in place, it must be put to use in planning, monitoring, and implementing of programs at the local church level. Programs developed following such an assessment and evaluation will certainly result in desired outcomes.

Results from surveys and questionnaires must not be taken for granted or kept as just knowledge of the situation, but used to clearly identify factors that contribute towards retention and those that militate against it.

The pastors and elders need to meet with, or find out from elders and members what makes the church grow, and what constitutes relevant retention strategies.

The current church members need to:

1. Since each respondent claims to know one or more people who have left the church, a frequent follow-up, or reclamation program should be established and implemented at the local church level.

2. To have each local church make a self-evaluation of itself, and its programs from time to time so as to be aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and to enable it to take corrective measures where possible.

3. To introduce friendship evangelism at the local church level. This will increase the circle of friends for each member among both members and non-members.

4. To establish and develop a reading culture at the local church level so that people can increase their reading of the Bible, Sabbath School lesson study quarterly, and Spirit of Prophecy books. The responses show a deficient reading culture.

5. To promote members having their own Spirit of Prophecy books, or any material that pertains to them and encouraging them to read.

6. To have each local church follow up on former members in order to find out what made them leave or be dropped from membership; also, find out what can be done to reclaim them.

7. To have members not only oriented, or made acquainted with doctrine, but to help them to understand it and what it stands for. This will reduce the negatives cited by former members that baptized too young, have dual membership (one in the Adventist church and also in another denomination), or are working on Sabbath as it will help them to be grounded in the faith

8. The church is to avoid negative attitudes against one another, and towards the newly baptized. This could be a potential for loss.

9. Spiritual guardians are to be identified and trained, and have their 'spiritual parenting' program monitored and evaluated from time to time

10. Pre- and post-baptismal classes be put in place and run in such a way that the newly baptized experience growth and maturity. For effectiveness, they could run for a period of between six and twelve months.

11. Pastors should train elders on matters of church leadership so that they would know what is expected of them as leaders of the local church especially on follow-up programs and nurturing.

In dealing with former members the church needs to improve on loving, caring, and showing hospitality, avoiding discrimination. Books and other materials needs to be translated into local languages. Former members should be visited and kept in touch with by members for them to be assured that the church not only has an interest in them, but still loves them.

Conclusion

The Zimbabwe situation has many lessons that we can learn from. First, there are some churches or regions that would be fast growing in membership yet poor in retention. The reasons are that in some places it is naturally ripe for evangelism, or the leadership comes up with programs that are very attractive in that they are soul winning in focus, yet they have no capacity or ability retain newly baptized members. According to James, in Arrais (2007), they fail to create and sustain a loving, caring, and supportive environment for the newly baptized.

Second, some churches can have marginal growth, yet they have the capacity to retain those that they have, or the few gains that they have received. In this case, the church could be compromising a certain minority group who really care for each other's needs and welfare. Their programs are group focused with very little attraction for those

who are outside the group. They tend to relate to each other as a family.

Third, another could be a church that is both fast-growing and retaining at the same time, yet another could be marginal in its growth and also poor in retention.

Assessment can help in identifying the entity's strength and weaknesses. Fourth, could be a church that is fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses, but either just do nothing about it, or not knowing what to do about the situation.

This research, therefore, can be helpful to the churches in Zimbabwe if those in leadership of all entities can take the findings, conclusions, and recommendations seriously. The intervention program that was designed for and tried in two fast-growing churches in district A and district B can be modified for any church situation where retention is to be realized.

APPENDIX A

PROJECT PROPOSAL

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The November 2007 quinquennial report of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe revealed that out of the 186 352 people admitted into membership through baptism, bringing the total membership to 530 286; 42 384 people were removed from membership record because they were either missing or had apostatized. This unacceptably high rate of loss included both new and established members. This loss constituted 7.99% of the quinquennial membership. The report of the previous quinquennial period [1998-2002] also revealed high losses of 5.84% of the then membership. There was no explanation in both reports as to why there was such a high degree of loss of membership. This lack of membership retention is seriously compromising the ability of the church in Zimbabwe to achieve organizational stability, financial health and to accomplish its mission objectives. If nothing is done to close the 'back door', members may continue to lose their connection to the church.

II. STATEMENT OF THE TASK

The task of this project is to discover reasons for the membership loss and to develop programs at local church level that contribute to membership retention and lower the overall Union rate of missing and apostatized members. Such programs will be deliberate, evaluated and reported so that they can be replicated in other entities and communities of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division [SID].

III. JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROJECT

- A. The missing and apostasy rate in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Zimbabwe reflects a serious downturn that necessitates investigation to determine, if possible, its cause.
- B. The cause of this lack of membership retention must be understood in order to suggest possible solutions, and more effective strategies for retention.

IV DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT PROCESS

- A. Theological reflection will centre on five biblical themes/models. First, the example of Jesus method of discipling, and how He revealed love for His disciples [John 15:15], referred to them as friends, and taught them with a lot of patience to love one another [John 13:35]. Second, how the Lord targeted 'outcasts' and those 'looked down upon' [John 4:39, 5:5-11] and empowered them. Third, how Jesus retained those He already had. Fourth, Paul's expertise in training [2 Tim. 2:2], and discipling, e.g. Timothy and Silas and several others. Paul's deliberate follow up programs [e.g. in his second and third missionary journeys] of visiting the places where he had previously evangelized and planted churches.
- B. Review current literature on church growth, whose sources include books, journals, previous dissertations, etc., and study articles that relate to retention and discipleship.
- C. Collect data for analysis from Zimbabwe Union statistical records on baptisms, and the most prevalent types of losses in the past ten years [e.g. 'apostasies' and 'missing'].
- D. Evaluate the growth and percentage losses in membership in the Zimbabwe Union in the ten year period 1997-2007.
- E. Select two districts and in them identify some growing churches and those whose growth is marginal, and evaluate retention strategies and loss of membership for both, including factors that contribute to non-retention.
- F. Carry out a survey through interviews and questionnaires to pastors on the existing retention patterns in the Zimbabwe Union and evaluate their effectiveness
- G. With the help of information from readings made and responses from questionnaires, design programs for member retention

- H. In the two districts selected under 'E' above, identify two churches with the help of the two pastors for those districts, identify a newly baptized group in each of those churches and try out the programs designed under 'G' above, to test its applicability
- I. After every three months, check on the retention rate of the identified groups, thus evaluating the effectiveness of the retention strategies applied, modify or adjust the suggestions as necessary, identify the two groups [April/May 2009]; first evaluation [August/September 2009]; second evaluation [Nov./Dec. 2009]; third and final evaluation [March/April 2010]
- J. A report on the experiences will be made available for sharing with other Adventist churches in Zimbabwe and other entities of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division [SID]
- K. This project should be completed before 30 June 2010.

V. EXPECTATIONS FROM THIS PROJECT

- A. This project will help pastors and local church leaders in the Zimbabwe Union to develop and implement programs that curb or reduce membership loss
- B. The project will contribute to a transformed church growth vision for membership retention in the congregations willing to participate in the programs
- C. The project will provide a lasting new life of discipleship for the Zimbabwean congregations in all its churches
- D. The project will help me develop my leadership and equipping skills as a union officer in charge of evangelism and church growth
- E. The project will provide strategies for other pastors and local church leaders to guide their members to effective relational community, genuine discipling and ministry, which will result in members being aware that retention has to do with God's people loving one another [John 13:35]

- F. This project will help the Zimbabwe Union and its congregations to attain, or realize sustained church growth by forming relational communities that foster membership retention.

VI. PROPOSED TITLE OF THE PROJECT

Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Membership Retention In the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe.

VII. PROPOSED PROJECT OUTLINE

A. Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem
2. Purpose of the Project
3. Definition of Terms
4. Limitations of the Project
5. Methodology

B. Chapter 2: Theological Reflection on Member Retention

1. Jesus approach: Jesus Relational Ministry as a model for Church Growth
2. Multiplication of Discipleship as core to Local Church Mission
3. A Biblical View of Equipping Pastoral Leadership
4. Member Retention through discipling.

C. Chapter 3: Literature Review

1. Biblical Approach to Member retention with special focus on Jesus and the apostle Paul
2. Developing a culture that does not end with evangelism, but looks beyond, to retention
3. How to develop programs that will increase relational evangelism, equipping of pastoral leadership and discipleship in Zimbabwean congregations.

D. Chapter 4: Analysis of Church Growth Patterns in Zimbabwe

1. SDA Church Growth in Zimbabwe for the ten-year period [1997-2007]
 2. The evangelistic Strategy Employed in Zimbabwe
 3. Needs of members in the SDA congregations in Zimbabwe
 4. Concerns and suggestions from apostate individuals.
- E. Chapter 5: Summary, Evaluation, Conclusion and Recommendations
- F. Appendix
1. Sample Interview Questions and Questionnaires
 2. Extracts from Union quinquennial session report 14-17 November 2007
- G. Bibliography

APPENDIX B

LETTERS AUTHORIZING THE RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED

SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH
ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE

NATIONAL
HEADQUARTERS

41 Linbury Road, Suburbs
P.O. Box 573, Harare,
Zimbabwe
TEL: 00263 9 2209102001
FAX: 00263 9 220908
E-Mail: info@zcu.adventist.org

To whom it may concern:

Ref: **AUTHORISATION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH**

This letter serves to confirm that Pastor Richard Sithole has been granted permission to conduct his Doctoral research project in Zimbabwe Union Conference without reservation.

We hope his findings will also add value to our organization in terms of mission, vision and strategic goals.

Sincerely yours,

Evans Muvuti
PRESIDENT
ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE

EM/cm

114 HERBERT CHITEPO STREET
P.O. Box 2450
BULAWAYO
ZIMBABWE
TELEPHONES: 76621/2, 881235
FAX: 60306
E-MAIL: wzc@teliconet.co.zw

WEST ZIMBABWE CONFERENCE

8 July 2008

Institutional Review Board
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-033S
Michigan
USA

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The West Zimbabwe Conference welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with Pastor Richard Sithole and Andrews University in his DMin Project Dissertation entitled: "Assessing Retentions Patterns of membership, and Implementing strategies for Retentions in Zimbabwe Union Conference". He has permission to conduct surveys and interviews in churches and among members of our Conference.

We will give him all the assistance he requires for him to get any information needed for his Dissertation Project, we also look forward to benefiting through the exercise.

Yours truly

J. Mahlangu
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

WEST ZIMBABWE CONFERENCE OF
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
Bulawayo

JM/ts

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Headquarters: 34-3rd St, P.O. Box 559, Gweru, Zimbabwe, AFRICA
Fax 263-054-25810 email: centcom@adtech.co.zw

Central Zimbabwe Conference

Tel: 263-054-28080/28123

22232/22226

9 July 2008

Institutional Review Board
Andrews University
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-033S
United States of America

To Whom It May Concern:

The Central Zimbabwe Conference welcomes the opportunity to co-operate with Pastor Richard Sithole and Andrews University in his Doctor of Ministry Project Dissertation entitled, "Assessing Retention Pattern of Membership, and Implementing Strategies for Retention in Zimbabwe Union".

He has permission from us to conduct surveys and interviews in churches and among members of our Conference.

Yours Truly

Jotham Manyakara
President of Central Zimbabwe Conference

JM/lb

Extracts from two quinquennial reports: One ending 30th September 2002 and another ending in September 2007. These, as shown below, reveal both significant growth as well as the most prevalent losses during the two five-year periods.

SECOND CONSTITUENCY MEETING

OF THE

ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE

OF

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

24 - 26 NOVEMBER 2002

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT

COMPILED BY

M CHOGA

Membership gains and losses conference by conference (1997-2002):

CONF	MEMBERSHIP	TOTAL BAPTISM JAN 1998-SEA2002	PROFESSION OF FAITH	TOTAL LETTERS RECEIVED	TOTAL LETTERS GRANTED	DEATHS	APOSTACY	MISSING	TOTAL MEMBERS DROPPED	MEMBERSHIP AS AT 31 DEC 2002
CZC	104,520	56,785	216	3,051	5,810	1,996	4,197	8,197	20,200	145,684
EZC	90,590	46,008	414	1,838	2,870	843	1,156	2,166	7,035	133,206
WZC	63,439	48,821	670	3,289	4,851	699	881	5,722	12,153	102,781
ZUC	1,299	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	259,848	151,614	1,300	8,178	13,531	3,538	6,234	16,065	39,388	381,671

ZIMBABWE UNION CONFERENCE

3rd Constituency Meeting

14 - 17 November 2007

LIFT UP CHRIST

TELL THE WORLD WITHOUT DELAY

Membership Gains and Losses Conference by Conference.

GAINS 2003-2007 MEMBERS DROPPED											
CON FER ENC E	MEMB ERSHI P	TOTAL BAPTIS M JAN- SEP 2002	PRO F OF FAIT H	TOTAL LETTE RS RECEI VED	ADJ UST MEN TS	TOTA L LETT ERS GRAN TED	DEA THS	APOST ASY	MISSI NG	TOTAL MEMBER S DROPPED	MEMBE RSHIP AS AT 31 DECEM BER 2002
CZC	147,312	56,959	336	5,381	4,108	8,811	2,834	850	10,220	2,448	181,235
EZC	133,952	71,948	2,048	3,557	-	4,110	1,760	294	3,822	1,546	199,973
WZC	105,617	57,445	574	5,550	1,697	5,410	889	270	5,223	637	149,078
TOT AL	386,881	186,352	2,98	14,488	5,806	18,331	5,483	1,414	19,265	4,631	530,286

APPENDIX C

GENERAL CONFERENCE APPEAL ON CONSERVING MEMBERSHIP GAINS

reclaim, retain, and engage its members in the mission of the Church.

While the specific response to this appeal will vary from place to place and will reflect cultural diversity that is so evident in the global Church family, certain specifics are universal. For example, an individual's spiritual life must be fed through Bible study and prayer. We also know that to retain new members, the following factors are essential. If one of these factors is missing, the member is weakened, but may survive. If two factors are absent, they almost certainly will leave the fellowship of church members.

1. They must be able to articulate their beliefs.
2. They must have friends within the congregation.
3. They must engage in a personally-meaningful ministry.

Every member, whether or not recently baptized, should be able to experience an atmosphere in which to grow spiritually, to know a sense of belonging and identity, and to use their spiritual gifts in the advancement of mission. Creating such an environment requires more than a program. It necessitates the creation of a loving atmosphere with each member taking a personal interest in others.

Persons who join the Seventh-day Adventist Church come from widely varied backgrounds and experiences. All members are not at the same point of spiritual development. But all should find within church fellowship a place to continue their growth. Peter urges, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:8-10 (NIV)

The following actions will help to bring this into reality:

1. Along with their annual planning and budgeting for evangelism, executive committees and local church boards should assess the membership retention capacity in their territory. This will require careful review of membership care measures along with accession and loss patterns. Analysis of the situation should be followed by deliberate steps to address the circumstances that lie within the church's ability to change.
2. Repeated instructions of basic Bible teaching should be provided for all newly-baptized members in an intentionally-designed follow-up for a period of months after their baptism.

**Conserving
Membership Gains**

Published & Distributed by
SID Secretariat
Printed by Print Factory

3. Ensuring that outreach methods used by the church take into consideration how new members will become integrated into the life of the church family and advance in the pathway of discipleship. Such planning should include the formation of friendships, fellowship in small groups, active participation in witnessing, and recruitment into specific roles and responsibilities as a member of the local congregation.
4. Designing ministry that addresses the developmental and spiritual needs of children, youth, and young adults, affirming their value to the church by training them for, and entrusting them with, responsibility.
5. Making certain that the provision of adequate places of worship is an integral part of the evangelistic initiative which brings people into church fellowship. No programs should be permitted that do not honor this essential requirement.
6. Training members in how to re-connect with those who have discontinued church fellowship. In many cases, the return to fellowship of former members is more challenging to the congregation than the acceptance of new converts. Careful attention is needed to facilitate the healing of

5

Conserving Membership Gains: An Appeal from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 2007

Seventh-day Adventists around the world rejoice in the rapid membership growth of recent years. The Church views this as evidence of Holy Spirit-led movements and a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 14:6, 7). Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church baptized over 5 million people from 2000-2005, membership losses during that time equaled nearly 1.4 million. Current indications are that annual membership losses, for reasons other than death, equal approximately 28 percent of membership accessions. Some membership loss occurs among recent converts, however, this tragic outcome is not limited to new members.

Members leave Seventh-day Adventist Church fellowship for a variety of reasons. It is unrealistic to expect the Church to reach a point where the membership retention rate is 100 percent. This, however, should not excuse the Church from consciously creating and maintaining a nurturing environment for all members. Research on why members leave Seventh-day Adventist Church fellowship suggests that social and relational factors are much more significant than disagreement with denominational teachings. In fact, many who leave denominational fellowship remain supportive of

Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and even maintain Church practices for some time following their departure.

The reasons most frequently cited by persons who leave local church fellowship are found in the realm of relationships, the absence of a sense of belonging, and the lack of meaningful engagement in the local congregation and its mission. Therefore, the loss of members for these reasons should be preventable.

Seventh-day Adventists understand that last-day events will be accompanied by multiplied thousands turning to God, seeking spiritual foundations for life, and identifying with a community of believers that holds fast to biblical teaching. Church members and leaders around the world continue to place great emphasis on evangelism and church growth believing that even greater and more rapid membership growth lies just ahead.

To prepare the Church for this large influx of new members, to reclaim members who have left, and to prevent current membership losses, the General Conference Executive Committee voices an appeal for members and leaders everywhere to give renewed emphasis to the matter of membership retention and reclamation. This involves understanding the reasons for membership loss in each local church and focusing on how to develop the capacity of the church to attract,

2

relationships and the realization, between persons, of the reconciliation that flows from the forgiveness and acceptance received through Jesus Christ.

The General Conference Executive Committee praises God for the rapid growth that is taking place in many areas. Evangelism is the mission of the Church. Leaders and members are commended for making this the priority in planning and budgeting. This we must continue and, while so doing, demonstrate the loving concern of the Good Shepherd for His sheep who may have strayed.

6

APPENDIX D

SURVEYS/QUESTIONNAIRES TO PASTORS, ELDERS,
REGULAR MEMBERS, AND FORMER MEMBERS

Zimbabwe Union Conference
Interview Guide for Pastors/Elders

Subject: Analysis of Church Growth Strategies in Zimbabwean Congregations

1. What church growth strategies do you view as prevalent in Zimbabwe?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Which ones do you view as most effective?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Suggest/recommend other strategies that can be used for outreach in the Zimbabwean congregations?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. What in your view are the most prevalent retention strategies in Zimbabwe?

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Which ones have you tried in your church/district and found most effective?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Which ones, if any, have not worked? Explain.

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. Suggest/recommend any other retention strategies that can be effective if tried on the above congregations?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. What elements or tendencies in the local church do you view as destructive to retention?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. What do former members state as their reasons for leaving the church? Is it doctrine, attitudes, lack of love among members or just lack of interest, or were they mistreated?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. What do they say could be done to reclaim them?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

11. If given a church that lacks retention, what strategies would you employ to introduce, or activate retention?

Why?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

End

RESPONSES

QUESTION 3: Other strategies that pastors/elders recommend/suggest can be used for Outreach

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Small Groups evangelism	42%	5%
Community Services	35%	24%
Programs to assist orphans	10%	-
Health expos /seminars	10%	-
Caring for the needy	10%	-
Friendship Evangelism	10%	-
Involvement (Fishers Of Men)	10%	-
Door-to-door ministry	10%	-
Nurturing of the newly baptized.	10%	0%
Shopping Centre Evangelism (open air)	2%	-
Helicopter proclamation	1%	0%
Family to Family evangelism	✓	0%
Bible Study	✓	-
Newsletters	✓	-
VOP Lessons	✓	15%
Contextualize the gospel	✓	-
Self Reliance Seminars	✓	6%
Pastor to member ration	✓	-
Cooking school can be an entering wedge	✓	-
Free education	✓	-
Satellite evangelism	✓	-
Distribution of literature	✓	-
Public Campaigns	✓	-
Re-union day	✓	-
DVD Ministry	✓	-
Guest Day	✓	-
Youth socials	✓	-
Family Ministries	✓	-
Ministry to the disabled	✓	-
TV Ministry	✓	-
Teaching Fundamental Beliefs	✓	-
Helicopter proclamation	✓	-
Visitation	20%	-
Free Literature	-	17%
Music	-	17%
Crusades	-	3%
Construction of new churches	10%	-

Key: ✓ Just mentioned y respondents
 - Or 0% not mentioned or/suggested by respondents

QUESTION 4: What in the pastors'/elders' views are prevalent retention strategies in Zimbabwe?

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Spiritual Parenting/mentoring of the newly baptized	45%	5%
Teaching of Fundamental Beliefs	40%	24%
Visitation by pastors / Elders / Deacons	35%	13%
Bible Studies	30%	27%
Small Groups & Sabbath School Action Units	30%	3%
Not responded	20%	20%
Member involvement	15%	-
Reclamation days / Great Re-union days	11%	-
Guest Day program	10%	-
Post baptismal classes	10%	-
Training & Equipping	10%	-
Hospitality / Feeding and clothing the underprivileged	10%	-
Games and Sporting Activities	✓	-
Prayers with members concerned	✓	-
Zonal mid week prayers	✓	-
Revival Efforts	✓	-
Fair disciplinary action	✓	-
Reading of SOP Books	✓	-
Crusades and campaigns	✓	-
Local television	✓	-
Giving aid to members	✓	-
Healing and prayer	✓	-
Nurturing	✓	-
Self help skills	✓	-
Voice of Prophecy	✓	-
Prayer Groups	✓	-
Friendships evangelism	✓	-
Departmental Seminars	✓	3%
Music programs	✓	-
Prayer Breakfasts	✓	-
Potlucks / Youth Camps	✓	-
Various types of campouts	✓	-
Community Services	✓	-
Witnessing	-	10%
Member/participation	-	18%
Media	-	13%
Public evangelism	-	-
Free Literature	-	17%

Music	-	17%
VOP	-	48%
Preaching	-	13%

Key: ✓ Just mentioned y respondents
- Or 0% not mentioned or/suggested by respondents

QUESTION 5: Prevalent retention strategies in Zimbabwe tried at church / district level and found most effective.

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Involvement of the newly baptized	25%	35%
Spiritual Parents	30%	-
Small Groups / Action Units	20%	-
VOP as outreach	20%	-
Family Fun days	20%	-
Visitation by Pastors/Elders/Deacons	20%	-
Guest Day programs	20%	-
Bible Studies	15%	20%
Teaching Fundamental Beliefs	15%	-
Post Baptismal classes	15%	-
Parent / Child Communication	10%	-
Social (Games & Sporting Activities)	10%	-
Youth days	10%	-
Members involvement	10%	-
Group evangelism	10%	-
Prayer with members in general	✓	-
Community Service	✓	-
Honorary days for the aged	✓	-
Zonal Mid-week prayers	✓	-
Revival efforts (meetings)	✓	-
Empowering new members (equipping)	✓	-
Personal evangelism	✓	-
Prayer groups	✓	-
Dorcas Rallies	✓	-
Music Programs	✓	-
Public evangelism	-	17%
VOP	-	13%
Visitations	-	24%
Community services	-	10%

Key: ✓ Just mentioned y respondents
- Or 0% not mentioned or/suggested by respondents

QUESTION 6: Retention Strategies which according to the pastors/elders

have not worked.

	PAS TORS	EL DERS
Left blank (with no comment)	25%	40%
None	20%	-
Lack of competent qualified teachers	10%	-
Post baptismal classes	10%	-
Using untrained spiritual guardians	✓	6%
One day events (lack of continuity)	✓	-
Congregation does not have full ownership of program	✓	3%
Crusades/evangelistic efforts are too many and have lost value	✓	-

Key: ✓ Just mentioned y respondents
 - Or 0% not mentioned or/suggested by respondents

QUESTION 7: Retention strategies which pastors/elders suggest/recommend

can be effective if tried on the above congregations.

Respondents = pastors

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Not responded	30%	30%
Involvement of new members	25%	38%
Members involvement in program	10%	6%
Spiritual parenting to increase	10%	3%
Small group / Action Units	10%	-
Prayer for the newly baptized	10%	-
Teaching of Fundamental Beliefs prior to baptism	10%	3%
Hospitality fellowship meals (socials)	10%	-
Increase pastor / member ration	✓	-
Increase children's programs	✓	-
Avoiding discrimination	✓	-
Hospitality	✓	-
Zonal weekly meetings	✓	-
To increase on people oriented programs, e.g. (music)	✓	-
Bible Studies	✓	-
Testimonies	✓	-
Follow up programs	✓	-
Home visitation	✓	-
Equipping of members	✓	-
Have Master Guide Studies	✓	-
Spiritual gifts seminars	✓	-
More of home visits by pastors/elders	-	6%
Mid-week prayer meetings	-	3%
More of pastors' presence for consultation and equipping	-	10%
Training of Spiritual guardians	-	10%

Key: ✓

Just mentioned y respondents

- Or 0%

not mentioned or/suggested by respondents

QUESTION 8: Factors in a local church viewed by pastors/elders as

destructive to retention

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Lack of hospitality	60%	30%
Clicks	25%	35%
Prejudices / discrimination	15%	13%
Lack of involvement/inactiveness of members	15%	-
Negative attitude/being judgemental	10%	-
Lack of fellowship	10%	-
Lack of spiritual parenting	10%	-
Lack of doctrinal teaching	10%	-
Inadequate outreach programs	✓	-
Hypocrisy	✓	-
Members not living up high Christian standards	✓	-
Harsh treatment old members give to new ones	✓	-
An unfriendly church	✓	-
Weak nurturing programs	✓	-
Unexplained Adventist jargon	✓	-
Lack of deliberate move towards retention	✓	-
Lack of training of spiritual guardian	✓	-
Lack of equipping	✓	-
Gossip	-	6%
Baptizing before teaching	✓	3%
Lack of love from old members (Lack of hospitality, unfriendly/unwelcoming churches)	65%	30%

Key: ✓ Just mentioned y respondents
 - Or 0% not mentioned or/suggested by respondents

QUESTION 9: Pastors'/Elders' view of what former members state as their reasons for leaving the church.

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Lack of love among members	90%	65%
Were mistreated	30%	-
Lack of hospitality and lack of friendship / lack of friends	20%	23%
Too much focus on baptism at the expense of nurturing	-	-
Lack of doctrinal teaching	15%	6%
Lack of orientation	✓	-
Negative attitudes by members	10%	-
Judgmental attitudes by Adventist	10%	-
Violation of church standards by leadership	✓	-
Lack of involvement	✓	-
They say the church has no Holy Spirit	✓	-
Lack of fellowship and warmth	✓	-
The church is too legalistic	-	-
There is no prophesying in the Adventist church	-	✓
Just lost interest/nothing new to learn	✓	✓
Standard of dress too high	-	3%
Unwelcoming attitudes by regular members	-	✓
Too much emphasis on offering	✓	✓

Key: ✓ Just mentioned y respondents
 - Or 0% not mentioned or/suggested by respondents

QUESTION 10: What pastors'/elders' indicate as what former members say could be done to reclaim them.

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Let us love them and pray for them	✓	-
A one-to-one visitation to their home	35%	-
The church should visit them to show that they love them	15%	-
Warmth in the church (fellowship)	10%	-
Living what we preach	10%	-
Adequately teach doctrines	10%	6%
Reconciliation with the mistreated	10%	-
We should assure them that God still loves them	-	✓
Have activities that involve all	✓	-
Allow time for airing grievances	✓	-
Prayer for them (without ceasing)	✓	✓
Inviting them to church programs	✓	-
Invite them for social gatherings (potlucks, etc)	✓	-
Need for spirit of forgiveness	✓	-
Need for acceptance	✓	-
Pray with them	✓	-
Pastoral counselling to be available for them	✓	-
Improved support by members.	✓	-
Members to be more hospitable	-	7%
Coming up with meaningful programs for backsliders	-	3%
Let us adequately teach doctrine	✓	-

Key: ✓ Just mentioned
0% not mentioned/suggested

QUESTION 11: Pastors'/elders' suggestions of programs that they would use

to introduce or activate retention.

	PASTORS	ELDERS
Guest days specifically for former members	✓	-
Introduce on all cell units for mid week prayers	✓	-
Increase visitation by pastor / elders	✓	-
Conduct teaching seminars	✓	-
Involve the newly baptized	✓	✓
Support in time of need	✓	-
Teach Fundamental Beliefs	✓	✓
Educating the church on retention	✓	-
Visitation	✓	20%
Show love for members	✓	✓
VOP Lessons	✓	3%
Training of new preachers / elders	✓	-
Have action Units	✓	-
Have social gatherings occasionally	✓	-
Leaders to live up to required ethical standards	✓	-
Preach message and not attack congregation	-	3%
More prayer sessions	-	3%
To have more of youth oriented programs	-	3%
Promote love	-	6%
Members to be taught how to relate to one another/love one another	✓	✓

Key: ✓ Just mentioned
0% not mentioned/suggested

REGULAR MEMBERS

Zimbabwe Union Conference

Membership Survey Form

NB: All responses to this questionnaire will be treated with anonymity.

Name of Church:..... Conference:.....

Date:.....

Kindly respond to the following statements and as per instruction given, ticking (✓) appropriate section.

A Background Information:

1. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Marital Status: Married ☐ Single ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorcee ☐
Separated ☐
3. Age Range:
18-25 ☐ 26-33 ☐ 34-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐
61 and over ☐
4. Highest Educational Level Reached:
Primary School ☐ Form II ☐ Ordinary Level ☐ Advanced Level ☐
College Education ☐ University Education ☐
5. Length of time in the church
Since Birth ☐ Other:..... days/weeks/months/years

6. Are you a baptized member of the Seventh-Day /Adventist Church?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, when were you baptized?

B In the scale of 1 to 5, were 1 indicates 'cold' and 5 indicates 'very warm', state:

1. What your major attraction to the Adventist Church was?	1	2	3	4	5
I. Born in an Adventist Family					
II. Doctrine					
III. Warm Fellowship					
IV. Positive attitude of other members					
V. Preaching Service					
VI. Sabbath School Program					
VII. Other (Specify)					

2. What makes you remain an Adventist?	1	2	3	4	5
I. Doctrine					
II. Warm Fellowship					
III. Positive attitude of other members					
IV. Sermons					
V. Born and grew up in Adventism					
VI. Other (Specify)					

3. In your own opinion, Adventists:	1	2	3	4	5
I. Are friendly					
II. Have only a few people they warmly relate to (have a circle of friends)					
III. Are caring					
IV. Are people oriented					
V. Other (specify)					

4. How do you rate the welcome by the following in the church	1	2	3	4	5
I. Ushers					
II. Choristers					
III. Sabbath School leaders					
IV. Elders					
V. Pastor					
VI. Other members					

F. How many people do you know, that have since left the church due to the following:

- (1) Apostasy
- (2) Lack of interest
- (3) To join other faiths
- (4) Other (Specify)

G. What do you see as the major factors that contribute to membership loss?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

H. In your opinion, what should the church do to retain membership?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

I. How many close and warm friends do you have,

- (1) Within this congregation?
- (2) In another Adventist congregation?
- (3) Among non-Adventists?

J. Do you have a personal copy of the following:

(1) Bible	Yes ☐	No ☐
(2) Hymn book	Yes ☐	No ☐
(3) Lesson Quarterly	Yes ☐	No ☐
(4) Adventist Belief Doctrines	Yes ☐	No ☐
(5) Spirit of Prophecy Books	Yes ☐	No ☐

* If yes, give titles of the Spirit of prophecy books that you have?

.....

.....

.....

.....

K. How often do you read the following, other than during the sermon and lesson study?

(1) Bible	daily ☐	once/ week ☐	occasionally ☐	once/month ☐	not at all ☐
(2) Lesson Quarterly	daily ☐	once/ week ☐	occasionally ☐	once/month ☐	not at all ☐
(3) Spirit of Prophecy Books	daily ☐	once/ week ☐	occasionally ☐	once/month ☐	not at all ☐
(4) Denominational History	daily ☐	once/ week ☐	occasionally ☐	once/month ☐	not at all ☐

L. Which programs do you like most:	1	2	3	4	5
Sabbath School					

Lesson Discussion					
Preaching Service					
Witnessing Programs					
Other (Specify)					

N. List at least five programs that would spiritually enrich you more if they were either modified or introduced (Indicate program, tick appropriate place and state reason or comment)

Program	To be introduced	To be modified	Reason/ Comments
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Responses to Survey Form (regular members of the church)

PART A: Background Information

	District A		District B	
	Church A1	Church A2	Church B1	Church B2
1. Gender:				
Male	67%	60%	40%	33%
Female	33%	40%	60%	67%
2. Marital status:				
Married	20%	60%	40%	40%
Single	66%	33%	53%	33%
Widowed	7%	0%	7%	20%
Divorced	7%	7%	0%	7%
Separated	0%	0%	0%	0%
3. Age Range:				
18 – 25yrs	20%	7%	20%	20%
26 – 33yrs	53%	7%	34%	20%
34 – 40yrs	20%	20%	20%	13%
41 – 50yrs	7%	46%	13%	13%
51 – 60yrs	0%	13%	13%	20%
61 and over	0%	7%	0%	0%
4. Highest Education :				
Primary School	13%	13%	0%	0%
Form 2	0%	0%	7%	7%
Ordinary level	60%	7%	27%	13%
Advanced level	7%	0%	13%	7%
College	13%	53%	33%	13%
University	7%	27%	20%	60%
5. Length of time in the church				
Less than 1 year	7%			
1 – 5 years	20%			
6 – 10 years	7%			
11 – 19 years	0%			
20 years	7%			
N.B: since birth	60%	60%	53%	60%
6. Baptized	100%	100%	100%	93%
Not baptized	0%	0%	100%	7%

PART B

In the scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates 'cold' and 5 indicates 'very warm', state:

1. What respondent's major attraction to the Adventist church was:

	By birth	Doctrine	Warm fellowship	Positive Attitude	Preaching service	SS Program	Other Specify
Church A1	57%	73%	57%	85%	69%	59%	0%
Church A2	68%	100%	56%	47%	76%	61%	0%
Church B1	56%	83%	72%	64%	64%	64%	Music 33%
Church B2	67%	83%	48%	72%	80%	69%	Music 13%

2. What makes respondent remain Adventist?

	Doctrine	Warm fellowship	Positive Attitude	Preaching service	Born Adventist	Other (Specify)
Church A1	90%	59%	63%	69%	48%	23% - Spirit of prophecy
Church A2	100%	79%	52%	81%	48%	0%
Church B1	83%	67%	44%	51%	48%	45% - Music
Church B2	95%	67%	75%	80%	52%	0%

3. In respondent's opinion, Adventist are:

	Friendly	Have only few friends they warmly relate to	Are caring	Are people oriented	Other specify
Church A1	60%	47%	49%	41%	5% - are proud
Church A2	51%	52%	63%	52%	25% - disciplined
Church B1	61%	53%	55%	53%	20% - loving but rather shy to go and make friends
Church B2	72%	45%	75%	73%	

4. How does respondent rate the welcome by the following in the church?

	Ushers	Choristers	Sabbath School leaders	Elders	Pastors	Other members
Church A1	79%	55%	60%	56%	55%	44%
Church A2	48%	51%	73%	53%	59%	45%
Church B1	67%	63%	72%	64%	75%	41%
Church B2	69%	69%	77%	73%	87%	53%

C. How many people does respondent know to have left the church due to the following?

	Apostasy	Lack of interest	To join other faiths	Other Specify
Church A1	16	45	53	16 – Marriage to unbeliever and visit Adventist church once in a while
Church A2	9	5	11	10 – to form own church 1 – marriage to non-Adventist 3 – working on Sabbath
Church B1	13	33	20	10 – peer pressure 1 – no support from members
Church B2	22	9+	20	0

N.B. Comments such as many, very few, once, family, handful on other responses are difficult to quantify although it is an indication that members know a good number that have left, and sometimes even the reasons for leaving. If the church felt the need to follow-up, some members have the information.

CHURCH A1

D. *What respondents see as the major factors that contribute to membership loss?*

1. Lack of effective leadership
2. Boring afternoon programs
3. Lack of visiting by other members (to the newly baptized)
4. No P A System (speakers have to strain their voices)
5. Dress code
6. Failure to understand doctrines (e.g.) 10 commandments, Sabbath
7. Belief that there is no Holy Spirit (no prophesying, speaking in tongues.
8. Discrimination
9. Discipline not properly administered
10. Lack of teaching and nurturing
11. Loneliness
12. Ill treatment by members of the church
13. Conflicts within the church
14. Lack of involvement
15. Marriage with unbelievers
16. Lack of interest
17. Lack of 'healing power' in the Adventist church
18. No food handouts like in the Catholic
19. No assistance of any kind, (e.g.) paying fees
20. Lack of caring

CHURCH A2

D. *What is seen as major factors that contribute to membership was:*

- Failure to nurse the weak
- Lack of love and concern for one another
- Failure to love, nurture and care for the newly baptized
- Failure to accommodate new members
- Poor strategy of handling youth
- Dull programs for youth/youth crave excitement
- Failure to get handouts from the church
- Migration to other countries
- Working on the Sabbath
- Marriage outside the church
- Deficiency in doctrinal foundation
- Dress code too high/doctrines too hard to abide by
- Extra marital affairs
- Vegetarian reform (holier than thou attitude)
- Unfriendly members
- Failure to find friends to associate with/lack of fellowship
- Failure to follow up on missing members
- Failure to live what they preach
- Poverty/complex/segregation

CHURCH B1

D. *What do respondents see as the major factors that contribute to membership loss?*

- No follow-up (on people who have been baptized)
- Failure to recognize people who need love, care and support
- Neglect of those who need the love care and support.
- Grading each other (classes)
- Lack of friendliness
- Have pre-baptismal lessons
- Change of residence
- Lack of reading culture
- Working on Sabbath and other such commitments
- Family issues (probably spouse belonging to another church)
- Failure to integrate in the Adventist society
- Tendency to cause newcomer to feel lonely or left out
- Programs are group oriented
- Personal needs are at times overlooked
- Lack of nurturing after baptism
- Shortage of warm welcome
- Peer pressure from outside
- Baptizing before teaching the truth (help them understand)
- Pretence which only prior to a new member's baptism

CHURCH B2

D. *What respondents see as factors that contribute to membership loss?*

1. Inadequate nurturing: (ineffective, not enough)	7%
2. No nurturing:	33% ^m
3. Some programs are boring	13%
4. No comment	13%
5. Non-acceptance	13%
6. Lack of caring attitude	7%
7. No love and no friendship-but big on doctrine and biblical knowledge	
8. Not very tolerant or accommodating	
9. Baptizing too early	20%
10. Mass baptism	7%
11. Lack of or no follow-up after baptism	13%
12. Poor welcome	7%
13. Language problem	7%
14. No afternoon programs	7%
15. How disciplinary measures are handled (administered)	7%
16. Poor hospitality	7%
17. Gossip	7%

NB: Celebration of baptism lasts only for a day

Hugs, warm welcome seem to have end by baptism
Poor afternoon programs
Gossip
Rushing baptism before learning (before they learn)

Church A1

E. In respondent's opinion, what should the church do to retain members?

1. Have effective leaderships
2. Have a P A System
3. Old members to do visitation to the newly baptized (follow up programs)
4. Love and care for one another
5. Leaders to research before they preach/teach (avoid sermons that are empty)
6. Insist on prayer for one another among members
7. Insist on Spiritual guardianship plan
8. Members to be friendly to each other
9. To help those in need
10. Involvement in activities
11. Insist on a reading culture
12. Avoid conflicts
13. Nurturing
14. Change leadership annually
15. Reduce dictatorship
16. Do Bible Studies with new members
17. Promote and fund AY Club

Church A2

E. What the church should do to retain members:

- Teach doctrine
- Live exemplary lives
- Faithfulness to biblical standards
- Nurture new baptized/make follow ups
- Warm fellowship/family hood even for unknown people
- Warm greeting to everyone/notice everyone
- Exercise love for everyone
- Visit new baptized
- Involve new baptized in the programs
- Bible study programs for everyone
- Empower members with relevant survival skills
- Have social activities (for people to get to know each other/become friends
- VOP
- Cultivate approachability in the church
- Present biblical truths without disturbances
- Run training programs for all (new and old members)
- Engage the church in outreach programs

Church B1

E. *In your opinion, what should the church do to retain members?*

- We have to show them love which is the true character of God
- We should educate them on what it means to be an Adventist
- Compile a register of backsliders
- Follow-up visits (phone and pray with them), visit them in their homes from time to time.
- Pray for them
- Correct what we are not doing right
- Involve them in discussion topics
- Make the church a fulfiller of people's needs both economic and spiritual
- Warm welcome
- Weekly meetings
- Visit them and enroll them in bible study
- Be creative/innovative so as to adapt to change without sacrificing principle.

E. Respondent's opinion on what should be done by the church to retain members.

1. Have programs that accommodate everyone (widows, single parents, divorced)	20%
2. Fellowship activities	20%
3. Have programs that place emphasis on doctrine	13%
4. Must have follow-up on backsliders	20%
5. Have programs that meet people's needs	13%
6. Improve on hospitality	7%
7. Have programs that nurture the newly baptized	33%
8. Preach through singing and witnessing	7%
9. No comment	7%

Church B2

E. Respondent's opinion on what should be done by the church to retain members.

10. Have programs that accommodate everyone (widows, single parents, divorces)	20%
11. Fellowship activities	20%
12. Have programs that place emphasis on doctrine	13%
13. Must have follow-up on backsliders	20%
14. Have programs that meet people's needs	13%
15. Improve on hospitality	7%
16. Have programs that nurture the newly baptized	33%
17. Preach through singing and witnessing	7%
18. No comment	7%
-

Church B1

G. Does respondent have a personal copy of the following?)

		Yes	No	
1	Bible	93%	7%	
2	Hymn Book	87%	13%	
3	Lesson Quarterly	53%	47%	
4	Bible Doctrine Manual	47%	53%	
5	SOP Books	60%	40%	

If yes, give titles of SOP books that you have.

Patriarchs and Prophets	5	No comment	8
Gems		Desire of Ages	4
The Great Controversy	8	Messages to Young People	
Prophets and Kings	2	Steps to Christ	4
Adventist Home		The Acts of the Apostles	2
Daniel Reveals the Future		Revelation of things to come	
Ministry of Healing	1	Testimonies, vol. 1	9
Christ Object lessons		Early Writings	
Christian Service		Amazing Facts	
Guides		<u>Ellen White Complete Set on CD (2007)</u>	

Church A2

Do respondents have a personal copy of the following?

	Yes	No	No Indication
1. Bible	93%		7%
2. Hymn Book	73%	20%	7%
3. Lesson Quarterly	73%	20%	7%
4. Adventist Belief Doctrines	60%	33%	7%
5.. Spirit of Prophecy Books	67%	27%	6%

NB: If yes, give titles of SOP books you have :

Nil	5	Desire of Ages	5
Early Writings	1	Great Judgement Day	1
Patriarch and Prophets	5	Last Day Events	1
Daniel Reveals the Future	1	Messages to Young People	1
Thoughts from Mount of Blessings	1	Revelation of things to come	1
Fundamental Beliefs	1	Adventist Home	6
Steps to Christ	6	The three volumes	2
Acts of the Apostles	2	The Bible Speaks	1
Prophets and Kings	1	Great Controversy	4
Christian Service	1	Counsels on Stewardship	1

Church B2

Do you have a personal copy of the following?

		Yes	No	
1	Bible	87%	13%	
2	Hymn Book	73%	27%	
3	Lesson Quarterly	47%	53%	
4	Adventist Belief Doctrine	67%	33%	
5	SOP Books	60%	40%	

If yes, give titles of SOP books that you have.

Patriarchs and Prophets	5	No comment	8
Gems		Desire of Ages	4
The Great Controversy	8	Messages to Young People	
Prophets and Kings	2	Steps to Christ	4
Adventist Home		The Acts of the Apostles	2
Daniel Reveals the Future		Revelation of things to come	
Ministry of Healing	1	Testimonies, vol. 1-9	
Christ Object lessons		Early Writings	
Christian Service		Amazing Facts	
Guides		<u>Ellen White Complete Set on CD (2007)</u>	

Church A1

G. Do respondents have a personal copy of the following?

	Yes	No
3. Bible	93%	13%
4. Hymn Book	87%	27%
5. Lesson Quarterly	53%	53%
6. Adventist Belief Doctrines	47%	33%
7. Spirit of Prophecy Books	60%	40%

NB: If yes, give titles of SOP books you have :

Patriarchs & Prophets	5	No comment	8
Gems		Desire of Ages	4
Great Controversy	8	Daniel Reveals the Future	
Messages to Young People		Revelation of things to come	
Steps to Christ	4	Acts of the Apostles	2
Christ Object Lesson		Testimonies vol 1	9
Prophets and Kings	1	Christian Service	
Ministry of Healing			
Guides		Amazing facts	
Early writings		E White complete on CD (2007)	

Church A2

H. How often do respondents read the following other than during the sermon and lesson study?

	Daily	Once a week	Occasionally	Once month a	Not at all
Bible	53%	13%	27%	7%	
Lesson Quarterly	33%	40%	7%	7%	13%
SOP Books	13%	20%	33%	7%	27%
Denominational History	7%	7%	32%	7%	47%

How often they read the following books?

- Bible 73%
- Lesson Quarterly 53%
- SOP 7%
- Denominational History 7%

Church B1

H. How often do you read the following other than during sermon and lesson study?

	Daily	Once a week	Occasionally	Once month a	Not at all	No comment
Bible	53%		40%		7%	
Lesson Quarterly	47%	47%	20%	13%	6%	
SOP Books	13%	20%	47%	73%	7%	
Denominational History			47%	80%	20%	

Church A2

Programs respondents like most

- Sabbath School 95%
- Lesson Quarterly 79%
- Preaching Service 79%
- Witnessing Programs 72%
- Other (specify)
- Bible Study on prophecy 7%
- Youth lessons
- Music 27%
- Family Ministries

Church B1

Which program do you like best?

1. Sabbath School	69%
2. Lesson Quarterly	65%
3. Preaching Service	73%
4. Witnessing Programs	49%
5. Other (Specify)	

Church B2

Which Programs do you like most?

i) Sabbath School	69%
ii) Lesson Discussion	65%
iii) Preaching Service	73%
iv) Witnessing Programs	49%
v) Other (Specify)	

Church A1

Which Programs do you like most?

vi) Sabbath School	71%
vii) Lesson Discussion	73%
viii) Preaching Service	81%
ix) Witnessing Programs	59%
x) Other (Specify)	40%

FORMER MEMBERS

Zimbabwe Union Conference

Interview Questions and Questionnaires for assessing factors on former members [those who have been dropped and those who have left the church] (up to ten respondents)

NB: All respondents to the following will be treated with strict confidentiality

PART A: Interview Questions

1. Why are you no longer a member of the Adventist Church and what do you currently do for your spiritual life?.....

.....
.....

2. What is your current view of:

The Adventist church and its programs?.....

.....
.....

Attitudes of Adventists towards you, in general?.....

.....
.....

3. What are the main things you found lacking in the people, and in the programs of the Adventist church.....

.....

.....

4. What in your own opinion, should the church do:

a) To improve on retention of its members.....

.....

.....

b) Successful reclamation.....

.....

.....

Other (Specify).....

.....

.....

PART B

MAJOR ATTRACTION TO ADVENTISM

1. For what length of time were you an Adventist?

1) Less than a year?

2) 1-5 years

3) 6-10 years

4) 11-20 years

2. How old were you when you joined the Adventist church?

1) 8-14 years

2) 15-19 years

3) 20-29 years

- 4) 30-49 years
- 5) 50-59 years
- 6) 60-69 years
- 7) 70 years and above

3. How many close friends did you have outside the church during your time of membership?

- 1) one
- 2) two to four
- 3) five or more
- 4) none

How many.....

4. What are the main things lacking in the programs and the people in the Adventist church.....

.....

.....

5. How many friends did you have in the Adventist Church then? (those you saw at least once

a month)

- 1) one
- 2) two to four
- 3) five or more
- 4) none

How many.....

6. On a scale 1 to 5, and in your view, do you see any of the following as having existed in the Adventist church(es) you associated with?

Choose one of these responses
1= strongly disagree
2= moderately disagree
3= neither agree nor disagree
4= moderately agree
5= strongly agree

1)	The Adventist church is God's remnant	1	2	3	4	5
2)	The fellowship is good and strong	1	2	3	4	5
3)	I experienced love from members	1	2	3	4	5
4)	Church standards are based on the Bible	1	2	3	4	5
5)	Belief in all church doctrines	1	2	3	4	5
6)	The church's teachings and practice match	1	2	3	4	5
7)	Worship and the church's programs met					
	people's needs	1	2	3	4	5

7. What is the possibility that you might come back into church membership, and what factors that would lead to that?.....

.....

.....

8. Have you ever been visited or contacted by the church since you were dropped or left the church?

If so, state by who, how many times and what were the circumstances?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

END

1)	The Adventist church is God's remnant	1	2	3	4	5
2)	The fellowship is good and strong	1	2	3	4	5
3)	I experienced love from members	1	2	3	4	5
4)	Church standards are based on the Bible	1	2	3	4	5
5)	Belief in all church doctrines	1	2	3	4	5
6)	The church's teachings and practice match	1	2	3	4	5
7)	Worship and the church's programs met people's needs	1	2	3	4	5

7. What is the possibility that you might come back into church membership, and what factors that would lead to that?.....

.....

.....

8. Have you ever been visited or contacted by the church since you were dropped or left the church?

If so, state by who, how many times and what were the circumstances?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

END

Responses from interviews and questionnaires to former members

PART A – Interview Questions

Question 1: Reasons why the former members left the Adventist church

- a) 37% of the respondents said they went to join other faiths due to the following reasons:
- Marriage – spouse in another faith
 - Joined a Pentecostal church whose prayers for them positively
 - To join parents in another faith
- b) 23% indicated that they lost interest because:
- Church programs are not interesting
 - No one cared enough for me
 - Lack of involvement
- b) 11% indicate hurtful practices by Adventists made them leave, e.g.,
- a. Gossip from one who brought me to Adventism
 - b. Some Adventists are fake/dishonest

- c. Lack of support when bereaved (not supported in 1997)
- d. Negative attitudes towards people
- c) 6% say they were baptized while too young and therefore did not know the demands of the new life
- d) 6% have dual attendance in an Adventist and non-Adventist church, but now have decided to remain in the other church
- e) 6% working on Sabbath
- f) 6% = Now differ in the interpretation of some scripture
- g) 3% = gone to the diaspora
- h) 3% = my hose was full of evil spirits and the church did not take this seriously enough to help chase them away
- i) 3% = had gone to train as a witchdoctor; had been there for eight years. Now that I have completed , I plan to return

MAJOR ATTRACTION TO ADVENTISM

Questions 2 and 3: What is the respondent's view on the following?

- a) Programs
 - 36% programs are good, educative and character building
 - 9% programs are conducted in a spiritual way
 - 6% enjoyable
 - 6% satisfying
 - 3% Well organized
 - 6% programs are dull and outdated
- b) Attitudes of Adventists towards former members are:
 - 14% = good
 - 11% = hatred towards former members
 - 9% = gossiping
 - 6% = they look down upon other people
 - 3%= lack visitations

- 3% = polite
 - 3% = proud
 - 3% = few are cheerful
 - 3% = display caring and loving attitudes
 - 3% = hard to associate with
- c) Things that respondents found lacking from church members and programs
- Lack of love for one another = 14%
 - Live hypocritically = 14%
 - They have no hospitality = 11%
 - Do not greet strangers = 6%
 - They lack fellowship = 6%
 - Proud = 3%
 - Lack of kindness = 3%
 - Lack of involvement of others = 3%
 - Some are not friendly = 3%,

NB: Question 2: Programs

Commenting on the Adventist church and its programs, interestingly, former members are very positive and appreciative of them. 11% describe them as good, educative and molding; 9% say they are conducted in a spiritual way. Some of the qualities that are attributed to these programs are that they are enjoyable, satisfying, and well organized. Only a very small percentage of respondents describe the programs as dull and outdated. One would therefore safely say that most former members have no problems with Adventist programs. The only problem that is cited as negative is some attitudes that are viewed as negative, see Appendix for details.

Question 3 seeks to find out what is lacking in people and the programs of the Adventist church. 14% say there is lack of love for one another; another 14% say

members in the Adventist church live hypocritically, and 11% say there is no hospitality.

This section is crucial in that it deals with issues of relationships without which it would not be possible for them to remain in attached to a group.

WHAT MAKES RESPONDENTS REMAIN ADVENTISTS

Question 4 What in respondent's opinion should the church do to improve on:

Retention of its members	Successful reclamation	Other (Specify)
Give advice on spiritual life	▶ No comment	No comment
Regular visits to be made to encourage		
Members to be spiritually minded Consider each as equal	▶ Promote unity	People t be exemplary
Tell the truth from the bible.	▶ No comment	No comment
No comment	▶ No comment	No comment
Study the bible	▶ No comment	Find ways of helping the aged
Accommodate the youth (introduce dancing music)	▶ Fallen heroes must be welcomed without stigma attached.	No comment
Continue to love and be kind Stop being competitive and being proud		Reach out to other people
To be friendly		
Print materials in vernacular (local language)	▶ Regular visits	Most things are done in English
Be as a family		Be helpful to each other
Be loving and caring Avoid discrimination	▶ Improve on communication	-

Improve o warmth especially on welcome to visitors	▶ Avoid tribalism	
They should change their behavior and attitude towards others. Visitation	▶ Teach	No comment
Strengthen their faith in Jesus		
Monitor the growth of the youth closely	▶ Support for the needy	Establish scholarship program
Avoid gossip		
Greet everyone after service		
Involvement		
Have people oriented programs – singing & praises		Humanitarian programs (poor & orphans to be cared for.)
Prayer groups needed		
Improve on fellowship	▶ Involvement	
Members to be exemplary	▶ To testify by deeds	
		Leadership to allow for others' _/suggestive

IN RESPONDENTS' OPINION, ADVENTISTS ARE

QUESTION NUMBER 6

6. On a scale 1 to 5, and in your view, do you see any of the following as having existed in the Adventist Church(es) you associated with?

Choose one of these responses

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = moderately agree
- 5 = strongly agree

- 1) The Adventist Church is God's remnant
- 2) The fellowship is good and strong
- 3) I experienced love from members
- 4) Church standards are based on the Bible
- 5) Belief in all church doctrines
- 6) The church's teachings and practice match
- 7) Worship and the church's programs met people's needs

	Remnant	Fellowship	Love	Biblical Standards	Doctrines	Teaching Matching practices	Relevance to people's needs
Strongly disagree	3%	1 7%	20%	9%	6%	26%	17%
Moderately disagree	3%	9 %	3%	3%	9%	14%	3%
Indifferent	3%	1 4%	26%	3%	11%	6%	17%
Moderately agree	11%	2 0%	20%	9%	14%	20%	20%
Strongly agree	54%	2 3%	14%	60%	31%	14%	20%
No comment	26%	1 7%	17%	17%	29%	20%	23%

HOW RESPONDENTS RATE THE WELCOME BY VARIOUS
LISTED GROUPS IN THE CHURCH

QUESTION NUMBER 7

7. What is the possibility that you might come back into church membership, and what factors that would lead to that?

Possibility of coming back to church	Factors that would lead to this
Can come back	If I frequent efforts and understand the preaching
I still come to church	Want to stop smoking
Not now	Satisfied with current faith
Will come back	Was Adventist at 8 years old
I might come back	It is the only church I really know
I might come back	If I get visitations from friendly members
No!	No comment
I need to come back	As long as my husband belongs to another faith I have to follow
No comment	Music
No comment	-
No possibility of coming back	Born a Brethren in Christ
I can come at any time	-
Yes	Provided my problem is solved
I will come back to Hillside	Attending another Adventist Church in Nyamandlovu
No comment	Lack of recognition of personal need
No – now a member of another church	See no reason of coming back
No!	Parents are non Adventists
No comment	-
The commitments that stop me from coming to church will soon be over – Then I will come	
I might come back	If they stop discriminating on worships
Not at the moment	God still accepts me
Yes	As long as there is assistance in church building
The comment was “interesting”	
Have started going back to church – but not yet settled	
Not at the moment	Still comfortable at the church where I am

The possibilities are slim	Until there is no dishonesty
Yes I was born and bred Adventist.	
Not at all	

SUMMARY OF QUESTION 7

Possibilities that former members would come back

- No! Not at all! Not now! = 25%
- I might come back = 20%
- Will come back = 6%
- Need to come back = 3%
- No comment = 11%

Factors that would cause them to come back

- ✓ If I frequent efforts
- ✓ If I am visited
- ✓ If spouse comes with me

Other comments

- ✚ I see no reason for coming back
- ✚ Once I stop smoking, I will come.
- ✚ Still comfortable at the current church.
- ✚ Until there is no dishonesty in church.
- ✚ Born a Brethren in Christ.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE KNOWN BY RESPONDENTS TO
HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH DUE TO THE FOLLOWING

QUESTION 8

8. Have you ever been visited or contacted by the church since you were dropped or left the church? If so, state by who, how many times and what were the circumstances?

Members = 34% 7 times
 Many times
 Many times
 Many times

Under what circumstances?

- Invitation to come to church
- Just a visit
- Bible Study
- If visited by friendly members

QUESTIONS 7 AND 8

Question numbers 7 and 8 are open ended questions as a result there are numerous responses. Only those relevant to the study have been selected for analysis, especially the top 3 – 4 in quantity.

Question 7 is checking the possibilities of the former members coming back to rejoin the church. 25% say they might come back, and 6% say they will come back. The percentage differences on the two are very close, and could be 50/50 if we add the 6% to the second set of respondents. On factors that may cause one to return, it would seem if the church gets in touch through efforts and visitations the person is likely to come.

Question 8 checks on how often the former member has been visited by the church. 43% say they have been visited by friends, other members and elders, while 34% say they have never been visited. The latter shows the need for the church to organize visits to this group.

Although numerous visits are to be reported as been made, the no, and never responses are so high that one would be justified to suggest more visits.

SUMMARY QUESTION 8

Former members

Have you ever been visited / contacted by the church since you were dropped/ left?

Yes! = 43%
 No / Never = 34%
 By whom (a) Elders 11%
 (b) Friend(s) 14%
 (c) Members 34% 7 times
 Many times
 Many times
 Many times

Under what circumstances?

Invitation to come to church
 Just a visit

Bible Study

If visited by friendly members

Other comments

I had gone to be trained into being a witch doctor and now can go back to church.
Will stick to Brethren although visited.

APPENDIX E
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

Andrews University

Institutional Review Board

Research Involving Human Subjects

Office of Scholarly Research

Tel: 269-471-6360 ~ Fax: 269-471-6246

INSTRUCTIONS:

Your application will not be processed unless ALL the relevant documentation has been submitted and is legible.

Use this form as a cover sheet and attach to it the following items: (1) An Abstract; (2) the appropriate Research Protocol; (3) an Informed Consent Form (if required); and, (4) Letter of Institutional Consent (Permission from local authority); and, (5) Survey Instrument; and, (6) Other documentation as needed—Cover Letter of Explanation; Written Copy of Verbal Instructions, etc. Submit the required number of full sets (1 set for Exempt; 5 sets for Expedited; and 9 sets for Full Review) to Andrews University, Institutional Review Board, Room 210 Administration Building, Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355.

SUGGESTED CATEGORY OF IRB REVIEW

The investigator(s) should carefully read the Brief Guidelines for Human Subjects Research and discuss with his/her/their advisor and/or department chair the relationship of the present research project to the policies and procedures contained in the above document. The investigator(s) should then request that the research project be considered

by the I.R.B. under one of the categories listed below. Final assignment of the review category is made by the I.R.B. The frequency of I.R.B. review action is noted by the respective review category.

☐ Exempt from Full IRB ☐ Expedited IRB Review

☐ Full IRB Review

Review [Weekly Review]

[Monthly Review]

[Monthly Review]

No risk/minimal risk research:

Submit the appropriate documentation two weeks

Exempt Category Checklist on page 2.
prior to the next Scheduled meeting of the IRB

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PROJECT

Please provide the requested information in the shaded space on the right.

Project Title →	Assessing Retention Patterns of Membership, and Implementing Strategies for Retention in Zimbabwe Union
Academic Dept. of Researcher →	Christian Ministries, Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University
Desired beginning date of Research →	1st September, 2008
Place/Location of Human Subject Involvement in Research →	Zimbabwe
Target Population (Group and Age Range) →	Seventh-day Adventists, Ages 18-60

	E-mail Address of Investigators	Mailing Address of Investigators	Signature of Investigator(s)	Signature Dated	Telephone # of Investigators
Richard Sithole	sitholer@zuc.adventist.org	Zimbabwe Union Conference, P.O. Box 573, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe		09 July 2008	+263(0)11 230 715 +263-9-250047
Name of Advisor	E-mail Address of Advisor	Mailing Address of Advisor	Signature of Advisor	Signature Dated	Telephone # of Advisor
Dr Skip Bell	<u>sibell@andrews.edu</u>	Seventh-day Adventists Theological Seminary			

INVESTIGATOR(S) AGREEMENT

Please note that if we cannot read your handwriting, we cannot guarantee that you will get a response from us.

“I (we) hereby agree to abide by the terms and methodology as outlined in the attached research protocol. I (we) also agree to begin the implementation of this project—if not approved under the exempt category—only after written notification of its approval (valid for one year) has been received. Furthermore, I (we) agree that in cases involving research to be conducted at non-university site(s), such research will commence only after written authorization has been received from an officer of the organization at each site involved and filed with our Office of Scholarly Research.

Notification of any alterations in the attached protocol will be submitted to the Director of the Office of Scholarly Research.

	<p>Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research on regular and special education instruction strategies, (or) Research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or management only.
	<p>Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures, or observation of public behavior UNLESS ALL of the following conditions exist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses are recorded in such a manner that the subjects can be identified directly or through identifying links, and— The responses, if they become known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subject's financial standing, employability, or reputation. <p>Note: The following types of Category 2 Exemptions do NOT apply to research where children (minors) are subjects: Survey Research, Interview Research, Observation of Public Behavior in which an investigator is a participant.</p>
	<p>Research of the type listed in Category 2 which under the above provisions is not exempt but qualifies for exemption if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office, or Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
	<p>Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens and these sources are publicly available, or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a way that the subjects CANNOT be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.</p>
	<p>Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of federal department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Benefit or Service Programs Procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs Possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures Possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.
	<p>Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies if wholesome foods without additives are consumed, or if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe or agricultural, chemical, or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe by FDA or EPA or USDA determination.</p>

—EXEMPT CATEGORY CHECKLIST—

If your proposed research project does not place the subjects at more than minimal risk and is included in one of six categories of research which are exempt from full review under the provisions of the Cod of Federal Regulations for the protection of human subjects from research risk, indicate the category(s) that apply to the proposed project placing a check in the appropriate box below.

Even if exempt from full IRB review, all research projects must make provision for compliance with published guidelines for obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality. Some research listed below, if involving prisoners and/or directed toward pregnant women or other vulnerable populations groups, is not exempt.

In signing this form requesting exempt status, I (we) assure the Institutional Review Board that the only involvement of human subjects will comply fully with the criteria for one of the above exemption categories.							
Principal Investigator's Signature	Date	Co-Principal Investigator's Signature	Date	Co-Principal Investigator's Signature	Date	Co-Principal Investigator's Signature	Date

APPENDIX F

CLOSING THE BACKDOOR—EXTRACT FROM ADVENTIST

Church Works

WORLD REPORT

Radio (AWR) and coordinator of the Tell the World initiative for media-informed Executive Committee members that AWR is adding new languages to its programs in Africa and Asia. The broadcasting organization has also presented the AWR Signal Award to North West and North East Nigeria conferences in recognition of their progressive outreach to Muslims living in their regions, using AWR as the primary outreach tool.

The GC Communication Department now has a podcast of news that averages 350 hits a day, Schoun said. And Adventist News Network has about 6,000 regular subscribers and an additional 7,000 hits a day from nonsubscribers.

The worldwide publishing work is alive and well. Schoun noted that literature evangelists have sold more than 12 million copies of books and magazines and church members have distributed 14 million missionary books and given away free 5 million copies of church magazines during the past year.

The Southern Africa-Indian Ocean and the Euro-Africa divisions have opened two new media centers in their regions to assist in the Hope Channel television outreach. Hope Channel is opening a new channel for Romanian broadcasts and also is working toward opening another channel for China by August 2007.

This is a major development, Schoun said.

GC Women's Ministries director Heather Dawn Small affirmed that women worldwide are committed to

improving the quality of life for women and sharing the love of Jesus by focusing on issues such as literacy, abuse, poverty, and women's workloads.

Women's Ministries believes we need to touch people in their area of greatest need, Small said.

Closing the Back Door

Executive Committee members on Tuesday of the session voted to adopt an appeal from the GC Council on Evangelism and Witness to church leaders and members to curb membership loss.

Presented by GC Vice presidents Lowell C. Cooper and Mark A. Finley, the Council's two-and-a-half-page statement indicated that although more than 3 million people were baptized into the Adventist Church from 2000 to 2005, nearly 14 million members walked out the back door and left the church.

During the last quadrennium's unit divisions began a review of active memberships, Cooper said, resulting in higher than usual membership separations.

Current indications are that annual membership losses for reasons other than death equal approximately 28 percent of membership accessions, and this is not limited to new members, the statement read.

The document cited research suggesting social and relational factors play a much larger role in a person's dissatisfaction with the church rather than disagreement with church doctrine.

The statement suggests new members will most likely remain in the church if they are able to articulate their beliefs, form friendships within the congregation, and engage in ministry. To accomplish this, local church boards should, among other things, review membership care strategies, study membership accession and loss patterns, repeat Bible instruction, develop friendship and small groups with new members, and encourage new members to become involved in church outreach and other activities.

Executive Committee members who spoke to this issue were unanimous in their support of the appeal, however, some questioned how greater attention to member retention can be made part of the culture at the local church level. Suggestions by some participants included establishing an accountability process for local leaders, board members aggressively focusing on designing a discipling oriented church, and cultivating a spirit of true love and concern for others.

We have to have an open heart love for people,

TELL WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY? GC under treasurer Steve G. Rosenfield (left), GC assistant Robert E. Lamm (center), and Heather Dawn Small (right) of GC Women's Ministries held attendees that we need to touch people in their area of greatest need.

APPENDIX G

INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Intervention Program for this project:

The following program was designed in April 2009 for purposes of curbing, or reducing membership loss at local church level. The program was structured as follows:

First step: The pastor of each of the two fast growing churches oriented all members on the importance of member retention in a local church, especially on a loving and caring attitude towards the newly baptized

Second step: The newly baptized were then allowed to choose their own spiritual guardians from mature, seasoned members of the church, and where necessary, the church assisted in the selection

Third step: An initiation program was conducted in which acquaintances and bonding was facilitated between the 'spiritual parent' and the newly baptized. This was a planned Sabbath outing which included a potluck and nature walk

Fourth step: The spiritual guardians were trained on spiritual parenting and nurturing. The training included the following as modeled by Jesus, emulated by Paul, and as suggested by pastors, elders, members of the church and former members in response to surveys and questionnaires

Methods used: *Jesus' and Paul's:*

This program proposes relational method which includes relating to the newly baptized or prospective candidates in a personal way as Jesus did when He mentored His 12 disciples (John 15:12-15)

Practicing unconditional love by crossing racial and social boundaries (Jesus and the apostle Paul were good examples on this)(John 4:, Acts 16:1-5) (Spiritual guardians suggested how love can be actively expressed between themselves and their spiritual children and other members)

Loving one another as self (Romans13:9)(They discussed what this concept entailed)

Loving one another to the extent that love becomes the group's identity (John 13:35) is another concept that was discussed.

Discipling as in Matt 28:19; a concept was defined, followed by the discussion by participants on how a church can achieve discipling..

Equipping (Luke 11:1) through training. Facilitators were invited to come and address the participants on those areas they (the participants) had identified as deficient.

Involvement (Luke 9:1-6, 1 Cor 4:17) Spiritual guardians were challenged to find their spiritual children's areas of interest, and to make deliberate plans to assisting them.

Mentoring/nurturing (John 21:13-18, Acts 16:16-18) (Participants made plans on how they would go about this)

Follow-up was emphasized as in the apostle Paul's second and third missionary journeys Acts 16-18

Other Sources and Literature Used:

Participants were encouraged to use any source that discusses, recommends, or makes relevant reference to member retention.

Outcomes from Surveys and Questionnaires:

N.B. The views of pastors, elders, members and former members helped in the shaping of this program. The program included some of what was suggested in the findings on keeping people interested in church.

Activities in the intervention program fell squarely in the hands of three sets of people: the pastor(s), the members of the church, and spiritual guardians. Following is a breakdown of those activities.

ACTIVITIES IN THE PROGRAM:

i) What is expected of the pastor:

Facilitating the choosing of spiritual guardians, and training them

Having a post baptismal class in a church where bible doctrine will be taught for a period not less than six months

Training of elders on pastoral care and mentoring, on how to orient the newly baptized on Adventist values and lifestyle, and how to do their personal devotion

Training elders on how to monitor attendance and spiritual growth of the newly baptized is an essential element of retention.

ii) What is expected of Members of the Church (This includes church elders)

Planning and conducting an initiation program for the newly baptized

Allowing each newly baptized to choose a spiritual guardian among the already active members

Training members on how to nurture the newly baptized by befriending them, and creating a loving, caring environment for them including, making occasional visits and calls

Equipping the newly baptized with essential tools for spiritual growth, e.g., bible, bible doctrine handbook, Steps to Christ, Desire of ages, and other such books for use by the newly baptized

Involving the newly baptized in church programs such as music, bible studies, youth and children's ministries, hospital visitations and other available activities

Inviting the newly baptized to social functions of the church

Having a monitoring instrument which will be used during periodic checks on whether or not the newly baptized are still attending church, and making follow-ups wherever necessary

iii) What is expected of the Spiritual Guardians?

Befriending their spiritual 'child'

Knowing where they stay and visiting them from time to time to nurture the friendship

Appreciating their coming to church, and making friendly follow-ups when the newly baptized are absent from any church related activity or event

Praying for, and with them occasionally

Attending functions or activities for which their spiritual children extend an invitation

Assisting them, or influencing them to be involved in some church activity. These could be church choir, hospital visitation, or any other that they may have an interest in, or aptitude for.

Readiness to respond to spiritual needs of the newly baptized

Readiness to respond to the questions from the newly baptized, or referring them to someone who is capable of giving them a satisfactory response.

APPENDIX H

EVALUATION INSTRUMENT FOR INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Zimbabwe Union Conference

Evaluation Form (*Intervention Program for church and Spiritual Guardian*)

PART A: To be completed by the pastor/elder of the church

1. *Is the church doing any of the following?*

Allowing the newly baptized to choose a spiritual guardian? (tick appropriate space)

Yes	No

Running a training program for spiritual guardians?

Yes	No

Number of times a new member was visited/ contacted per week: _____

Visitations and calls to the newly baptized per week: _____

Are the newly baptized invited to participate in church social activities (eg) potlucks, games, etc

Yes	No

If yes, specify _____

Equipping: Are the newly baptized taught how to pray, and how to conduct bible studies (etc)?

Yes	No

If yes, specify _____

Are the newly baptized Involved in church programs, e.g., prayer groups, church choir, ushering, etc

Yes	No

If yes, please specify _____

Are the newly baptized trained and involved in witnessing and soul winning programs?

Yes	No

Does the church or spiritual guardian take time to identify new member's areas of interest?

Yes	No

Comment on this. _____

10. Does the church conduct a pre and post baptismal class?

Yes	No

Does the church run orientation/initiation programs for the newly baptized, familiarizing them with the Adventist way of life?

Yes	No

Does the church facilitate the giving of spiritually enriching literature such as the bible doctrine manual, Steps to Christ, and the Desire of Ages, etc to the newly baptized?

Yes	No

Specify _____

PART B: Monthly report to be completed by spiritual guardian:

Name of Spiritual guardian: _____

Contact details _____

Date: _____

1. Have you been a spiritual guardian before? _____

2. Were you trained by the church as a spiritual guardian?

Yes	No

3. How many 'spiritual children' did you have in May 2009? _____

4. How many do you have now? _____

5. Have you done the following as a spiritual guardian?

Befriending their spiritual 'child'?

Yes	No

Knowing where they stay?

Yes	No

Visiting them occasionally and building close acquaintanceship with them?

Yes	No

Appreciating their coming to church?

Yes	No

Praying for, and with them occasionally?

Yes	No

Making a follow up when they are absent from any church event or function,
finding out whether they had, or have any problem?

Yes	No

Attending the functions or activities to which your spiritual children extend an
invitation?

Yes	No

Have assisted them in joining some church activity, e.g., church choir, hospital
visitation, or any in which they might have an interest or talent?

Yes	No

Been ready to respond to their questions, or to identify someone who is capable to give them needed assistance?

Yes	No

Are you missing any of your 'spiritual children? _____

If the answer is yes, then how many? _____ and list their names and contact details. _____

OVERALL Comment ON THE NEWLY BAPTIZED:

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX I
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

Title: Assessing Retention Patterns of Membership, and Implementing
Strategies for Retention in Zimbabwe Union

Purpose of Study: I understand that the purpose of this study is to investigate and recommend to Zimbabwe Union, a membership retention tool that will be used to reduce missing and apostasy rate, which for the last ten years (1997-2007) stands at 33%

Inclusion Criteria: In order to participate, I understand that I must be an adult between the ages of 18 and 60 and of sound mind, and must either currently or at some point in the past been an active participant in a Seventh-day Adventist congregation.

Risks and Discomforts: I have been informed that there are no physical or emotional risks to my involvement in this study.

Benefits/ Results: I accept that I will receive no remuneration for my participation. I will help the researcher and the Seventh-day Adventist Church arrive at a better understanding why there is an increase in missing and apostasy rate, and that this will help the church in developing strategies that will encourage retention.

Voluntary Participation: I understand that my involvement in this survey is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without any pressure, embarrassment, or negative impact on me. I also understand that participation is

anonymous and that neither the researcher nor any assistants will be able to identify my responses to me.

Contact Information: In the event that I have any questions or concerns with regard to my participation in this research project, I understand that I may contact either the researcher, Richard Sithole at sitholer@zuc.adventist.org [Tel: (+263) 9 – 250047/ (+263) 11 230 715], or his advisor, Dr. Skip Bell, professor in Church Ministries at sjbell@andrews.edu (Tel: (269) 471-XXXX). I have been given a copy of this form for my own records.

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

REFERENCE LIST

- Abernethy, A. D. (Ed.). (2008). *Worship that changes lives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group.
- Atkinson, H. T. (2002). *The Power of small groups in Christian education*. Nappanee, IN: Evangelical Publishing House.
- Arrais, J. (2007). *A positive church in a negative world: Learning and Improving Leadership in every experience of your church*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association Resource Center.
- Bailey, K. E. (1992). *Finding the lost: Cultural keys to Luke 15*. Saint Louis, MO: G.P.H.
- Blackaby, H. T., & Blackaby, R. (2001). *Spiritual leadership: Moving people onto God's agenda*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers.
- Britten, B., & Britten, C. (1999). *Answers for your marriage*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Burrill, R. (1996). *Radical disciples for revolutionary churches*. Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center.
- Burrill, R. (1997). *The revolutionized church of the 21st century: The explosive power of a church built on relationships*. Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Centre.
- Dudley, R. L., & Cummings, D. (1983). *Adventures in church growth*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- Fernando, A. (2002). *Jesus driven ministry*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Friedman, E. H. (1999). *A failure of nerve: Leadership in the age of the quick fix*. New York: Church Publishing.
- Green, M. (1979). *Evangelism: Now and then*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulinist Press.
- Harris, I. (1967). *Groups that work*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

- Harvard business review on change*. (1998). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Hays, R. B. (1996). *The moral vision of the New Testament: A contemporary introduction to new testament ethics*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Helland, R. (1982). *The revived church*. Norfolk, VA: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Home Mission Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. (1962). *Training light bearers: How to give Bible readings*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald.
- Horst, T. (1999). *The gift of friendship: Developing and enjoying relationships that last*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press.
- Jackman, D. (1996). *Understanding the church*. London: Christian Focus Publishers.
- Jeavons, T. H., & Basinger, B. R. (2000). *Growing givers' hearts: Treating fundraising as a ministry*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, F. P. (1994). *Joining Together: Groups Theory and Group Skills*. Boston, MA: Ally and Bacon.
- Lahey, B. B. (1998). *Psychology: An introduction*. (6th ed.). Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill.
- Kinnaman, G. D. (2003). *Leaders that last: How covenant friendship can help pastors thrive*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Macchia, S. A. (1999). *Becoming a healthy church: 10 characteristics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Brooks.
- Mallison, J. (1989). *Growing Christians in small groups*. Homebush West, Australia: Anzeta Publishers.
- McGavran, D. A. (1986). *Understanding church growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- McGavran, D. A., & Win, A. (1975). *How to grow a church: Conversation about church growth*. Glendale, CA: Regal Books Division.
- Mounce, W. D. (1993). *Basics of biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Nichol, F. D; Cottrell, R. F., & Neuffer, J. (Eds.). (1980). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary*. (Vol. 5). Washington, DC: Review and Herald.
- Nichol, F. D; Cottrell, R. F., & Neuffer, J. (Eds.). (1980). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary*. (Vol. 6). Washington, DC: Review and Herald.

- Oxford English Dictionary*. (2000). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Prime, P. J. (N.d.). *The gospel of love and real evangelism*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Quinquennial Report Extracts (Zimbabwe Union Conference): 1998-2002 & 2003-2007.
- Rhodes, J. (1984). *Success secrets for pastors*. (Ministry Releases). Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Samaan, P. G. (1990). *Christ's way of reaching people: The fine art of relational witnessing*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.
- Seventh-day Adventist Church manual*. (2005). Hagerstown, PA: Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Shawchuck, N., & Perry, L. (Eds.). (1986). *Revitalizing the 20th century church*. Chicago, IL: Woody Press.
- Shenk, W. R. (1983). *Exploring church growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Sithole, R. (1997). *The Relationship between the Empty tomb and the Christophany*. MA thesis, Helderberg College, South Africa.
- Smith, F. (1998). *The book of learning and forgetting*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Tropman, J. E. (2003). *Making meetings work: Achieving high quality group decisions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wagner, L. (1986). *Caring is not a spectator sport*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press.
- Warren, R. (1995). *The purpose driven church: Growing without compromising your message and mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- White, E. G. (1915). *Gospel Workers*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.
- White, E. G. (1940). *The Desire of Ages*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.
- White, E. G. (1944). *Christian service*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.
- White, E. G. (1970). *Evangelism*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.
- White, E. G. (1993). *The Acts of the Apostles*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press.

White, E. G. (2005). *The ministry of health and healing: An adaptation of Ellen White's classic work*. Canada: Pacific Press.

Whitworth, L., Kinsley-House, K., Kinsley-House, H., & Sandahl, P. (2007). *Co-active coaching: New skills for coaching people towards success in work and life*. (2nd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Davis-Black Publishers.

VITA

RICHARD SITHOLE

Zimbabwe Union Conference

P.O. Box 573

Cell: 011-230-715

PERSONAL DATA

NAME	Richard Sithole
SEX	Male
MARITAL STATUS	Married
DATE OF BIRTH	26 April 1948
NATIONALITY	Zimbabwean

EMPLOYMENT

Executive secretary at Zimbabwe Union Conference: 1 September 2005 to the present

President	West Zimbabwe Conference:	2003-2005
Dean	Solusi University, Bulawayo	2003-2003
Registrar	Solusi University	1993-2002
Chaplain	Solusi University Church	1990-1993
Dean of Men	Solusi College, Bulawayo	1986-1990
Assist. Accountant	Lemco Zimbabwe, Bulawayo	1983-1984
Senior Clerk:	Monarch Products, Bulawayo	1980-1983
District Pastor	Matabeleland-Midlands Field	1976-1979
Senior Clerk	David Whitehead and Sons, Gweru	1972-1975
School Clerk	Selukwe Peak School, Selukwe	1970-1972
Teacher	Gunde SDA School, Kwekwe	1968-1969

EDUCATION

MA in Religious Studies	1998	University of Zimbabwe
MA in Pastoral Ministry	1994	Andrews University
BA in Theology	1988	Andrews University
Ph D Candidate, New Testament Studies		University of Johannesburg, RSA
DMin in Leadership	2010	Andrews University