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ABSTRACT

IMPROVING MEMBER RETENTION IN THE ZAMBIA
UNION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

by

Fordson Vincent Chimoga

Adviser: Roger L. Dudley

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: IMPROVING MEMBER RETENTION IN THE ZAMBIA UNION OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Name of researcher: Fordson V. Chimoga

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Roger L. Dudley, Ed.D.

Date completed: June 2000

Problem

The loss of church members in the Zambia Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is of grave concern. According to church statistics, every year members leave the church through being missing and apostasy. This study is intended to provide practical solutions to pastors and the laity on how to keep members from leaving the church.

This study of church member retention is approached in the following manner. First an analysis is made of the finding of the questionnaires sent to pastors and church members in Zambia. Second, there is an analysis of the church statistics obtained from Zambia. Third, biblical principles on how to deal with the problem of missing and

apostate members, are studied. Fourth, specific roles for the pastors and laity are discussed. Lastly, there is a summary and conclusion.

Results

Loss of church members through missing and apostasy is not a small issue to be ignored. Therefore, this project suggests some solutions on how to prevent losses of members in the Zambia Union. This dissertation first reveals the methods Jesus used to teach his disciples about assimilating those who accepted him as Lord and saviour of their lives. The second thing it does is to discuss the church-growth principles about assimilation of members found in current church-growth literature.

Conclusion

Both winning souls and nurturing them are very important ingredients of evangelism. Both the pastors and the laity should devote the same amount of time and effort in nurturing souls as well as winning them. Church financial resources should be invested in nurturing souls as well as winning them. If they do, the church will experience growth that is balanced and meaningful in winning and keeping souls until Jesus comes the second time.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

IMPROVING MEMBER RETENTION IN THE ZAMBIA
UNION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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

by
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to fellow ministers of the Gospel and the laity in the Zambian Union who are engaged not only in soul winning but in nurturing daily those who accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
Chapter	
1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
The Purpose and Background of the Project	1
Justification of the Study	3
Description of the Study	9
Organization of the Study	10
Definition of Terms	12
Limitations of the Study	13
2. THE SITUATION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ZAMBIA	15
Church Statistics	15
Statistical Analysis of Apostate Members	19
Statistical Analysis of Ministers Versus Members	21
Statistic Analysis of Congregations and Permanent Church Buildings	23
Summary	25
3. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS ON CHURCH MEMBER RETENTION	26
Jesus' Methodology	27
The Great Commission	31
Caring Leadership	38
Jesus' Command to Love One Another	40
Lessons from the Nation of Israel	43
The Story of the Good Samaritan	46
Weariness	49
Faith	51
Summary	54

4.	ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED AMONG PASTORS AND THE LAITY ABOUT THE CAUSES FOR DROPOUT IN THE ZAMBIA UNION . . .	55
	How the Surveys Were Conducted	55
	The Two Groups of Pastors Surveyed	56
	The Responses from Church and	
	District Pastors	56
	Main Reasons for Member Losses	56
	Reducing Member Losses	59
	Small Versus Large Meetings	60
	Time in Baptismal Classes	61
	Equipping Elders	62
	A Nurturing Program	62
	Goal Setting	63
	Length of Baptismal Class	64
	Responses of Pastors at Fields and	
	Union Mission Levels	65
	Main Reasons for Member Losses	65
	Equipping Elders	67
	Responses from the Lay Members	67
	Preparation of Converts	68
	Frequency of Pastoral Visits	69
	Study Materials	70
	Worship Places	70
	Summary	71
5.	RESEARCH ON CHURCH-GROWTH LITERATURE ON HOW TO CURB MEMBERSHIP DROPOUT IN THE ZAMBIA UNION MISSION	73
	Unassimilated Members	73
	Obstacles to Friendship	76
	Jesus and Friendship	77
	How to Be Friendly	79
	Assimilation through Tasks/Roles	80
	Who Are the Laity?	82
	Spiritual Gifts	84
	The Purposes for Spiritual Gifts	87
	Assimilation through Small Groups	89
	Assimilation through Identification	94
	Identification with the Vision	96
	Assimilation through Spiritual Growth	97
	Summary	100
6.	SPECIFIC ROLES OF PASTORS AND LAITY ON ASSIMILATING NEW MEMBERS IN ZAMBIA UNION MISSION	101
	The Theological Role of a Pastor	101
	Evangelistic Efforts	105

Factors That May Hinder a Church's Evangelistic Efforts and Nurturing Converts	108
How to Motivate the Laity	108
The Difference between the Clergy and the Laity?	110
Work for the Laity	111
Three Key Lists of Spiritual Gifts	113
Every Person Has Needs	115
Summary	115
7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	117
Summary	127
Conclusion	133
APPENDIX	
A. QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO PASTORS IN ZAMBIA UNION MISSION	120
B. QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO THE LAITY IN ZAMBIA UNION MISSION	122
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127
VITA	133

LIST OF TABLES

1. Statistical Analysis of Missing Members	15
2. Missing Members of the Unions of the Eastern African Division 1988 - 1997	18
3. Comparisons Between Baptized and Apostate Members	20
4. Central Zambia Conference: Statistical Comparisons Between Members and Ministers	21
5. South Zambia Field: Statistical Comparisons Between Members and Ministers	22
6. North Zambia Field: Statistical Comparisons Between Numbers of Permanent and Temporary Worship Shelters	23
7. Copperbelt Field: Statistical Comparisons Between Number of Permanent and Temporary Worship Shelters	24
8. Causes of Member Losses as Viewed by Pastors at the Church and District Levels	59
9. Comparison of Small and Large Evangelistic Efforts	60
10. Program for Nurturing Church Members in the Zambia Union	63
11. Causes for Member Losses as Viewed by Pastors at Fields and Union Levels in Zambia Union	66
12. Survey Responses of Lay Members from Twelve Selected Churches in the Zambia Union Mission	68
13. Comparisons Between Pastors and Elders in Preparing Baptismal Candidates in the Zambia Union	69
14. Comparisons of Pastoral Visitations and the Churches They Are Assigned	69

15. Comparisons of Study Materials and the New Members in the Zambia Union	70
16. Places of Worship	71

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Background of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a strategy for church member retention in the Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists. The Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Zambia have continued to lose church members through missing and apostasy.¹

For example, in the fourth quarter of 1988, out of 4,296 members brought in by baptism and profession of faith, 609 were dropped through being missing and apostasy. In 1997, also, 9,135 were brought in by baptism and profession of faith, but 854 were dropped as missing and apostate members.²

Most of the converts who become members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church do so with a genuine desire to follow Jesus as Savior and Redeemer. One such convert in Luwingu

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¹"Missing" is a statistical term that denotes members removed from the rolls because their whereabouts are unknown. "Apostasy: denotes those disfellowshipped for doctrinal or behavioral reasons.

²Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Quarterly Statistical Report (Lusaka, Zambia: Zambia Union Office of Executive Secretary and Statistics), 1987-1996.

of Northern Zambia in 1989 expressed this conviction when asked why he was joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church after an evangelistic crusade I conducted. "I have joined this denomination because I have accepted Jesus as my Savior and Redeemer and I want to serve Him as long as I live."

Winning people to Christ in Zambia is easier than nurturing them. Almost every quarter the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Zambia bring in about 5,000 converts.¹ The most difficult task is nurturing converts in the church so that they do not apostatize. Many church-growth experts support the idea that it is more difficult to keep new converts than to bring them into the church. One such expert, Dawson Trotman, wrote: "You can lead a soul to Christ in from 20 minutes to a couple of hours, but it takes from 20 weeks to a couple of years to get him on the road to maturity, victorious over the sins and recurring problems that come along."²

In the Adventist Church in Zambia pastors and the laity work together to win people to Christ and help them join the church. They are doing a good job and need encouragement to continue. However, they are encouraged to ponder and analyze this important question brought up by Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin: "How are we helping people continue in

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¹Ibid.

²Dawson Trotman, Born to Reproduce (Colorado Springs: NAV Press, 1986), 30.

their faith?"¹ This is crucial and needs to be addressed by church leaders before new converts are brought into the churches. Detailed plans need to be developed on how to nurture the converts. The father and founder of the church-growth movement, Donald A. McGavran, wrote this important statement about plans that work: "Church leaders should beware of petty plans. Plans for establishing power centers of liberated and liberating persons (churches) should, then, be both intelligent and adequate."² He also stressed that "a good plan on paper does nothing. Only as it becomes incarnate in flesh and blood does it achieve anything."³

Justification of the Study

First is the issue of missing members in the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Zambia. How do members become missing. What causes members to stop coming to church? It is important to adequately answer these questions because doing so will help identify the problem. There are many reasons members stop coming to the Adventist church in Zambia. One of them has to do with lack of following local church policy by church leadership on how to drop and add members. The late pastor Webby Makoma, while serving as

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¹Gary McIntosh and Glen Martin, Finding Them, Keeping Them: Effective Strategies for Evangelism and Assimilation in the Local Church (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 15.

²Donald A. McGavran, Church Growth and Christian Mission (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1976), 240.

³Ibid.

president of the Zambia Union, wrote: "This is a major problem of the church. Many church clerks report big figures of members missing without a careful check and following a policy requirement. Between January and June 1998 we lost 5,595."¹

Second, new members begin to miss shortly after an evangelistic campaign because there are too many to keep track of and care for. The majority of the evangelistic campaigns conducted either by laity or pastor end up being successful. Hundreds of new converts accept Jesus and become Seventh-day Adventist members. Every quarter about 5,000 people join the church.²

Third, church members begin missing because of lack of follow-up after the evangelistic campaigns. This is a well-known problem among the pastors of the Adventist churches in Zambia. There is hardly any follow-up done after the campaigns. It is one of the major causes for missing members. It is crucial before the evangelistic campaign to plan for follow-up because it is one of the major ways to keep and nurture converts.

Fourth, the disparity between the number of pastors and members has been very big and does not get any better. A recent survey revealed that the ratio of pastors per members

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¹Webby Mukoma, Exploits, A Publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, July-September, 1998, 18.

²Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Quarterly Statistical Report, 1993.

stood at 1:2000.¹ With this ratio it is impossible for pastors alone to give quality care to members.

This state of affairs was heightened in 1994 when the local Ministerial Training School was shut down because of the continued deterioration of the infrastructure. The school used to produce, on the average, ten new pastors every two years. But now those needing theological training go to Solusi University in Zimbabwe. The tuition there is more than double that of the tuition of the Ministerial School had been. As a result of the higher tuition, the church is able to send only about two students in four years for training.

The fifth reason for missing new members is hasty baptism of new converts. As a result of the urge to reach baptismal goals set by the higher organization, most churches tend to baptize new converts before they are thoroughly prepared. It is not bad to baptize new converts soon after conversion. However, thorough preparation is necessary before their actual baptism. The policy guidelines to ministers on thoroughness in preparing converts before baptism are as follows:

The minister's work is not completed until he has thoroughly instructed the candidates, and they are familiar with, and committed to, all fundamental beliefs

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¹Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Quarterly Statistical Report, 1996.

and related practices of the church, and are prepared to assume the responsibilities of church membership.¹

What about members apostatizing? What causes some members to apostatize? There are many causes. The first is poverty. Poverty is one of the major causes for apostate members. Munyimba, a Zambian who recently visited Grand Rapids, Michigan, said: "Zambia is one of the leading African countries in poverty. About 80 percent of the people are living in poverty. This means that these people have not enough food to eat, clothes to wear, and houses to live in."²

In the period of 1988 to 1990, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia experienced some loss of members because of an American evangelist, David Wilson, who gave out material things to people in exchange for joining his movement. A substantial number of members and even pastors left to join Wilson. These people were very much aware of the biblical teachings, but the desire for material things became greater. Therefore they apostatized in order to join him.³

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¹Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 15th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995), 28.

²Munyimba Munyimba, interview by author, Jenison, Michigan, July 31, 1999.

³South Zambia Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Monze, Zambia, "Minutes of the Meetings of the South Zambia Field Committee," April 15, 1993.

Another example of poverty was seen in the way great numbers of people joined the Moslem religion. The reason for this was because of the food the leaders of the Moslems gave to those who came to worship with them. In fact, some of the members of the Moslem religion who were homeless ended up staying for hours outside waiting for the next meeting to be given more food. It was easy in Zambia to start a congregation by giving food and used clothes to hundreds who needed them.

Lack of warm caring in the church is the second reason for apostasy. Most people who join the church look for new caring and loving friends. They join the church with many burdens from which they want to be relieved. They have many questions without answers. Dossman described the need for warm caring as follows:

There are hurting people who feel lonely in a crowded church. They have personal needs and concerns that can only be addressed when we are open enough to come close to them and to exercise the gift of compassion. However, instead of the church getting involved in the needs of hurting families, we usually take the bystander posture.¹

The Adventist Church in Zambia has generally been known for being uncaring. The church has the truth but becomes less effective because of not caring for others. Dossman had this challenge for the church: "If there was ever an area that the church needs to get back to basics, it would

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¹Craig A. Dossman, From House to House (Lincoln, NE: NAD Distribution Center, 1994), 34.

be in the area of establishing caring ministries in the congregation and community."¹

The third reason for apostasy in the Adventist Church in Zambia is "too many power brokers."² Power brokers are church members who want to be leaders all the time without giving a chance for others to lead. Dossman described them in this way:

Power brokers want to hold all of the major offices in the church and extend their power base. They allow new believers to join the church on their terms. Power brokers are interested only in perpetuating their own customs. New programs and ideas are offensive to power brokers because they represent change. And change is a dirty word in the vocabulary of a power broker. Power brokers are not usually interested in doing ministry in the community. Their needs and values are more important than those of Christ or the church.³

In 1983 when I was pastoring ten organized churches and companies of the Kabile District of Central Zambia, I experienced power brokers among some members, clamoring for power. Every year during church elections, they would force themselves to remain in leadership or would fight to be elected if they had not been in leadership the previous year. This was not easy to handle because the members concerned created a political atmosphere. This caused church business meetings to be times of human strife rather than Spirit-led occasions.

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¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 35.

³Ibid.

This unfortunate state of affairs caused some members to leave the church. They were surprised by the behavior of these power brokers and eventually were discouraged. This was how church politics destroyed some people's faith in Jesus Christ. Unchristian politics should always be avoided in the church.

Fourth, traditional rituals surrounding death caused some members to apostatize. Among most tribes in Zambia it is believed that a widow or widower becomes unclean as soon as the spouse dies. This uncleanness requires that traditional rituals be performed, such as a widow or widower having sex with a brother or sister of the deceased. Traditionally, it was required and anyone who refused was considered unclean and would be cut off from the society of the tribe. Therefore, no matter how Christian a person might be before the death of his or her spouse, that person ended up having to go through the rituals because not doing so would mean permanent separation from family.

Description of the Study

This study meets one of the requirements for the Doctor of Ministry degree. It focuses on studying the causes for missing and apostate members with the view of providing solutions. The Bible and the practical knowledge of church growth experts are used to provide solutions to the challenges. The study also seeks to bridge the gap between pastors and too large a membership.

Most of the resources used are from the James White Library and Cornerstone College Library of Berrien Springs and Grand Rapids respectively. Other materials were acquired through the inter-library loan service of libraries both in North American and Africa.

Statistical reports and other relevant materials were obtained from the headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lusaka, Zambia, and the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, in the United States of America.

Church members and pastors in Zambia were used to provide necessary information about what contributed to loss of members through missing and apostasies. Questionnaires were sent by mail to Enid Mantabe, in Lusaka, at the Seventh-day Adventist church headquarters. She mailed some of the questionnaires to churches and pastors at field and union levels. Some of the questionnaires she gave to the workers at the union offices when they came for seminars. After she received the completed questionnaires, she mailed them to me here in the United States of America.

Organization of the Study

There are seven chapters in this study. Chapter 1 introduces the subject and justifies the study. Chapter 2 endeavors to analyze the available statistical information from the Adventist Church regarding missing and apostate church members. The statistics provide pertinent

information that helps to determine the causes, in order to provide the correct antidotes. It is far better to know the real problem than to try and provide the antidote to an unknown problem.

In chapter 3 the biblical principles and counsels will be analyzed and studied. These are the principles that provide information about nurturing and keeping converts in the church. The Old and New Testaments will be explored in a general sense. Biblical exegesis principles will be used, but it will not be the author's purpose to go into unnecessary details of the texts selected.

Chapter 4 analyzes the responses of the questionnaires that were sent to both members and pastors in Zambia.

Chapter 5 explores the church-growth literature about nurturing and its importance. There are numerous pieces of literature on the market today that deal with nurturing. Most of this literature has been written by people dedicated and desirous to put to practice church-growth principles. It was the author's task to select what literature is useful for this type of study.

Chapter 6 wrestles with specific roles of pastors and laity. It is important for pastors and the laity. It is important for pastors and the laity to know and perform the duties according to their roles. This way it will avoid confusion, overwork, and duplication of responsibilities.

Lastly, chapter 7 deals with summary and conclusion. It summarizes the causes and solutions to member losses in Zambia. It also throws a challenge to pastors and laity about nurturing new members.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this dissertation.

Local Church: "A united organized body of individual believers."¹

Local Conference/Local Field/Mission: "A united organized body of churches in a state, province, or territory."²

Union Conference/Union Field/Mission: "A united body of conferences or fields within a larger territory."³

General Conference: "The largest unit of organization, [which] embraces all unions in all parts of the world. Divisions are sections of the General Conference, with administrative responsibility assigned to them in designated geographical areas."⁴

Zambia Union of the Seventh-day Adventists (ZBU): An administrative unit of this church in Zambia. The names of

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¹Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 24.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

the Conference/Mission Fields Under ZBU include: Central Zambia Conference (CZC); Copperbelt Field (CBF); North Zambia Field (NZF); South Zambia Field (SZF); East Zambia Field (EZF); and West Zambia Field (WZF).

Zambia: Formerly known as Northern Rhodesia. It is one of the three countries located in the central part of Africa. Zambia became free from the colonial British rule in 1964 under the leadership of Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda. Zambia has a population of about 15 million people.

Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church: It is at times shortened to "Adventist."

Rusangu Secondary School: (RSS): A coeducational secondary school run by the South Zambia Field. It is located in Southern Province of Zambia, about 300 miles north of the town of Livingstone. It accommodates about 700 students.

Limitations of the Study

This study is about church member retention for the Zambia Union. It is hoped that the pastors and laity use the strategies developed to help nurture both old and new members to prevent them from leaving.

This study is limited in several ways: First, some of the contents includes book knowledge, which therefore has not undergone field testing.

Second, having lived in the U.S.A. for the past five years limits this study, because some issues related to

church members leaving the church in Zambia may be different than they were five years ago when I was there.

Third, lack of printed church materials, such as books for use as reference, limit this study because some statistical information is only approximate. Most of the fields and conferences do not have funds to supply church supplies to the churches, therefore, church leaders just improvise.

Fourth, lack of adequate church-growth literature for the church in Zambia limits this study. A few pieces have been written, but there is need for more.

Fifth, illiteracy among some church members limits this study because they are unable to adequately articulate the information. Some of these members display dynamic leadership but cannot write down their ideas and programs in book form for others to use.

CHAPTER 2

THE SITUATION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

Church Statistics

One of the best ways to discover the condition of the Adventist Church in Zambia is to study its statistics. The statistics will reveal whether or not the condition is favorable. First, the statistics about missing members from 1988 to 1997 is shown in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF MISSING MEMBERS

Year	Field	Baptisms 4th Qtr	Missing Members 4th Qtr	Percentage
1988	ZBU	4,296	609	14
1989	ZBU	8,619	506	5
1990	ZBU	6,056	171	3
1991	ZBU	5,408	973	18
1992	ZBU	5,695	778	14
1993	ZBU	6,243	238	4
1994	ZBU	6,120	378	6
1995	ZBU	3,682	138	4
1996	ZBU	9,493	2,082	21
<u>1997</u>	<u>ZBU</u>	<u>9,135</u>	<u>854</u>	<u>9</u>
Totals	ZBU	64,747	6,727	10

Source: Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Quarterly Statistical Report, 1988-1997.

What are missing members? Missing members are people who stop attending church for various reasons such as loneliness, lack of care, or any displeasing thing or event they come across in the church where they are members. The leadership of the church usually does not realize some members are missing until the end of the quarter and other times when it compiles reports. As a result, for every quarter and year, the Zambia Union reports hundreds of members missing. There is need to quickly arrest this problem, otherwise it will be useless to win souls who do not get established in the truth of Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matt 24:13 NIV).

The statistics in table 1 are only for the fourth quarters from 1988 to 1997. They show that the Zambia Union, in that time period alone, lost a total of 6,727 members. In 1996, alone, it lost 2,082 members. These are not just figures but actual souls missing. These are people who had accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. They received baptism and were accepted into membership. It is important for the church leadership to devise ways and means of keeping members in the church so that they do not leave. It is actually more crucial to keep the souls we have already won, and make sure that they are grounded and established in the churches, than to win new souls.

Another way of revealing the magnitude of the issue of missing members in the Zambia Union is by comparison with other unions in the Eastern Africa Division territory. The Zambia Union is one of the unions belong to the Eastern Africa Division. The Eastern Africa Division is the higher organization that oversees eight unions, including Zambia. Its headquarters are in the city of Harare in Zimbabwe. Below in Table 2 are the number of missing members per union, including Zambia which is also in the Eastern African Division, from 1988 to 1996.

The statistics in Table 2 below show that the Zambia Union led in the number of missing members in the entire Eastern African Division from 1988 to 1996. Following are the reasons for the argument:

1. In 1994 and 1996 the Zambia Union ranked number one in the number of missing members, with 6,283 and 8,726, respectively.

2. In 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, and 1995 the Zambia Union ranked number two in numbers of missing members. The union that ranked number one, with the exception of Tanzania in 1991, was the East Africa Union. The East Africa Union had more membership than Zambia, e.g., in 1996 Zambia had 252,926 and the East Africa Union had 421,557. Zambia, therefore, even in 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992,

TABLE 2
MISSING MEMBERS OF THE UNIONS OF THE
EASTERN AFRICAN DIVISION
1988-1997

Unions	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
East Africa	5,396	8,840	6,301	4,475	40,651	11,091	4,503	4,083	7,982	5,271
Ethiopian	268	350	302	1,366	1,412	1,848	1,381	239	108	116
South East	1,205	2,554	1,728	2,123	3,211	1,628	1,063	2,244	3,351	2,562
Tanzania	1,099	1,750	1,196	8,459	11,699	5,386	4,325	5,774	7,008	3,726
Uganda	550	1,099	3,566	808	5,828	4,355	2,298	5,142	1,287	962
Zambesi	514	662	603	448	3,909	2,072	1,924	1,488	3,478	2,205
Zambia	4,307	4,338	6,211	4,513	7,503	4,579	6,283	5,240	8,726	6,648

18

Source: Eastern Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists,
Quarterly Statistical Report, 1988-1996.

and 1995 still held the leading position in missing members as a percentage of membership of the whole Eastern African territory.

3. It was only in 1993 that the Zambia Union was in the third position of missing members with 4,579. Tanzania was in second position and East Africa in the first with 5,386 and 11,091 missing members, respectively. The difference between Tanzania and Zambia was a small margin of 807.

Statistical Analysis of Apostate Members

Apostasy is another avenue through which church members leave the Adventist Church in Zambia. What is apostasy? Webster defines it as follows: "In its original Greek *apostasias* literally means revolt. In English apostasy means renunciation of a religious faith or abandonment of a previous loyalty."¹

The Zambia Union loses members through missing and apostasy. The figures in table 3 reveal the number of apostate members from 1988 to 1997. In 1996 there were more apostasies than all other years shown. 1997 was the second highest in number of apostasies.

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¹Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. (1993), s.v. "Apostasy."

TABLE 3

COMPARISONS BETWEEN BAPTIZED AND APOSTATE MEMBERS

Year	Baptized 4th Qtr	Apostasies	Percentage
1988	4,296	551	13
1989	8,619	777	9
1990	6,056	767	12
1991	5,408	880	16
1992	5,695	984	17
1993	6,243	852	13
1994	6,120	539	8
1995	3,682	336	9
1996	9,493	1,232	12
<u>1997</u>	<u>9,135</u>	<u>1,066</u>	<u>11</u>
Totals	64,747	7,984	12

Source: Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Quarterly Statistical Report, 1988-1997.

Apostasy is an issue the church leadership must wrestle with. Precious souls are leaving the church and they sometimes become worse than when they came in. In fact, such members who leave the church in this manner are more difficult to win back than missing members. It is important to prevent them from apostatizing before it happens.

Statistical Analysis of Ministers Versus Members

Another issue brought up in the survey that contributed to large numbers of missing and apostate members was that the ratio of ministers versus church members was very

disparate. The statistics in tables 4 and 5 show how large the disparity was from 1988 to 1997. The fields studied were South Zambia and Central Zambia.

TABLE 4

CENTRAL ZAMBIA CONFERENCE: STATISTICAL
COMPARISONS BETWEEN MEMBERS AND MINISTERS

Year	Ministers	Membership	Ratio
1988	14	20,360	1 to 1,454
1989	13	26,273	1 to 2,021
1990	20	33,378	1 to 1,668
1991	10	43,778	1 to 4,377
1992	29	45,112	1 to 1,555
1993	24	59,050	1 to 2,460
1994	34	63,766	1 to 1,875
1995	38	72,455	1 to 1,906
1996	39	77,190	1 to 1,979
1997	52	72,821	1 to 1,490

Source: Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Quarterly Statistical Report, 1988-1997.

TABLE 5

SOUTH ZAMBIA FIELD: STATISTICAL COMPARISON
BETWEEN MEMBERS AND MINISTERS

Year	Ministers	Membership	Ratio
1988	13	27,780	1:2137
1989	21	30,657	1:1459
1990	26	37,908	1:1458
1991	28	40,361	1:1754
1992	23	45,112	1:1961
1993	32	48,175	1:1505
1994	32	55,489	1:1734
1995	38	61,729	1:1624
1996	38	73,270	1:1928
1997	38	87,231	1:2295

Source: South Zambia Field of Seventh-day Adventists,
Quarterly Statistical Report, 1988-1997.

The above statistics show that the ratio between the number of ministers and members was very disparate. What does this mean? It means that the members were not receiving adequate nurturing because the ministers could not manage the large number of members by themselves. If each minister had one hundred or less members, it would have been a bit better. But the figures above reveal that each minister had more than a thousand members. This was more than a minister could manage. This was one of the major reasons why the Adventist church in Zambia was losing so many members. Therefore, one of the solutions was to provide enough ministers to nurture them.

Statistical Analysis on Congregations
and Permanent Church Buildings

Another issue brought up in the survey was the one that dealt with the number of congregations versus permanent church buildings. The survey revealed that there were fewer church buildings than the number of congregations. More were worshipping in unfinished shelters than in permanent buildings. Table 6 illustrates the issue.

TABLE 6

NORTH ZAMBIA FIELD: STATISTICAL COMPARISONS BETWEEN NUMBER
OF PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY WORSHIP SHELTERS

Year	Number of Church Congregations	Number of Permanent Buildings	No. Not in Permanent
1988	80	12	68
1989	92	21	71
1990	111	26	85
1991	129	26	103
1992	147	26	121
1993	164	53	111
1994	166	53	113
1995	177	53	124
1996	195	53	142
1997	194	57	137

Source: North Zambia Field of Seventh-day Adventists,
Quarterly Statistical Report, 1988-1997.

The statistics in table 7 prove beyond a doubt that there were more congregations worshipping in shelters than in permanent or decent church buildings. Where did they congregate then? In public schools, town halls, mud and pole shelters, and sometimes under trees.

It should also be pointed out here that the survey revealed that only about 5 percent of the permanent church buildings have decent seats. Most of them use cement blocks, mats, or mere planks set on stones or cement blocks.

TABLE 7

COPPERBELT FIELD: STATISTICAL COMPARISONS BETWEEN
NUMBER OF PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY WORSHIP SHELTERS

Year	Number of Church Congregations	Number of Permanent Buildings	No. Not in Permanent Buildings
1988	61	23	38
1989	61	23	38
1990	126	19	107
1991	143	24	119
1992	149	19	130
1993	149	25	124
1994	178	25	153
1995	195	21	174
1996	222	21	201
1997	228	53	175

Source: Copperbelt Field of the Seventh-day Adventists,
Statistical Reports, 1988-1997.

The Adventist Church in Zambia faces a serious challenge of providing its members with permanent church buildings and comfortable seats. This state of affairs contributes to members apostatizing and missing. It must not be left unattended. Church leadership is advised to use every avenue possible to arrest the situation before it worsens.

Summary

The Adventist Church in Zambia lost large numbers of members from 1988 to 1997 through apostasy and missing. The situation was bad and needed immediate attention.

During those years, however, the Adventist Church in Zambia excelled in reaching baptismal goals. In the Eastern Africa Division territory, the Zambia Union was known for reaching quarterly baptismal goals. On the other hand, it was leading in missing and apostate members. Therefore, the leaders of the Adventist Church in Zambia need strategies to prevent members from being missing and apostatizing.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS ON CHURCH MEMBER RETENTION

The dictionary defines retention as "to hold secure or intact."¹ Retention is also synonymous with the word "keeping." The term "keeping" in the dictionary provides the following interesting ideas related to the concept under discussion: (a) "to maintain in a good, fitting, or orderly condition; for example, keeping a house"; (b) "to cause to remain in a given place, situation, or condition"; (c) "to preserve (food) in an unspoiled condition."²

Similar words used are "assimilation" and "nurturing." Assimilation means to "take in and appropriate as nourishment or to absorb into the system."³ Nurturing means "to supply with nourishment, educate, or to further the development of a child."⁴ These terms will be used interchangeably. The focus, however, is to find some biblical and theological insights on how to prevent church

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¹Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Retention."

²Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Theodicy."

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

members in the Adventist Church in Zambia from leaving fellowship for whatever reason.

Jesus' Methodology

Jesus' methods of keeping or assimilating those who believed in him and his teachings are worthy of study. He came up with a plan to win and nurture the believers in his time and for the ages to come. This is what he said: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In other words, Jesus wants his followers to continue in faith "even to the end of the world. Amen" (Matt 28:20).

As soon as he began his ministry on earth, Jesus unfolded his plan for winning and retention of the followers. His retention plan began with His method of recruiting the disciples. He recruited disciples for winning souls and nurturing the believers. In the Gospel of Matthew the work of recruiting disciples is described as follows:

And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon and Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he said unto them, "follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. (Matt 4:18-20)

Also, Matt 4:21-22 says:

And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Jesus knew that he would not be physically available all the time to preach the gospel and to keep the believers. As a result, he recruited the disciples whom he would give the responsibilities of evangelizing and nurturing those who would accept him. William Hendriksen underscored Christ's methods as follows:

The wonderful gospel of the kingdom was not intended only for the men living during the time of Christ's earthly ministry. It was intended for the ages. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that at the very beginning of his ministry Jesus chose men who, by means of their testimony both oral and written, would perpetuate his work and proclaim his message. Christ's disciples were to become the links between himself and his church.¹

The biblical account reveals two important methods Jesus used to safeguard ministry and continuity of the believers. First, he recruited workers as recorded in Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11, and John 1:43-51. He traveled to those places he knew he would find committed and hard-working workers. Matthew Henry aptly describes the disciples in this way:

They were men of business, who had been bred up to labour. . . . They were men that were accustomed to hardships and hazards; the fisher's trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in peril by waters. Those who have learned to bear hardships, and to run hazards, are best prepared for the

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¹William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 245.

fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.¹

Second, he trained the disciples while being involved in ministry himself. They received training by observing what he was doing. For example, before he taught the beatitudes at the mountain of blessings, he trained them how to heal diseases of the sick people. The Gospel according Luke supports this line of thought as follows:

And he came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. (Luke 6:17-19, NKJV)

Jesus taught by example because immediately after recruiting the disciples, he continued his ministry openly so that they could learn by watching him do it. Matt 4:23 says: "And Jesus went about Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." He was the best instructor, second to none. He knew that learning by example, especially in spiritual matters, was more crucial and important than merely memorizing facts. His aim in teaching was to help the disciples to develop a meaningful relationship with him that would enable them to evangelize and nurture others.

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¹Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible in One Volume, ed. Leslie F. Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 1218.

Third, he challenged the disciples this way: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you (John 15:16). He revealed in this text two aspects of ministry: (1) To bear fruit, (2) To nurture the converts.

Fourth, he also gave the disciples enabling power to do actual ministry. Matt 10:1 says: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." He knew that with training minus the Holy Spirit they would not accomplish anything.

God, the Holy Spirit, is available even today to use Christians to "proclaim" the gospel and nurture those who receive it. In Acts 13:2-4, the Scriptures reveal that the gospel workers in Antioch fasted and prayed for the Holy Spirit. During this experience the Holy Spirit rested upon them and sent them as missionaries.

In a similar way gospel workers today should fast and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in preaching and retention of believers. The Holy Spirit is willing to use Christians in every phase of ministry. In nurturing especially, it is more important and crucial because many people who leave the fellowship do so due to discouragement.

In Acts 9:31 and Rom 15:16, the Holy Spirit promises to comfort and sanctify the believers.

The Great Commission

The Great Commission found in Matt 28:18-20 begins with the following words of Jesus: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." What did Jesus mean by the phrase "all power"? He meant that "because of His victorious life, death, and resurrection, He has won 'all authority in heaven and on earth' (vs. 18) for dominion in 'all nations' (vs. 19) for all time always vs. 20."¹ His authority is for all believers then, now, and forever. He still has authority and will always use it to send workers "to preach the gospel."

Jesus' authority also means that "the power of heaven's love and wisdom and strength, and the power over persons, all passions, all principles, all movements"² is vested in Him. The main purpose of his authority is "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He is not interested in only winning souls, but in their retention because he said, "but he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt 24:13).

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¹George R. Knight, The Abundant Life, A Practical Guide to Abundant Christian Living in the Book of Matthew (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1994), 281.

²Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fauset, and David Brown, Commentary: Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 950.

Second, he said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." What did he mean? He meant that "by preaching of the gospel, people must be completely won over to Christ; they must be turned into new people by what they hear and believe."¹ The disciples' preaching and teaching of the gospel would enable the people to be completely surrendered to Christ. In other words, He wants them to develop a permanent relationship with Jesus.

A closer study of the phrase "make disciples" in Greek gives this fresh meaning. "The imperative verb (*mathensate*, "make disciples") is preceded by an aorist participle (*poreuthentes*, "go") which shares the imperatival force of the main verb."² Hence, the disciples are to go (rather than the temporal emphasis "having gone") and make disciples. In other words, Jesus still mandates believers even today to keep going everywhere making disciples.

D. B. Wallace, in his book Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, wrote: "There is no good grammatical ground for giving the participle a mere temporal idea. To turn *poreuthentes* into an adverbial participle is to turn the

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¹Ray Togtman and H. H. Ridderbos, Bible Student's Commentary: Matthew (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 554.

²Jack Cottrell and Tony Ash, The College Press NIV Commentary: Matthew (Joplin, MO: College Publishing Company, 1997), 510.

Great Commission into the Great Suggestion."¹ In other words, the work of preaching the gospel is for every believer and needs to be continued until Jesus comes back for the second time.

In giving the Great Commission to the disciples Jesus was requiring them to actively get involved in gospel ministry. This was true because "making disciples involves 'going' (28:19), as it had before" been said by Jesus, "And as you go, preach, saying 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matt 10:7)."² Therefore, Christ's disciples then and now should keep going everywhere making disciples. This is even more true for member retention. They need constant visiting and encouragement in order to prevent them from leaving fellowship.

Third, What did the phrase "all nations" mean? Jesus said "all nations" because at this time he wanted the disciples not to evangelize just the nation of Israel but the whole world. Cottrell and Ash wrote:

The object of their mission is to disciple "all the nations." The earlier instructions to go only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 10:6; cf. 15:24) are now rescinded, replaced by a universal mission to all ethnic groups.³

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¹D. B. Wallace, Greek Grammar beyond the Basics (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervon Publishing House, 1996), 645.

²Craig S. Keener, Grant R. Osborne, D. Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon Robinson, Matthew, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 400.

³Cottrell and Ash, 510-11.

Keener et al. also wrote:

All nations may signify all groups of "peoples," rather than the modern concept of "nation-states"; in many nations a variety of different people coexist. Thus Christ commands us to sensitively reach each culture, not merely some people from each nation.¹

Jesus still commands his followers everywhere to evangelize and nurture everyone who believes in him so that they will not be lost. He wants every person to accept the gospel and to continue trusting in Him until the end of this age. Hence, the need for rigorous member retention in every church.

Fourth, What does the phrase "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" mean today in the context of member retention? It means that the believer is "brought into fellowship with and the authority of Him in whose name he is baptized."² The fellowship that begins between God and the believer is permanent. It is a fellowship that will not be broken even by death because Jesus said: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

Besides the permanent fellowship that a baptized individual experiences, he/she gets "into a relationship of

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¹Keener et al., 401.

²Togtman and Ridderbos, 555.

belonging to the triune God."¹ This relationship, too, is permanent because of the sure protection a baptized person receives from God. Jesus, one of the Godhead, said: "I gave them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28, 29).

The names of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit in which a believer is baptized signify "the sum total of the distinctive confession which the individual to be baptized is to accept as his, both now and for all time coming."² Confession is a response given to God by a person who wishes to forever belong to him. The apostle Paul recognized this permanence when he wrote: "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stand firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness'" (2 Tim 2:19).

Paul revealed two foundations. One, God knows those who belong to him. Two, those who confess him will turn away from sin. In other words, the key to member retention or to remain strong and faithful is for members to keep confessing God who knows everything and grants power to

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¹Cottrell and Ash, 511.

²Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 302.

overcome sin. John the disciple wrote: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Fifth, the phrase "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Jesus charged the disciples with the responsibility of teaching the believer everything he had taught them. The disciples did the work of evangelizing and continued until death. What about after the death of the disciples? Who is charged with the responsibility?

Cottrell and Ash respond: "It is the responsibility of the church to lead new believers into an awareness of what life in the kingdom entails."¹ This responsibility is today placed among pastors and local church leaders to nurture the members so that they become strong in the faith and never apostatize.

Sometimes believers tend to select certain teachings of Jesus in order to avoid the other ones. This is not right because "life in the kingdom necessitates hearing and doing everything that Jesus has commanded."² Jesus, in support of this idea, said, "You diligently study the scripture because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me," (John 5:39). Paul also added: "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in

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¹Cottrell and Ash, 511-512.

²Ibid.

righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Lastly, Jesus said: "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." What did Jesus mean, especially since he left for heaven a few days after making this promise? How would he be present in both heaven and earth at the same time? He said this because he was God. As God he is present everywhere. Jesus clarified this line of thought when he said: "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

The apostle Paul, writing to the Colossians, understood Jesus as divine and creator. He wrote:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. (Col 1:15-17)

According to Matthew's Gospel, the prophets wrote that he was God as follows: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us" (Matt 1:23). In other words Jesus, although human in this earth, was also "God with us" at the same time. This is one of the reasons he could promise to be with his followers always, even unto the end of the world.

In this phrase Jesus was talking about his own presence being present to the end. He was also talking about his own

presence being present to the end. A well-known commentary has observed: "The 'I' here is emphatic. It is enough that I am with you alway--'all the days;' till making converts, baptizing, and building them up by Christian instructions, shall be no more, even unto the end of the world. Amen."¹ Therefore, the pastors and church leaders should take up the challenge of instructing believers so that they continue trusting Jesus without anyone giving up. Member retention, therefore, is an ongoing program or nurturing and encouraging believers.

Caring Leadership

Exod 18:14-27 outlines the caring leadership style that can help to properly assimilate members in the teachings of the Bible. A closer look at this style of leadership would help. Moses was doing the work of nurturing members alone. His father-in-law, Jethro, said this: "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself" (vss. 17-19).

Jethro spoke the truth as he observed it. It was impossible for Moses alone to perform holistic ministry to thousands of people. Therefore, he gave this timely advice to Moses:

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¹Jamieson, Fauset, and Brown, 950.

Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be ruler of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. (vss. 19-22)

In the above passage Moses' job description was discussed. It was to "stand before God for the people," "to teach statutes and the laws," and to select those to whom he would delegate caring leadership. Before this, his job description was enormous and unmanageable. He and the people were wearing out, and as a result needs and issues were unattended. There was just total confusion. Everyone blamed Moses even for the problems of their own making. The thing that brought all this was poor leadership.

Some church members drop out for lack of caring leadership. Sometimes the leaders are too few to care for the masses that need help. This is why it is important to designate and train members into caring leadership. Ellen G. White admonished: "Each member of the church has a part to act in order that the body may be preserved in a healthful condition. We are all members of the same body

and each member must act a part for the benefit of all the others."¹

When it comes to member retention, caring leadership is not an option but a must. There is no better way of nurturing members than providing trained leaders for them. White appealed: "The burden of church work should be distributed among its individual members, so that each one may become an intelligent laborer for God. There is altogether too much unused force in the churches."²

Training of leaders for nurturing members should be an ongoing program. It is not to be done once or twice but all the time. Members who are hurting and discouraged need to be cared for by dedicated and trained leaders.

Jesus' Command to Love One Another

Jesus said: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). In vs. 17 of the same chapter, Jesus also said: "These things I command you, that you love one another." He repeated the command to love one another because it was important and he wanted it to be understood and obeyed by his followers. He gave this command to those who had accepted him as Lord and Saviour.

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¹Ellen G. White, "Harvest," Signs of the Times, August 1902, 12.

²Ibid.

He knew that "to live in love is to live victoriously over all error and all anxiety."¹

How does this command to love relate to member retention? Member retention is warm-hearted care given to church members by the leaders so that they do not drop out or apostatize. Love is the key to nurturing church members. Walter A. Elwell, an evangelical theologian, wrote: "Love for neighbors is 'Love in action' doing something specific and tangible for others."² In other words, "Christ's love is the motivation for evangelism, and it compels us to become ambassadors for Him, a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:14)."³ Christians minister to each other because Christ commands them to do so in love. Therefore, evangelism and nurturing are a response to Christ's love for all people (John 3:16).

Realizing the importance of love among the disciples Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). He is still commanding today's pastors and local church leaders to express love to others. Why? Because they know how much he

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¹Charles M. Layman, The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980, 938.

²Walter A. Elwell, Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1996), 494.

³Ibid., 495.

loves them. He is telling them to love all people, so that in turn they would comprehend Christ's love.

Jesus also pointed out that love would make people know that believers are his disciples (John 13:35). This brings the question, How are Christ's disciples known today? Today's disciples include every member, but especially pastors and local church leaders. Some are known by the training they undergo. Some by their preaching and teaching. Some by the gift of administration they have. But how many are known by the love they demonstrate to others. Christ's counsel encourages workers to be known by the love they reveal to others because "love is the supreme gift of the Spirit which marks the church as the body of Christ"¹ (cf. Rom 12:9-10; Col 3:12-15).

Love is important between and among people everywhere. Both young and old people like to stay in a place where there is love. Love keeps people together. Love promotes prosperity and health among people. Therefore, love in a church is needed because it helps people not to leave the church. However, people must understand that "God's love does not protect us from all suffering, but protects us in all suffering."²

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¹Layman, 808.

²Hans Kung, Does God Exist? An Answer for Today (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company (1980), 695.

Lessons from the Nation of Israel

God chose the nation of Israel (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 18:9-13). He called them special and holy people. He commissioned them as follows: "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut 5:7). In other words, he commanded them to share with their children the spiritual lessons he had revealed to them. Christian parents even today are encouraged by this text to teach biblical principles to their children. These lessons will help the children to become members and be assimilated into the truth. Solomon wrote: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it (Prov 22:6).

Though the Israelites were a special and holy people, they often revolted against God. For example in Exod 32, the Israelites made a golden calf in rebellion against God. Yet in Jer 3, for example, God sent the prophet to appeal to the backsliding nation of Israel as follows:

Return backsliding Israel, says the Lord; I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful, says the Lord; I will not remain angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, And have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice, says the Lord. Return, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. (Jer 3:12-14)

This is an example of how God helped the revolted nation of Israel from continuing in apostasy. He loved and corrected them. White put it this way:

The unwillingness of the Lord to chastise is here vividly shown. He stays His judgments that He may plead with the impenitent. He who exercises "loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth" yearns over His erring children, in every way possible He seeks to teach them the way of life everlasting.¹

Another example of Israel's backsliding was at Rephidim in the Wilderness of Sin. The story of their backsliding is found in Exod 17:1-7. The Lord had preformed several miracles before them to show his presence among them. But still more they doubted him whenever they lacked something. David described their condition as follows: "They forgot God their Savior who had done great things in Egypt. Wondrous works in the land of Ham. Awesome things by the Red Sea (Ps 106:21-22). Some of them did not just end at doubting, but backslid. In their backslidden condition, God still loved and provided for them.

That present-day church members also experience backsliding should not surprise the leaders of the churches, but concerted efforts should be conducted to reclaim them. It is not just verbal love that wins people back to Christ, but tangible love that involves meeting their physical needs.

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¹Ellen G. White, Prophets and Kings (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), 413.

Another incident in which God dealt with the people of Israel when they were in a backslidden state is found Judg 3:7-11. Here the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord. "Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rushathaim eight years" (vs.8 NKJV).

In this case the Lord used a heathen king to correct Israel's rebelliousness. When suffering inflicted on them became evident, they called upon the Lord and He delivered them. They were happy and became obedient to the Lord for forty years.

A further example is found in Judg 3:12-31. When Israel again rebelled against God, He allowed Eglon, king of Moab, to oppress them for eighteen years (vs. 14). When they repented, He accepted them.

What does this have to do with member retention? When members backslide or drift away from church fellowship or even begin to think of leaving the church, most of them think life will be better outside church fellowship. It is not. Solomon described a miserable life of a person who thought he was enjoying life outside God's presence, drinking alcohol as follows: "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contention? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger

long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine"
(Prov 23:29-30 NKJV).

If church members are helped to discover lasting joy and peace in the church, they will be less likely to seek it by leaving the church. Also, Christians need to be reminded that the trials of this life are only temporary, as John the Revelator described, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4 NKJV).

Pastors and local churches today are to display God's attitude in dealing with backsliders and those who are on the verge of leaving the church fellowship. They are never to forsake them but to reclaim them by nurturing. White revealed a godly attitude in this way: "With a father's heart, God bore with His people. He pleaded with them by mercies given and mercies withdrawn. Patiently He set their sins before them and in forbearance waited for their acknowledgment."¹

The Story of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37 records the story of the good Samaritan, a parable Jesus told in answer to a lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" This story impacts the topic of church member retention in several ways.

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¹Ibid., 21.

First, it gives a simple and practical definition of neighbor. Jesus defined it in story form as follows: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (vs. 30). At the end of His story, Jesus asked, "Which . . . do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" and approved the answer, "He who showed mercy on him" (Luke 10:36-37).

Ellen G. White, commenting on this parable, defined neighbor as follows: "Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God."¹ In other words, all of us human beings are neighbors, and as such it is important to help each other with any need we may have, especially with the need of encouragement when we are discouraged. Discouragement is one of the causes for church members to leave the church fellowship.

Second, the priest and Levite "passing on the other side" both saw the man lying on the ground bleeding, needing immediate help. They both "passed by on the side" not willing to help. The difference between them and the good Samaritan was compassion. The Samaritan had compassion, but the priest and Levite did not. White described the Levite interestingly:

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¹Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons (Silver Spring, MD: Better Living Publications, 1990), 165.

He was convicted of what he ought to do, but it was not an agreeable duty. He wished that he had not come that way so that he would not have seen the wounded man. He persuaded himself that the case was no concern of his, and he, too, "passed by on the other side."¹

How often church members shun involvement in other people's difficulties, passing by "on the other side" like the priest and the Levite. And yet this is the time help is most needed. If care is not shown to people when they most need it, they will feel lonely and rejected and eventually leave the church. Hence, the story of the Samaritan becomes relevant to a study of member retention. White put it this way: "This Samaritan represents Christ. Our Saviour manifested for us a love that the love of man can never equal. When we were bruised and dying, He had pity upon us."²

Third, really caring involved giving of material things. The Samaritan gave "two denarii to the innkeeper" for the hospitalization of his patient. He was even prepared to spend more when he returned from his trip. He deeply cared for his neighbor. He did not mind spending money on him. His sympathy was in line with Jesus' advice: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

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¹Ibid., 166.

²Ibid., 167.

Weariness

"To become weary" is defined in the dictionary as "to become exhausted in patience, tolerance, or liking."¹ Some members leave the church because of weariness. It is not healthy for a Christian to be in a state of weariness all the time because it brings discouragement and eventually causes abandonment of faith. The first text to consider is Isa 28:12 (NKJV): "To whom He said, This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest." According to this text, God provides rest to the weary. But this does not just happen automatically. The weary have to surrender to God to receive rest from Him. Jesus invited the weary this way: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28 NIV).

Second, Isa 30:15 (NKJV) assures: "For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'" What was God saying to Judah who was experiencing weariness at the time? He was saying to them that

the only hope of Judah was to turn from evil back to God. In doing so they would find confidence, rest, and peace. In looking to the strength of men they had found only disappointment, trouble, and defeat, but trust in God would bring peace, calmness, and strength.²

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¹Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Weary."

²Ibid., 220.

Jesus also made a similar promise when He said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will be no means cast out" (John 6:37, NKJV). At any time, God will accept the weary and discouraged, if they come to Him. In God's presence there is stability and Christians thrive.

Third, Isa 40:31 (NKJV) says, "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." What do those words mean to the church members who are about to give up their trust in God? It means "that they look to the Lord in sincerity and humility for wisdom and strength, and then patiently await His guidance."¹ Once they totally focus their minds and efforts on God, He will provide them strength to continue growing in a relationship with Him. Thus they will not apostatize but continue experiencing spiritual growth.

Fourth, in Gal 6:9 (NKJV) the Apostle Paul advised, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Here Paul revealed that a major reason for not being weary in trusting God is the future reward of eternal life that Christ will give to Christians who "do not lose heart." In other words, Jesus will give eternal life to people who accept Him as Lord and Savior and continue to follow Him.

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¹Ibid., 248.

Lastly, Heb 12:2-3 (NKJV) says:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Paul encouraged the Christians to endure as did Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith." He suffered for humanity but did not give up. Many Christians today will remain strong in the faith if they continue to imitate Jesus' life and teaching found in the Holy Scriptures.

How do the above texts help keep members from leaving church fellowship? The message revealed is very simple. Weariness causes members to leave the church. But if they continue to trust in God, he will give them strength to continue in faith.

Faith

Faith is an ingredient for member retention. The Bible defines it as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1 NKJV). And vs. 2 says, "For by it the elders obtained a good testimony." In other words, God's people in Old Testament times managed to continue being obedient to God because they had unwavering faith in Him. So Christians today can continue in obedience to God without apostatizing if they have faith in him.

One means that helps Christians' faith in God to grow is prayer. White defined prayer as "talking to God as to a friend."¹ Catherine J. Foote gave an example of a prayer as talking:

God, I just want to talk to you. I just want to open my soul to you. I don't want to try to say it right. I don't want to meet someone else's expectations of what I should say or what I should believe. I just want to talk to you.²

Since prayer is talking to God, the line of communication has to be continued by us. God does not get tired; He loves to talk to us. The Bible tells us that David prayed three times a day, as follows: "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud. And He shall hear my voice" (Ps 55:17). Paul advised the Christians in this way, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17).

A second means of growing faith is Bible study. Tim and Beverly La Haye wrote: "The Bible is God's message to you, but it will meet your needs only if you read it. It is impossible for anyone who does not regularly read God's word to become a strong Christian."³ Jesus said: "You search

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¹Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ (Coldwater, MI: Remnant Publications, 1997), 52.

²Catherine J. Foote, Survivor Prayers--Talking with God about Childhood Sexual Abuse (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 25.

³Tim La Haye and Beverly La Haye, The Act of Marriage: The Beauty of Sexual Love (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 242.

the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39). David wrote: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105).

A third means to greater faith is church attendance.

The La Hayes wrote:

You will never become a strong Christian unless you consistently attend a Bible-teaching church where you can hear more of God's word. You have only begun to learn about the many exciting thing God has planned for you. You also need to make Christian friends; church is the ideal place to do it.¹

Paul admonished: "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:25).

A fourth means of increasing faith is Christian witnessing. It is spiritually beneficial both to Christians and the people to whom they witness. The La Hayes said, "Relating what Christ has done for you will both strengthen you and help your friends to receive Christ."² The Apostle Peter wrote: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet 3:15).

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¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

Summary

The Bible is full of principle of nurturing church members. Such principles as prayer, Bible study, church attendance, and Christian witnessing are vital in bringing about stability among members of the churches. Therefore the main responsibility of the pastor and the local leadership is to feed the members with the spiritual food, the Bible.

Since Jesus Christ himself founded Christianity, the methods he used remain important to the church even today. One of them had to do with training disciples to be his co-workers. He did not just end there, but he empowered them to work on his behalf. Jesus still today searches for more laborers. Notice his constant plea: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matt 9:37-38).

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED AMONG PASTORS AND THE LAITY ABOUT THE CAUSES FOR DROPOUT IN THE ZAMBIA UNION

How the Surveys Were Conducted

Three groups of workers participated in the survey. These are: (1) Workers at the field and union levels. (2) Church and district pastors, and (3) The laity. Questionnaires were sent by mail to Enid Mantabe, in Lusaka, at the Seventh-day Adventist church headquarters. She mailed them to head elders of the selected churches. The church elders supervised the surveys and mailed the responses to her. She also mailed the questionnaires to the pastors at church and district levels. The pastors, after completing the survey, mailed the responses back to her. To workers at field and union levels, she gave the questionnaires when they came to attend workers meetings in Lusaka at the Seventh-day Adventist church headquarters. She then mailed the completed surveys to me here in the United States of America. The majority of both the pastors and laity to whom the surveys were sent by mail cooperated by completing the questions. It took about three months to conduct the survey because of the following: (1) The poor

mail system in Zambia, (2) Long distances between the United States and Zambia.

The Two Groups of Pastors Surveyed

The pastors surveyed were divided into two groups. The first group was composed of pastors from the fields and union mission levels. The total number of pastors from the fields and unions that participated in the survey were eighteen. These were heads of various departments and heavily involved in administration. The second type of pastors was made up of the ones working at the local church and district levels. There were forty-two. Their main job was to give spiritual guidance to church members. A district is composed of a group of churches administered by one pastor. Most churches are administered in this way in the Zambia Union because of the fewer number of pastors than churches.

The Responses from Church and District Pastors

Main Reasons for Member Losses

The first question asked of the pastors at church and district levels was: "What do you consider to be the main cause for member loss in the Zambia Union?" The following were the responses: First, lack of balanced approach to evangelism is the main cause for member losses in the churches throughout the Zambia Union. This means that both the pastors and the laity have emphasized more the winning

of souls than nurturing them. The higher organizations of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Zambia also have placed more emphasis on the pastor and the laity reaching baptismal goals than on nurturing new converts. The pastors wished there would be a balanced approach to evangelism whereby winning of souls and nurturing them are emphasized equally throughout the Zambia Union. They further suggested that field and union funds allocated for evangelistic efforts should include some for nurturing new members. This way would show the pastor and laity the seriousness the administrators place on the importance of nurturing new members. The local church leaders too would follow the example as soon as they saw it being practiced.

Second, lack of adequate preparation is given to converts prior to baptism. They said that this mostly happens during and after a large evangelistic effort. Large evangelistic efforts usually run for three to four weeks. And in most cases the evangelists who speak in these evangelistic efforts come from outside the country. They stay only for the period of the evangelistic effort; after that they leave. The converts are hurriedly prepared for baptism so that during or at the close of the evangelistic effort they are baptized. The time is usually too short for them to develop a meaningful relationship with Jesus. It is also not enough time for them to know and develop friends with the members of the churches they attend.

Third, no proper care is given to new members after the evangelistic effort by both pastors and laity. They said that in most cases converts are left to themselves to figure out how to get assimilated into the churches. A simple welcome is usually extended to the new members when they join the church, but that is all they get in most cases. They suggested that providing new members spiritual guardians composed of members in good and regular standing would help to assimilate them into the churches.

Fourth, there is a lack of trained laity on how to integrate converts into the churches. The pastors felt that they need to put more time in training the laity on how to incorporate new members into the churches. They said that in the past this kind of training was done on a small scale, and as a result those who are already members did not know how to assimilate new members into the churches. They felt that training members would help improve member retention in the Zambia Union because there would be more trained people to do the job.

Fifth, lack of personal evangelism is one of the causes for member losses. The majority of pastors said the people who join the Seventh-day Adventist churches do so through evangelistic efforts. They said this was all right, but they also wanted to foster personal evangelism because those who would join the church that way would easily assimilate into the churches. Personal evangelism helps prospective

members to develop friendships with those already attending prior to becoming members themselves. That is why personal evangelism is advantageous over public evangelism.

Table 8 shows how the pastors rated the causes for member losses in the Zambia Union.

TABLE 8
CAUSES OF MEMBER LOSSES AS VIEWED BY PASTORS
AT THE CHURCH AND DISTRICT LEVELS

Causes	Number	Percentage
Lack of a balanced approach	15	34
Lack of proper preparation	11	26
Lack of proper care	9	21
Lack of more trained laity	4	9
Lack of personal evangelism	3	7
Totals	42	97

Reducing Member Losses

Pastors also responded to this question: "What practical suggestions do you give for reducing the problem of member losses in the Zambia Union?" They provided the following suggestions:

1. Pairing converts with members.
2. Providing Bible study materials to converts in their own languages.
3. Teaching converts the love of God.
4. Conducting more small evangelistic efforts rather

than large ones for easier nurturing.

5. Organizing visitation programs for new members.
6. Organizing prayer bands for new members.
7. Training the laity how to nurture new members.
8. Planning and budgeting for follow-up before the evangelistic effort.
9. Introducing new members into fellowship meetings.
10. Encouraging members to be involved in personal evangelism too.

Small Versus Large Meetings

The next question to which the pastors responded was: "In terms of proper indoctrination of new converts, which evangelistic efforts are better, small or large ones?" The responses are shown in table 9.

TABLE 9

COMPARISONS OF SMALL AND LARGE EVANGELISTIC EFFORTS

Evangelistic Efforts	Number	Percentage
Small	28	65
Large	15	34
Totals	43	99

Small evangelistic efforts were rated better than large ones because:

1. Few people are easier to assimilate than large numbers.

2. Care and love are shown better to a few than to many people.

3. Small efforts are less costly but effective for nurturing purposes.

4. Friendship is easier to develop and maintain with fewer people than with many people.

Time in Baptismal Classes

Another question the pastors answered was: "Can keeping the new converts longer in baptismal classes before baptism help to reduce church member loss?" About 30 percent said yes, and 70 percent said no. The group who answered no gave the following reasons:

1. Quality indoctrination does not require many months and years to prepare baptismal candidates.

2. Warm love and care for converts are important ingredients for nurturing.

3. Longer periods of time in baptismal classes before baptism could discourage the converts.

4. Set goals are good to work towards.

5. Emphasis should be given to converts that baptism is not the end of studying.

The group who said yes gave the following reasons:

1. There were not many member losses in the late seventies and eighties when baptismal candidates stayed six

months to one year in baptismal classes before baptism.

2. Much time spent produces solid and lasting members.

3. Fruits of their conversion should be demonstrated before actual baptism; for example, returning tithe.

4. Careful examining of baptismal candidates on a one-to-one basis without being in a hurry helps to avoid baptizing them before they are fully ready.

5. Older folks still support longer periods for indoctrinating baptismal candidates before baptism.

Equipping Elders

Pastors also responded to the following question:

"What do you think of church elders? Are they adequately equipped to prepare converts for baptism?" No, they are not adequately equipped for the job of teaching converts for baptism. The pastors said the elders need constant training and teaching materials in English for those who read English and in vernacular for those who read vernacular.

A Nurturing Program

The next question the pastors answered was: "Is there a program in the Zambia Union for nurturing new and old members?" The responses are shown in table 10 below.

The majority of the pastors answered "no." They wished there could be a program developed for nurturing members throughout the Zambia Union territory. Sixteen said yes.

TABLE 10

PROGRAM FOR NURTURING CHURCH MEMBERS IN ZAMBIA UNION

Program for Nurturing	Number	Percentage
No	28	63
Yes	16	36
Totals	44	99

Those who said "yes" understood the program for nurturing as including the following:

1. Church attendance
2. Bible studies
3. Witnessing programs
4. Sabbath school programs
5. Church fellowship gatherings
6. Dorcas and Adventist men's organizations.

Goal Setting

Another question to pastors was: "Could the idea of goal setting for baptisms required by the higher organizations on a quarterly basis be a contributing factor toward losing members?" Seventy-five percent said "no," and 25 percent said "yes." The ones who said "no" responded with these reasons:

1. Nothing wrong with goal setting.
2. Goals are good to work towards.

3. Reaching goals is an incentive to members and pastors.

4. Goal setting is biblically supported.

5. Goal setting encourages strategic planning.

Some said yes and these were their reasons:

1. Too much half-baked baptisms.

2. There is more emphasis on quantity than quality.

3. Encourages pleasing men rather than God.

4. Encourages competition.

Length of Baptismal Class

The last question to which the pastors responded was:

"How long should the baptismal candidates stay in the baptismal class before baptism?" The responses were:

1. Emphasis should be more on meeting the baptismal requirements than the period of time to stay in the baptismal classes.

2. Constant revision of methods for teaching baptismal candidates.

3. Three months to one year.

Responses of Pastors at Fields
and Union Mission Levels

About 50 percent of the pastors surveyed from the fields and mission office levels participated in the survey. Their responses were slightly different from those of pastors at church and district levels. Therefore, the emphasis on this report will heavily reflect those aspects that were not covered by the pastors at the church and district levels to avoid repetitions.

Main Reasons for Member Losses

The first question was: " What do you consider to be the main cause for member losses in the Zambia Union?" The following were the responses: -

1. Poor management of new members.
2. Immorality among some members.
3. Shorter period of preparing baptismal candidates.
4. Poor record keeping.
5. Small pastor ratio per member.
6. Apostasy.

Table 11 shows how they rated the above causes for member losses in Zambia.

Small pastor ratio per member was rated the highest. Poor record keeping was rated second. Shortness of period of preparing baptismal candidates was rated third. Poor management of new members rated fourth. Apostasy was rated number five, and immorality was number six.

TABLE 11

CAUSES FOR MEMBER LOSSES AS VIEWED BY PASTORS AT FIELDS
AND UNION LEVELS IN ZAMBIA UNION

Causes	Number	Percentage
Small pastor ratio per member	6	33
Poor record keeping	3	16
Shortness of period for preparation of converts	3	16
Poor management	2	11
Apostasy	2	11
Immorality	2	11
Totals	18	98

They provided the following suggestions to reduce member losses:

1. Closer monitoring of the office of the church clerk by pastors.
2. Re-educate the members about the principles of disfellowship.
3. Employ and train more pastors.

Equipping Elders

The second question was: "What do you think of church elders? Are they adequately equipped to prepare converts for baptism?" The pastors at the field and conference levels came up with this response. They said that besides training the elders to prepare baptismal candidates, they

should be trained to be more serious in preparing candidates before and after baptism.

Responses from the Lay Members

Since feedback from the survey would take a long time to get, two churches from each field were selected. The churches selected were those in the towns of Zambia for easier accessibility. Table 12 shows the responses of the members who participated per church.

TABLE 12

SURVEY RESPONSES OF LAY MEMBERS FROM TWELVE SELECTED
CHURCHES IN ZAMBIA UNION MISSION

Names of Churches	Number of Members	Percentage
Libala	33	16
Lusaka Central	25	12
Monze Central	21	10
Rusangu Mission	19	9
Mwami	19	9
Chipata Main	17	8
Ndola Main	17	8
Kitwe Central	15	7
Mansa Main	13	6
Mansa Central	11	5
Mongu Main	9	4
Tungi Church	7	3
Totals	206	97

Preparation of Converts

The responses from members were helpful because areas that the church leadership needed to address were identified

clearly in this report. The first question members responded to was: "Who prepares converts for baptism in your church?" Seventy-two percent of the members said that the elders prepared baptismal candidates, and only 27 percent said the pastors prepared the candidates. Table 13 shows this comparison:

TABLE 13

COMPARISONS BETWEEN PASTORS AND ELDERS IN PREPARING
BAPTISMAL CANDIDATES IN ZAMBIA UNION

Instructors	Number	Percentage
Church Elders	150	72
Church/District Pastors	56	27
Totals	206	99

Frequency of Pastoral Visits

The second question the members responded to was: "In a month approximately how often does your pastor visit the church?" The responses are shown in table 14.

Study Materials

The third question was: "Does your church provide study material for new members?" The response is shown in table 15.

TABLE 14

COMPARISONS OF THE PASTORAL VISITATIONS
AND THE CHURCHES THEY ARE ASSIGNED

Number of Pastoral Visits	Number of Members Who	Number of Members Who	Totals
per Month	Said Yes	Said No	
One time	158	0	158
Two times	12	145	157
Three times	5	155	160
Four times	3	162	165
Totals	178	462	

TABLE 15

COMPARISONS OF STUDY MATERIALS AND THE NEW MEMBERS
ZAMBIA UNION

Study Materials	Number of Members Who did Not Receive	Number of Members Who Did Receive	Number Who Did Not Answer	Totals
Bible manuals	163	16	27	206
Bibles	156	14	36	206

Table 15 shows that only a small minority receive Bible manuals and Bibles. The churches or the fields cannot afford them; therefore, it is left to individual members to purchase

their own. However, members wished the churches or fields would provide study materials, especially for the new members.

Worship Places

The fourth question the members responded to was: "Where does your congregation meet for worship?" The responses are shown in table 16.

TABLE 16
PLACES OF WORSHIP

Places of Worship	Number of Members Meeting in Particular Worship Locations	Percentage
Public schools	- 75	36
Church buildings	61	29
Mud and pole shelters	45	21
Under trees	14	6
No answer	11	5
Totals	206	97

Table 16 shows that there are more members worshipping in public schools than in church buildings. It also reveals that there are still some churches that worship in mud and pole shelters and under the trees. Worship places are still underdeveloped in the Zambia Union.

Summary

Pastors from the church and district levels realized that the problem of member losses in the Zambia Union was becoming a concern and, therefore, needed to be addressed. They supported

conducting more small evangelistic efforts than large ones for better assimilation. They also felt that they needed to spend more time training the laity on how to nurture members besides winning them to join the churches. Planning and budgeting for follow up is another thing they would like to see done before each evangelistic effort is conducted. In the past, evangelistic efforts were conducted but without a plan for nurturing the converts who join the church.

The pastors from the field and union mission levels had a slightly different focus. They saw that one of the main causes for member losses in the Zambia Union was poor record keeping by those who served as church clerks. They felt that some members were dropped from the records for reasons not according to church policy and sometimes for ignorance on compiling reports. They recommended intense workshops for church clerks to solve the problem. Also they felt that discipline was not properly handled in the churches. They said that there was need to educate the leadership of churches on how to discipline those who err. They need to be merciful so that the ones they discipline have room to come back.

On the part of church members the desire and enthusiasm were there to work for the Lord. Since the pastors were very few, the lay members performed ministry, including preparing candidates for baptism. However, they needed training and guidance. Pastors at the church, district, and union levels should band together to prepare instructional materials and workshops for the laity. This would really help their performances, and the work itself would be done better than in the past. The laity are tremendous resources for extending the work of the pastors.

itself would be done better than in the past. The laity are tremendous resources for extending the work of the pastors.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH ON CHURCH-GROWTH LITERATURE ON HOW TO CURB MEMBERSHIP DROPOUT IN THE ZAMBIA UNION MISSION

The research in this chapter is focused on principles found in church-growth literature about member assimilation, sometimes called "closing the back door." Thomas S. Rainer wrote: "Keeping the back door closed is a major problem in most churches today. A church with half of its membership in attendance is considered successful by most standards."¹

Unassimilated Members

A gospel minister in the Adventist church in Zambia who goes about conducting evangelistic crusades is considered important and hard-working because he wins thousands of people to the Lord. This is good, but those engaged in the work of assimilation are not viewed that way. Ministers or lay workers who devote their ministry to nurturing members should also receive similar recognition of importance from the leadership of the church. One of the reasons for this is because "evangelism and receiving new members into a

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¹Thomas S. Rainer, The Book of Church Growth (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 281.

congregation are two separate actions."¹ In other words, winning souls and keeping them are two different ministries that need mastering.

During public and personal evangelism, evangelists show care and love to the people they minister to. As a result of this love and care, those they minister to accept their messages. But as soon as they become members, the local church leadership and the pastor somehow feel like they have completed their work. This should not be the case, because a much harder job has just started. It is important to ensure that they are "incorporated into the friendship structure of a church."² Lyle E. Schaller, in his research about member assimilation, discovered the following:

The background theory is that every congregation can be described in terms of two concentric circles. The larger outer circle is the membership circle. Every member is within that outer circle. The smaller inner circle includes the members who feel a sense of belonging and who feel fully accepted into the fellowship of that called-out community. Most of the leaders come from persons within this fellowship circle. By contrast, many of the workers who do not have policy-making authority may be drawn from among the members who are outside the fellowship circle. In some congregations workers may even be recruited from among the people who are outside the membership circle, some of whom identify with this congregation as constituents and some of whom are members of other congregations. One of the means of distinguishing between those within the fellowship circle and those outside it, is the terminology; the former usually are comfortable with the pronouns we, us, and ours, when referring to that

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¹Lyle E. Schaller, Assimilating New Members (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 77.

²McIntosh and Martin, 77.

congregation, while the latter tend to use they, them, and theirs, more frequently.¹

Those circles Schaller noted above, though invisible at times, are felt and experienced by new converts before assimilation into the churches takes place. I remember when I became a member of Rusangu Secondary School Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia in 1978. Though baptized and accepted, I felt lonely and deserted for a period of about two years before I was finally assimilated. Thank God I did not quit, but some of the people who joined at the same time quit and rejoined the Roman Catholic Church because there was no warm caring given them. Schaller's further findings are even more shocking:

There is considerable evidence which suggests that at least one-third, and perhaps as many as one-half, of all Protestant church members do not feel a sense of belonging to the congregation of which they are members. They have been received into membership, but have never felt they have been accepted into the fellowship circle.²

One of the ways to assimilate, or close the back door, is friendship evangelism. What is friendship? It is the "state of being friends; friendly attachments; friendliness; amity."³

The members of the church, especially those already established, should befriend the new ones to help assimilate them into church membership. Befriending people, whether in

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¹Schaller, 76.

²Ibid., 16.

³Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Friendship."

the cause of Christianity or not, is important. Alan Loy McGinnis wrote: "Friendship adds a brighter radiance to prosperity and lightens the burden of adversity by dividing and sharing it."¹ He also observed:

People with no friends usually have a diminished capacity for sustaining any kind of love. They tend to go through a succession of marriages, be estranged from various family members, and have trouble getting along at work. On the other hand, those who learn how to love their friends tend to make long fulfilling marriages, get along well with the people at work, and enjoy their children.²

Obstacles to Friendship

Friendship, like any other good thing God created, is under Satan's attack. Satan works to cause Christians to misrepresent God. He uses racism, tribalism, materialism, and education to prevent people from being friendly. Ellen G. White, in her reaction to social evils, wrote:

The religion of Christ uplifts the receiver to a higher plane of thought and actions, while at the same time it presents the whole human race as alike the objects of the love of God, being purchased by the sacrifice of His Son. At the feet of Jesus the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, meet together, with no thought of caste or worldly preeminence. All earthly distinctions are forgotten as we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced.

The self-denial, the condescension, the infinite compassion of Him who was highly exalted in heaven puts to shame human pride, self-esteem, and social caste. Pure, undefiled religion manifests its heaven-born principles in bringing into oneness all who are sanctified through the

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¹Alan Loy McGinnis, The Friendship Factor (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 9.

²Ibid.

truth. All meet as blood-bought souls, alike dependent upon Him who has redeemed them to God.¹

In her opinion there is no genuine reason for not being friendly to others, especially among Christians. Christians are the "salt of the earth," therefore they should not allow anything to stifle their God-given friendship to others. Even materialism is not enough reason for avoiding friendship. Craig A. Dossman emphasized this when he wrote:

Materialism is causing us to turn in on ourselves instead of outward to the world. Churches are dying because they primarily focus on themselves and not the needs of the world. When you look at our church financial records, you will notice more emphasis on institutions than on community-based ministries.²

Jesus and Friendship

Jesus, both as divine and human, was friendly to all people. He came to this earth because of his strong belief in friendship with humanity. He "died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). White underscored this thought when she wrote: "He was highly social, yet He possessed a reserve that discouraged any familiarity. His temperance never led to bigotry or austerity. He was not conformed to the world, yet He was attentive to the wants of the least among men."³

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¹Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), 330.

²Dossman, 36.

³Ellen G. White, Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 262.

Examples of Jesus' practices that show his friendship to people of his time include, first, his attendance at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). Some people would think that it was not necessary for Jesus to attend. Some also would say he was wasting his time. But Jesus was not that kind of a person. He knew he was God but spent quality time to socialize with others, even the very least in society.

A second example of Jesus' friendliness is seen in his methods of recruiting disciples. He socialized with those he later invited to be his disciples. Matt 4:18-22 tells of his visit to the Sea of Galilee where he recruited fishermen. They saw his interest in them and were later willing to change profession from being fishermen to "fishers of men."

A third example of Jesus' friendliness is his methods of healing. He respected the sick by listening to them and providing for their needs. When he healed the leper (Matt 8:1-4), he first listened to the leper's request and then healed him with a "touch." Lepers were untouchable, but Jesus touched them to show His friendship.

A fourth example is found in His forgiving spirit. While on the cross he declared, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). He forgave because he was friendly to sinners. He warmly received and welcomed them.

How to Be Friendly

The topic "how to be friendly" requires much thinking and reflection on the part of the church leadership. This is so because a friendship inspires and appeals to more people in the community than do doctrines and programs. George Barna observed: "Jesus did not minister through programs. The early church did not appoint program managers. The Bible never exhorts us to create programs. Jesus, the apostles, the Bible--all indicate by word or deed that our focus is to be on people, through meaningful relationships."¹

One of the ways the Adventist church in Zambia lost touch with people was through its emphasis on programs and institutions. Church members, who are the church, received little care and attention. It should not be that way because people are more important than money or buildings. Barna, in wrestling with this issue, wrote: "Once someone focuses on you, on your needs, and makes you the center of attention, it's hard to give that up. In today's world, you don't get to be the center of attention very often."²

How do you make people the center? You can make people the center by loving and caring for them. For example, those who join the church should be visited and their actual

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¹George Barna, User Friendly Churches (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1989), 43.

²Ibid., 47.

needs assessed and provided. Most times the church does not appoint anyone for this ministry and, as a result, nothing much is done. Generalizing such a responsibility to all members does not help much, hence the need to appoint and train them on how to minister to the needy. The church also should keep in stock such things as food, clothes, and blankets to give out to the needy. The need should be thoroughly investigated before money or other items can be given out. Dossman observed,

Over and over again, the practice of compassion and unselfish sharing of material wealth is mentioned. This allowed the early church to demonstrate concretely God's love and to look after the temporal and eternal needs of the church.¹

Assimilation through Tasks/Roles

Every church member is a minister. It is not just the clergy who are responsible for ministry but all members.

Greg Ogden clarifies:

A clergy/laity dichotomy still exists in the mentality of many churchgoers. For them, the clergy are the doers of ministry--contrary to the clear biblical teaching that God's people also are to do the ministry and works of service (Eph 4:12). For most Christians today, church is a place they attend and where the pastor works.²

Ministers of the gospel and all those involved in church leadership should empower the laity to do ministry. In most cases the laity are willing to do ministry, but they

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¹Dossman, 29.

²Greg Ogden, The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 20.

lack someone to empower and permit them to do so. Thomas S. Rainer came up with this challenge:

Are we as church leaders giving our laity "permission" to start and become involved in ministries? Or is involvement in the church limited to redundant committees, where the committee members are chosen by a select group? Do we encourage or require spiritual gift assessments to involve people in ministry according to their giftedness: Or are we choosing June or John for the kitchen committee because they are not doing anything else? Do we teach, preach, and show that ministry is done by the people of God, rather than by some artificial ecclesiological hierarchy?¹

Since the laity are many, they can do more work for the Lord than the pastor alone. They can witness more for Jesus than what one or even a group of clergy can do. Some of the clergy do not recognize the tremendous resources the laity can bring to the work of God. -They need to be aware of this and how to utilize it. C. Peter Wagner recognized the laity's potential as follows: "As far as church growth is concerned, lay liberation has opened up fantastic new possibilities. If lay people become excited about what they can do for God and for their church, the sky is the limit."²

Ellen G. White, writing about the laity's potential, came up with this important and profound statement: "The work of God in the earth can never be finished until men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and

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¹Rainer, 283.

²C. Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Grow, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1984), 80.

unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers."¹

Who Are the Laity?

They are the members that occupy the churches every Sabbath. It is often assumed that they are "the amateurs and clergy are the professionals."²

The term laity is derived from the Greek *ho laos*. Its basic meaning is "the people of God." "Thus anyone who is part of the people of God is considered laity. By this definition, even clergy are laity."³ This puts the clergy and the laity on the same level because they are also the people of God.

Most times pastors are the ones busy doing ministry. Members just sit and watch the pastor do ministry. This is not right because "ministry has been committed to all the people of God and must never become the domain of the privileged few who we call clergy."⁴ Paul echoed the same idea when he wrote:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry

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¹White, Gospel Workers, 351-52.

²Russell Burrill, Revolution in the Church: Unleashing the Awesome Power of Lay Ministry (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993), 33.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:17-20 KJV)

This does not remove the pastor from the responsibility of leadership. He is still the leader, but his leadership should give allowance to the laity to also do ministry. In fact the pastor should be a source of inspiration to the laity in ministry involvement. Russell Burrill noted as follows:

The pastor may function as a leader, a source of inspiration, or an organizer, but the pastor cannot and must not attempt to do the whole work of the ministry, for this is the job of the whole church. However, the pastor does perform a work of ministry, not because he is a pastor, but because he is first of all a lay person, and because that is the work of the laity.¹

Lay involvement in ministry is good and biblically supported. Ministers or pastors should accept this fact because there is no way God-given ministry can be finished without laity's involvement. Melvin J. Steinbron in his study of laity involvement in ministry discovered:

As we studied the scriptures, we discovered that there is a God-given method by which His love could be given concretely to all of our members. That method is through raising up a sizable team of lay people who can be called forth, trained, equipped and then commissioned to the task--to be pastors.²

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¹Ibid.

²Melvin J. Steinbron, Can the Pastor Do It Alone? (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 26.

Most times the laity feel less equipped than the pastors because of the fact that they are not trained. Pastors have spent several years in theological seminaries training to be pastors. For sure the training they undergo puts them at an advantage in terms of the knowledge they have. But still more can serve the Lord without being trained academically. Alistair Campbell, a Scottish churchman and theologian, observed:

Pastoral care . . . is not correctly understood if it is viewed within the framework of professionalism. . . . Pastoral care is a relationship founded upon the integrity of the individual. Such a relationship does not depend primarily upon the acquisition of knowledge or the development of skill. Rather, it depends upon a caring attitude toward others which comes from our own experience of pain, fears, and loss, and our own release from their deadening grip.¹

Accordingly, biblical evidence calls for ministry that encompasses all believers. In other words, all believers in Christ are ministers of God. They should neither wait for training nor empowerment by the church but share the good news of Jesus Christ to people in a simple yet dynamic way.

Spiritual Gifts

One of the ways to properly involve the laity in ministry is to give them tasks or responsibilities according to their spiritual gifts. What are spiritual gifts? Spiritual gifts are gifts God the Holy Spirit bestows to equip people for ministry when they become Christians. C.

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¹Alistair Campbell, Rediscovering Pastoral Care (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1981), 7.

Peter Wagner defined spiritual gifts in this way: "A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the Body."¹

Another church-growth expert defined it as follows:

"Spiritual gifts are the skills and abilities necessary to do the Master's work on earth, resulting in the maturation of the church."²

Every committed Christian is capable of discovering his or her spiritual gifts. How can one discover spiritual gifts? One of the best ways to do so was pointed out by E. E. Cleveland as follows:

I knew then, but even more so now, that disciplined living and dependence upon God were requisites for the exercise of these gifts. My personal prayers became expressions of total dependency. This deliberate cultivation of God-consciousness has, through the years, found its fruitage in gifts divinely given.³

In other words one "has to be a Christian"⁴ in order to discover spiritual gifts.

Second, a Christian has to believe in spiritual gifts. Besides accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour, a Christian

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¹C. Peter Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979), 42.

²McIntosh and Martin, 88.

³E. E. Cleveland, Let the Church Roll On (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1997), 115.

⁴Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow, 106.

also has to believe in spiritual gifts personally in order to discover them. In fact, Wagner was right when he wrote:

I am almost certain that most Christians who do not believe in spiritual gifts believe that way because they have not been told about them. In my long experience, I cannot recall any Christian who has seriously listened to teaching on spiritual gifts and not become a believer.¹

Third, a Christian has to be willing to work. God gives spiritual gifts to Christians so that they can spread the good news to the people of the world. He does not give spiritual gifts to Christians just for the fun of it. He does so for saving people from this sinful world. Wagner was in support of this line of thought when he wrote:

God has given you one or more spiritual gifts for a reason. He has a job He wants you to do in the Body of Christ, a specific job for which He has equipped you. God knows whether you are serious about working for Him. If He sees that you just want to discover your gift for the fun of it or because it is the "in" thing to do, you cannot expect Him to help you do it.²

Fourth, a Christian has to pray. What is prayer? White defined prayer in this way:

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive him. Prayer does not bring God down to us but brings us up to Him.³

James also wrote: "If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally" (Jas 1:5). It is

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¹Ibid., 107.

²Ibid., 108.

³White, Steps to Christ, 52.

important to ask God through prayer so that he can reveal to us our spiritual gifts.

The Purposes for Spiritual Gifts

The spiritual gifts are given, first of all, for edification. The apostle Paul, writing to the Ephesians, declared: "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). McIntosh and Martin wrote that in the book of Acts the apostolic church was "edified and grew in number and strength."¹

Second, the members have their needs met. Every member of the church needs her or his spiritual needs met. One of the ways God provides for the needy is to give his followers spiritual gifts for service. He gives spiritual gifts to Christians so that they can in turn serve others. And those who give service to others "are saved to serve."²

Third, members are satisfied. Most people, after joining the church, develop a desire to participate in the leadership. If they receive a responsibility that matches with their spiritual gifts, they experience satisfaction and their desire for it increases. James G. Hougland and James

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¹McIntosh and Martin, 88.

²Leslie B. Flynn, 19 Gifts of the Spirit (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 11.

Wood came up with this conclusion: "That people who definitely feel that they are having an impact on their social structure will not only sense more satisfaction but also desire to continue their efforts."¹ George Barna put it even better as follows: "Unless you become involved in the activities of your church, you will never truly feel satisfied with that church."²

Win Arn, one of the church-growth advocates, has made the following interesting and yet challenging discovery:

The typical church that is declining has approximately twenty-seven tasks/roles per every hundred adults in the church. In a declining church often those who are participants perform more than one task or role. Churches which have plateaued have developed forty-three opportunities to become involved per every hundred adults. The growing and healthy body offers sixty tasks or roles per every hundred adults, with a low level of overlap and overuse.³

In other words, he found out that the more positions the church has for its members, the better for retention and assimilation. Therefore, each church should strive to provide responsibilities to its members. However, these tasks are not "busy work, but kingdom work. These new

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¹James G. Hougland and James Wood, "Control in Organization and the Commitment of Members," Social Forces 59 (September 1980): 93.

²George Barna, Evangelism That Works (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 93.

³Win Arn, The Church Growth Ratio Book (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth, 1987), 10.

roles/tasks should focus on meeting needs, changing lives, and touching people with Christ's love and care."¹

Assimilation through Small Groups

Before discussing how small groups can help church member assimilation, it is better first to define "small group." What is a small group? Jeffrey Arnold, author of The Big Book on Small Groups, aptly defined it as "an intentional gathering of three to twelve people who commit themselves to work together to become better disciples of Jesus Christ."² He also listed a variety of formats and focuses such as "prayer circles, Bible studies, mission fellowships, sharing and caring groups, evangelistic teams, church ministry committees, new member classes, house churches, covenant groups, etc."³

Small groups can help church member assimilation. There are several essential ingredients to the assimilation mix. The first is sharing within the group. The Apostle Paul admonished the Hebrews in this way: "But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:16). In other words, God wants and requires His people to share whatever they have with others, especially with those in need. In fact when we share

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¹Ibid., 68.

²Jeffrey Arnold, The Big Book on Small Groups (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 9.

³Ibid.

material things with others we are not losing because Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35, last part). Sharing benefits not only the receiver but the giver as well. Charles H. Spurgeon wrote: "A good character is the best tombstone. Those who love you, and were helped by you, will remember you when forget-me-nots are withered. Carve your name on hearts, and not on marble."¹

Members of a small group experience an opportunity whereby they are able to share their life challenges with others. In a small group also they develop freedom to talk about themselves and their needs. Members of the group should be attentive and be willing not only to pray for others but to supply their material needs. Everybody likes to belong to a caring people. We belong to God because he cares. Floyd L. Schwanz underscored this thought when he wrote:

When Moses was given the two tablets of stone, God outlined for us how we are to relate to Him and to each other. From the creation of humanity to this present day, God continues to love with an everlasting love, calling us to Himself in relational ways.²

The second ingredient of small groups is Bible study. The Bible is the Word of God. We must be free to study it. The apostles Paul, writing to young Timothy, revealed, "All

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¹Charles H. Spurgeon, Sermons Illustrated (Minneapolis: Jeff and Pam Carroll Publishers, 1989), 36.

²Floyd L. Schwanz, Growing Small Groups (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1995), 19.

scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Dwight D. Eisenhower, writing about the importance of Bible study, put it this way: "To read the Bible is to take a trip to a fair land where the spirit is strengthened and faith renewed."¹

Three changes take place in a person when he or she studies the Bible. First, the student is changed morally. The Bible says, "And do not be conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2). The person who studies the Bible will not be "conformed to this world." He-or she will develop some God-given abilities to resist the fleshly desire of "this world." And "small groups are a place where we can hear the 'word of Christ' (Rom 10:17). They are a place where we can be molded from within rather than from without. There the believer receives inward power to overcome the pressures of the world."²

Second, the student is changed mentally. The Bible says, "But be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2).

The Greek word translated transformed in this passage is used to describe the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus

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¹Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979), 192.

²McIntosh and Martin, 97.

(Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2), and it is also used to describe the glorious change wrought in believers when they steadfastly contemplate the Lord Jesus.¹

An individual who takes times to study and meditate on the Word of God will experience positive mental changes. His or her thoughts, instead of focusing on sinful imaginations, will be centered on spiritual things that bring hope, courage, and goodness of life.

Third, the student is changed motivationally. The Bible declares: "That you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2). "Only through study can we see God's direction for our lives and become motivated to walk in the steps that He has laid before us."²

The third ingredient for small groups is support. "Support is living in touch with people and closing the triangle," a triangle composed of God, ourselves, and other people.³ Real and normal living requires that we believe in God, ourselves, and other people. God uses people to meet other people's needs. Their life challenges can be a blessing when shared with others who may be experiencing similar ones. Tan wrote: "Nothing happens to you that hasn't happened to someone else."⁴

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¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 98.

³Ibid., 99.

⁴Tan, 192.

People who have the greatest impact upon others have these characteristics. "First, they consistently portray an immense joy in living."¹ They are positive about life. Every obstacle they encounter is a stepping stone to others. They do not easily get discouraged. They are like someone who said, "When God closes this door He opens another one." Their enthusiasm is contagious to others.

Second, they drop anything to help another person. "Their bags lie unpacked, letters lie unanswered, the house is not cleaned, for as long a time as other people need. They are individual-conscious, not thing-conscious."² People are more important than things. This is why Jesus was more relational than His disciples. Floyd L. Schwanz discovered that

The Sermon on the Mount is all horizontal stuff, and Jesus' ministry method was so relational. Throughout Acts we see God raising up a community of believers in each locality. The epistles are filled with challenges such as the following:

- Love one another (1 John 3:11,23; 4:11-12).
- Love each other deeply (1 Peter 1:22, 48)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess 4:18; 5:22; Heb 3:13, 10:25).
- Serve each other (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10).
- Forgive each other (Eph 4:32; Col 3:16).
- Instruct one another (Rom 14:14; Col 3:16).
- Carry each other's burdens (Gal 6:2).
- Confess your sins to each other (James 5:16).
- Pray for each other (James 5:16).³

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¹McIntosh and Martin, 99.

²Schwanz, 25.

³Ibid.

The fourth ingredient for small groups is service, "performance of labor for the benefit of another, or at another's command."¹ John Wesley defined service as follows: "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, and as long as you can."²

Assimilation through Identification

Identification is another factor used to assimilate people in the church. "To identify" is to "recognize, distinguish, put one's finger on; associate; name."³ This means that the pastor and local church leaders need to identify the individual needs of new members. Needs, if properly met, motivate people to do something. Knight wrote:

Just as there are the deeper currents that motivate us in our faith, there are also the deeper currents that motivate people to become assimilated into your church. They are drawn along by unseen factors which they identify with and support.⁴

One of the ways to identify people is to discover their purpose for life. Purpose directs people, and a question like Why are we here? can help someone to define his or her

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¹Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Laity."

²Walter B. Knight, Knight's Treasury of Illustrations (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1963), 357.

³Merriam-Webster, s.v. "To Identify."

⁴Ibid., 105.

purpose for life. It is not only individuals but church congregations who need to define their purpose for existence. McIntosh and Martin wrote:

A congregation's dream must be clearly known by its members. Yet a statement of a kingdom dream is rarely encompassed adequately by a few words. God's purpose of redemption is always greater than our imaginations, hopes, and vocabularies. But our continuing witness in word and life is our best vehicle for telling his story. Stating and publicizing your congregation's dream is critical. Either the sharp focus of your congregation's resources of people, facilities, money, energy, and information is on a defined dream or your church is using its resources ineffectively to some degree.¹

McIntosh and Martin pointed out five guidelines on how to help people identify with the purpose of the church:

First, establish a ministry area. A desire to "save" the world is a wonderful ideal, yet in all practicality, improbable. Research has determined that the following is an accurate picture of the typical driving [to church] times for most church members.

- 20 percent drive 0-5 minutes
- 40 percent drive 5-15 minutes
- 23 percent drive 15-25 minutes
- 6 percent drive 25-35 minutes
- 5 percent drive 35-45 minutes
- 3 percent drive 45+ minutes

A church's incorporation strategy must focus on those people within a three-to-ten mile radius. If people have to drive much farther than this, they will have trouble identifying with your church.

Second, establish a target audience. Whom do you hope to reach? What type of church are you building? If families are to be the focus, then the people need to hear the word family in the purpose. If the evangelism of the local community is the aim, make that clear. The purpose must provide a sense of direction by using words like "reach" and "teach." Spend time evaluating the new residents, or people experiencing crisis, or the families with new babies. Establish your purpose based on their needs.

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¹McIntosh and Martin, 108.

Third, condense this purpose into 25 words or less. This exercise causes the leadership to think through and prioritize the purpose. It makes the purpose easily memorized by the people. It becomes an opportunity for the pastor to springboard into a complete series of messages on "The Direction of _____ Church," or "God's Purpose for _____ Church."

Fourth, make the purpose visible. Repetition is the key to learning. We must expose the people to outside experts who will validate and confirm the purpose. Seminars are appropriate. Consultants extremely useful. Use a variety of media to convey the message. Slide shows, banners, newsletters, testimonies, prayers, and films can all be very effective. We must teach the purpose, especially to all the new members. The pastor's class or new-member orientation class is the best place to begin. Then, every Sunday school class must hear it, every leadership retreat must discuss it, and all planning must include it.

Fifth, the purpose and growth of the church become a standing agenda item for staff in board meetings. Vital statistics must be gathered on attendance and Sunday School involvement. Critiques of curriculum and worship must be sought. Updates and follow up and visitation must be stressed. We all have our opinions, but facts are hard to argue against. Do not be afraid to ask for the presentation of charts and graphs to maintain a vivid perspective of the purpose and its fulfillment.¹

Identification with the Vision

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov 29:18). Vision "provides people with the motivation for accomplishing the purpose."² The dictionary defines it as "a vivid picture created by the imagination." In other words, people with vision will be motivated to accomplish their purpose in life. Vision is important because it empowers people to productiveness.

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¹Ibid., 108.

²Merriam-Webster, s.v. "Vision."

The apostolic church, on the Day of Pentecost, grew from 120 members to 3,000. But the church did not stop there, because the Bible reveals: "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 5:4). The people's vision was to grow not only quantitatively but qualitatively as well. McIntosh and Martin put it this way, "Large is not lethal."¹ In other words, the church should grow but in a qualitative manner.

Assimilation through Spiritual Growth

Spiritual growth is also fundamental in member retention. Pastors and church leaders should ensure that their members are fed spiritually. Quality time for prayers and Bible study is to be encouraged in all churches. It is one of the ways the members can be kept spiritually healthy and prevented from apostatizing.

McIntosh and Martin suggest "four deadly signs that inhibit spiritual growth." These are isolation, fragmentation, stagnation, and confrontation.² These signs are important and need proper analysis as follows:

First, isolation is a very easy mood for new and even old members to go into. Factors such as failure, lack of acceptance, unrecognition, discouragement, and uncaring can

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¹Ibid., 109.

²Ibid., 119.

lead to isolation. It is important in every church to involve members in meaningful fellowship such as Bible studies and prayers. In these kinds of fellowship people will be enabled to develop relationships with others that help prevent them from isolation.

Second, fragmentation, if not prevented in a church, can spread like cancer. One surgeon described its similarity this way:

A tumor is called benign if its effects are fairly localized and it stays within membrane boundaries. But the most traumatizing condition in the body occurs when disloyal cells defy inhibition. They multiply without any check on growth, spreading rapidly throughout the body, choking out normal cells. White cells, armed against foreign invaders, will not attack the body's own mutinous cells. Physicians fear no other malfunction more deeply; it is called cancer. For still mysterious reasons, these cells, and they may be tissues--grow wild, out of control. Each is a healthy functioning cell, but disloyal, no longer acting in regard for the rest of the body.¹

God requires the church members to be "fitly joined together" (Eph 4:16 KJV). But the devil incites disunity. Therefore, one of the biblical ways to combat the works of the devil is through prayer and Bible studies.

Third, stagnation is being at a standstill, without any movement. Tan illustrated the danger of stagnation by referring to an airplane:

Between an airplane and every other form of locomotion and transportation there is one great contrast. The horse and wagon, the automobile, the bicycle, the locomotive, the speedboat, and the great battleship--all can come to a

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¹Paul E. Brand and Philip Yancey, Fearfully and Wonderfully Made (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 59.

standstill without danger, and they can all reverse their engines, or their power, and go back. But there is not a reverse about the engine of an airplane. It cannot back up. It dare not stand still. If it loses its momentum and forward drive, then it crashes. The only safety for the airplane is in its forward and upward motion. The only safe direction for the Christian to take is forward and upward. If he stops, or if he begins to slip and go backward, that moment he is in danger.¹

Christianity is an ongoing experience. There is no room for stagnation. The apostle Paul admonished his converts this way:

For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light. (Eph 5:8 NKJV)

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom 12:1)

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having hold of it yet; but one thing I do; forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:13-14)

A fourth sign of inhibited spiritual growth is excessive confrontation. Someone said, "There is always conflict between and among people that live together." Conflict may be positive or negative, depending on the circumstances. Too many conflicts, though sometimes positive and beneficial, can result in traumatizing situations. It is important to prevent excessive conflict or destructive confrontation at any cost if we can. God is peaceful, but He is also just and will not make peace with

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¹Tan, 182-84.

evil. Nevertheless He says: "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Matt 5:9 NKJV)

Summary

Nurturing new members is not just the work of the pastor alone, but the entire church. The reason for this is because all new members need love and warm caring which one person cannot adequately give to all, especially when a great number join the church. For effective care to new members, the regular members should be assigned to specific new individuals. The ones they are assigned to they should befriend in such a way that they discover even their material and psychological needs. And the assignment should be done shortly after new members are baptized. Church-growth advocates call this "small groups."

Besides friendship, most church-growth experts support the principle of incorporating new members in churches through giving them tasks and roles that are suitable and that match with the talents and spiritual gifts they have, using both care and caution in assigning them places of service in the church.

CHAPTER 6

SPECIFIC ROLES OF PASTORS AND LAITY ON ASSIMILATING NEW MEMBERS IN ZAMBIA UNION MISSION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia continues to face the challenge of having few pastors taking care of large numbers of members. The current ratio of pastor per member is 1:2000.¹ This is far too difficult to manage adequately. In fact one of the reasons why the work has been progressing despite some member dropout is because of the laity's involvement. Laity are doing ministry, such as preaching, teaching, and administration. Therefore, it is important for the pastor to train and empower the laity to do their God-given ministry so that his work can grow.

The Theological Role of a Pastor

The Bible is clear regarding the work of the pastor. It says:

And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:11-13)

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¹Zambia Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Quarterly Statistical Report, 1987-1996.

According to this text the work of a pastor is "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry." The work of a pastor here is to train the laity to do ministry. This is actually the pastor's main job. White wrote: "Let the minister devote more of his time to educating than to preaching. Let him teach the people how to give to others the knowledge they have received."¹

It is very easy for the pastor to conclude that training and empowering laity is taking away the responsibility he has been assigned by the conference committee. No, actually it is not taking away responsibilities and power from him but restoring power and making him become more responsible over the church and members. Russell Burrill wrote:

The work of the pastor is to prepare God's people to do the work of the ministry. It is not the job of the pastor to be the only soul winner in the church. It is not the job of the pastor to do the work of the ministry, but to train the members to do the work of the ministry. It is true that the pastor, as stated in the previous chapter, performs ministry. He does give Bible studies, counsel, visit, etc. But whenever he does it, he is acting in the capacity of a lay person and is not functioning as a pastor. What a pastor is paid to do is to train the members. If he is not doing that, then biblically, he is not doing his job.²

A pastor alone cannot do the work that needs to be done in the churches, including nurturing of new members. No

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¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 7:20.

²Burrill, 26.

because there is just too much to be done. No wonder the church in Zambia keeps losing members. A pastor cannot do it alone, therefore, he needs to stick to his job description of training members. This way the churches will be stronger spiritually and able to retain new members because there will be more trained workers. White has this advice to pastors:

God has not given His ministers the work of setting the churches right. No sooner is this work done, apparently, than it has to be done over again. Church members that are thus looked after and labored for become religious weaklings. If nine tenths of the effort that has been put forth for those who know the truth had been put forth for those who have never heard the truth, how much greater would have been the advancement made.¹

The Jerusalem church became egocentric and forgot the work of evangelism and nurturing. God allowed persecution in order to remind it of the work he had called it to do. White also wrote:

Forgetting that strength to resist evil is best gained by aggressive service, they began to think that they had no work so important as that of shielding the church in Jerusalem from the attacks of the enemy. Instead of educating the new converts to carry the gospel to those who had not heard it, they were in danger of taking a course that would lead all to be satisfied with what had been accomplished. To scatter His representatives abroad, where they could work for others, God permitted persecution to come upon them. Driven from Jerusalem they went everywhere preaching the word.²

Nurturing new members is important and every pastor should ensure that it is done. One way of nurturing is to

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¹White, Testimonies, 7:18.

²Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 105.

train and empower the laity to work for God. As they witness to others about Christ, they will be strengthened and in the process nurtured. Kenneth Van Wyk wrote as follows:

This mission-oriented Christian education is to equip people for the growth and outreach of the church. . . . The church is a training center where the people of God are equipped for their respective areas of ministry and mission. Nurture indeed comes as a by-product of being equipped and involved in ministry. My experience in Christian education is that a mission mentality in the church motivates people to training and produces astounding results in personal spiritual growth as well as church growth.¹

Burrill also wrote: "It is impossible to be nurtured apart from involvement in soul winning."² In other words the new members should be trained in evangelism and be given specific responsibilities to perform in the church. Many times members are trained to work for God, but after the training no specific jobs are given to them. This is sad. It does not help the church, or the pastor who trained them. If nothing is done quickly to arrest the situation, they will be discouraged and eventually end up leaving church fellowship.

The pastor as a trainer and equipper cannot be over-emphasized. It is the job for the pastor. Along with training and equipping, the pastor must provide leadership

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¹Kenneth Van Wyk, Pastor's Church Handbook, vol. 1 (Garden Grove, CA: Community Church, 1993), 134.

²Burrill, 51.

training and equipping, the pastor must provide leadership that encourages members to work for the Lord. George Barna wrote:

The pastor must provide true leadership in all dimensions of ministry activity. Such leadership must influence several areas: teaching, modeling, training, evaluating, encouraging, exhorting, praying, and sending. Although it is unhealthful to wait for the pastor to make evangelism happen within the church, it is similarly unhealthful to minister in a church where the pastor provides no leadership in the realm of outreach.¹

Barna also wrote:

We do nonbelievers a disservice if we introduce them to Christ, have the privilege of seeing them decide to follow Christ, but then leave them on their own to grow. The period immediately following the decision leaves the new believer incredibly vulnerable to the darkest tricks of the enemy.

For us to abandon the new believer at that point is akin to recruiting a new soldier into the army, then immediately throwing that person into battle without training or armor. The new soldier doesn't stand a chance. He is susceptible to all of the attacks of the enemy without any means of protection. The failure to enfold and to disciple a new believer is not only a tragic sin against the new believer, but also is an offense against the God who called us to evangelize!²

Evangelistic Efforts

Evangelistic efforts in Zambia help to bring thousands of souls to Christ and the Seventh-day Adventist churches. On the other hand, a substantial number of new members who join the church through evangelistic efforts end up leaving church fellowship. How does the pastor's role in this help to curb dropouts? The pastor's role is that of training and

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¹Barna, Evangelism That Works, 132.

²Ibid., 131.

assign them the following specific responsibilities during and after evangelistic efforts.

First, training in how to invite the surrounding community to attend an evangelistic effort. This is important because wrong approaches to people can cause people to never attend evangelistic meetings.

Second, training in ushering the people. This is important too because first impressions on people can go a long way in influencing them positively.

Third, training in follow-ups. This has to do with following up interests after the evangelistic effort. This is the right time to enable them to grow.

Fourth, training in giving Bible studies. The pastor cannot be in every Bible study group, but he can train the laity on how to give Bible studies. He can send the trained laity to conduct Bible studies in various places which he himself cannot reach.

Fifth, training in preaching. If one pastor is the only preacher at an evangelistic effort, what happens when he falls sick? Disaster. But it should not be that way if the pastor trains some laity on how to preach. If he does not train some to preach, he is hindering the importance of the meetings being conducted.

Sixth, training in singing and conducting music. Several can be trained and assigned specific days when to lead music in the evangelistic efforts. The pastor cannot

be a preacher and a chorister at the same time. Hence it is important to share responsibilities.

There are many other areas of training for an effective evangelistic effort. It is up to the pastor and the local leaders to decide the types of training and how to implement them. The real issue here is that it is practically impossible for one person to perform all the duties required to run an evangelistic effort. Barna wrote: "One of the marks of effective leadership is the ability to identify qualified people, to prepare them for action and to release them to do what they do best with not just verbal blessings but with the mandate to do what is necessary to get the job done in a manner that meets the existing standards and accomplishes defined goals."¹

Having many Christians trained in conducting evangelistic efforts is helpful in minimizing drop-out in the churches. The new converts who join the church will have more church members to assist them in their spiritual journey. It is impossible for the pastor alone to nurture the converts. This is one of the reasons why he should spend time training members to help in assimilating new converts.

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¹Ibid., 131.

Factors That May Hinder a Church's Evangelistic
Efforts and Nurturing Converts

Pastors need to know the factors that hinder an evangelistic effort and nurturing of new members. They are:

1. The absence of vision for church-based evangelism.
2. The lack of church-wise ownership of evangelism as core value and activity.
3. The absence of church-wide prayer for evangelistic efforts.
4. A lack of significant relationship with non-believers.
5. An attitude of disinterest in non-Christians.
6. The goal of facilitating decisions rather than conversions.
7. Too much reliance upon the pastor to make evangelism happen.
8. Not enough strong leadership by the pastor in evangelism.
9. The absence of a strategic plan for outreach.
10. No accountability for meeting evangelistic goals and standards.
11. The inability to change from existing methods to more effective methods.
12. Poor-quality ministry activities.
13. Having only one entry point for non-believers.
14. Inadequate training of evangelizers.
15. Allocating responsibility without giving authority.
16. Failure to celebrate stellar efforts, obedience to God's call, and His blessings.
17. Division among churches.¹

How to Motivate the Laity

One of the things that the pastor can do in order to find the laity to train for evangelism and nurturing is to motivate them. How does he motivate them? This is crucial because if the laity are not motivated, then they will not attend the training. Here are some of the things a pastor can do to motivate the laity.

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¹Ibid., 139.

One way to motivate the laity is to involve them in planning activities or running programs for the church. This is important because in the process of planning they can become owners of the programs and develop a desire for involvement. The pastor should give them freedom to get involved because their success is his too. And their participation leads to a desire to do more for the church.

A second way to motivate the laity is to teach them that they are co-workers with God. White wrote: "To everyone work has been allotted and no one can be a substitute for another."¹ However, it is important to assign responsibilities according to their spiritual gifts. Burrill wrote:

In the early church, it was recognized that every member had a spiritual gift or a combination of gifts. All did not possess the same gifts. God had enough gifts in the church to make it function properly. He placed each believer in a particular church because that person had a gift which the congregation needed at that time. Every believer was important and needed.²

Immediately after the training is done, the pastor and the local leadership of the church should empower the laity to work. They should assign the responsibilities and freedom to them so they can work with little supervision.

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¹Ellen G. White, Christian Service (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), 10.

²Burrill, 28-29.

The Difference between the Clergy and the Laity?

The dictionary defines laity as "the people, as distinguished from the clergy; laymen." The obvious question to ask is, How are the laity distinguished from clergy and vice versa? The laity are not trained. The clergy are trained. The laity work on a voluntary basis. The clergy are employees of the conference. They are paid for the work they do. Sometimes the laity do more work than the clergy. The clergy should train and inspire the laity to work for the Lord. The laity should develop a positive attitude towards the Lord's work.

Burrill wrote:

In the New Testament, the clergy were lay people who devoted full time to directing gospel work. The laity were seen as performers of ministry and the clergy as the trainers and equippers of ministry. Yet, as part of the laity, the clergy also performed ministry.¹

In most churches the clergy are doing more ministry than the laity. And since the clergy are the minority, they cannot manage the demands of the ministry. It is, therefore, important to know that ministry calls for every believer's involvement. Burrill appealed:

Correct theology will result in correct practice. Wrong theology will result in a distorted practice. As long as we fail to return to the biblical concept of the laity and the church, we will continue in Laodicean indifference and fail to see the work of God finished. We say that we believe that the work will be finished by a revived lay movement. If we are ever going to see God's work go forward as it should we must again make our church a lay person's church. The whole church must become involved in

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¹Ibid., 30.

the ministry of the whole church. Pastors need to actively encourage the work of the laity, and begin preparing the church for the full ministry of the laity. It is time to call all laity to the aid of the church in fully restoring the ministry of the laity. May we soon see that day.¹

Sometimes tension is found among pastors because they feel that their work is being taken by the laity. This should not be the case. The pastors should be happy to see the laity doing ministry. Instead of discouraging them they should be encouraging the laity. The whole aim is to work together. Notice this statement from Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .:

Scripture does not support the view that the clergy should minister while the laity merely warm the pews and wait to be fed. Both pastors and laity make up the church, "God's own people" (1 Peter 2:9 RSV). Together they are responsible for the well-being of the church and its prosperity. They are called to work together, everyone according to his or her special Christ-given gifts.²

Work for the Laity

It is important to understand God's call for all believers. What does God want the laity to do as far as advancing his kingdom on earth is concerned? The Bible reveals:

And from Jesus Christ, who is a faithful witness, the firstborn of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a

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¹Ibid., 31.

²Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . 27, A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 211.

kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to Him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. (Rev 1:5-6 NIV)

According to the above text, Jesus loves all people, and he freed them by offering his life through death on the cross. As soon as people accept Him as Lord and Saviour of their lives, he charges them with a responsibility to service for him. They do so by sharing the gospel and nurturing others. He made his people "a kingdom of priests," meaning that they are a team in working for the Lord.

The Apostle Peter, wrestling with the work of believers, wrote:

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . . But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Pet 2:5, 9 NIV)

In other words, God is calling Christians to develop a meaningful relationship with him and to share their experiences with him to others. This way the church will be nurtured spiritually and be able to reach others with the gospel. Paul, writing to the Christians in Rome, urged: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom 1:12 NIV).

What then is the work of the laity? The work of the laity is threefold: (1) to know Jesus as their personal Saviour and to grow in faith, (2) to share the experiences

of the gospel with others, and (3) to help nurture others in the faith. This way every believer will have something to do in the church. There will be none without work because work starts with knowing Jesus and sharing our knowledge and experiences of him with others.

Three Key Lists of Spiritual Gifts

C. Peter Wagner identified three key lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible as follows:

Romans 12

1. Prophecy
2. Service
3. Teaching
4. Exhortation
5. Giving
6. Leadership
7. Mercy

1 Corinthians 12 adds the following (without repeating those already listed from Romans):

8. Wisdom
9. Knowledge
10. Faith
11. Healing
12. Miracles
13. Discerning
14. Tongues
15. Interpretation of tongues
16. Apostle
17. Help
18. Administration

Ephesians 4 adds the following (again without repeating any mentioned above):

19. Evangelist
20. Pastor

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¹Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts, 53-54.

God knows that in order for the church to grow even in keeping members strong, they need spiritual gifts which he himself bestows. In Rom 12:1 the Bible declares: "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function." In other words the members of the church are to be given responsibilities in their churches that are according to God-given gifts.

If the pastor and the local church leaders use the outlined spiritual gifts in the above three Bible texts, they will not run out of responsibilities to give church members. Every member will have something to do. But before members assume any unfamiliar responsibilities, they should undergo some training provided by the pastor or other experienced members.

One of the responsibilities in which church members can be involved in the church is providing care to new church members and those not yet members. When care is given to those already members, they internally grow and become strong members. But those not yet members are won to Christ by the warm caring shown to them. Donahue points out six aspects of providing care to people, as follows:

1. Feed the flock.
2. Lead them to rest.
3. Seek the lost.
4. Bring back the scattered.
5. Bind up the broken.
6. Strengthen the sick.¹

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¹Bill Donahue, The Willow Creek Guide to leading Life-Changing Small Groups (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 149.

Every Person Has Needs

One of the main reasons why a pastor cannot do ministry alone is because "everybody needs pastoring, even though they may be reluctant to acknowledge those needs."¹ The truth of the matter is that every person has needs; therefore, everyone needs pastoring. A pastor alone cannot manage and, therefore, needs laity involvement. Steinbron wrote:

Someone has an invalid mother . . . a marriage is in trouble . . . he has a bad back . . . they have financial problems . . . her son is in trouble with the law . . . his mother-in-law died last week . . . these all spell needs.²

The involvement of laity in ministry is crucial and needs immediate utilization. People join the church but later leave because no one cares for them. It is important that the pastor put his energies into training the laity. The power and success of the church are vested in people.

Summary

It would be a fatal mistake for the pastor to think that he can do the work alone. It is not God's plan. God wants every believer to work for Him. He did not call the pastor alone but all who profess his name.

The main job of the pastor is to train and equip the laity for ministry. He should devote himself to training

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¹Steinbron, 47.

²Ibid.

the laity in different aspects of ministry. He should not just train but show them how to work for their master Jesus. They will be able to do more work than he will for the obvious reason that they are the majority.

The main job of the laity is willingness to be trained and to work for the Lord. Each lay person should be willing to say, "Here am I! Send me," when the Lord says: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isa 6:8).

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

Zambia Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists continues to lose some of its members through apostasy and missing. The ten-year period from 1988 to 1997 studied and analyzed showed a loss of more than 50,000 members.¹ Therefore it is important for pastors and the local leadership to find solutions to the problem.

The Scriptures were investigated to find answers to church members abandoning church fellowship. Some of the findings had to do with using or putting into practice Jesus' methodologies of nurturing members. One of them that was very important had to do with recruiting more disciples. He recruited and taught them by example how to do ministry. He later empowered and sent them out to preach the gospel.

Jesus' methodologies are still applicable and useful for our time today. There is need for more workers. Jesus once said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matt 9:37-38). As church

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¹See Table 2, above.

leaders we should not just pray for "laborers" but be actively engaged in training not only the clergy but the laity into ministry.

Church-growth literature on nurturing new converts revealed that friendship, warm caring, and love for others help to assimilate them into the church. Pastors and local leaders should devise tangible plans and goals to be more friendly, warm, caring, and loving to both new and old members of our churches. Jesus once said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). For sure, a loving, friendly, and warm caring church will be able to assimilate its members and more easily attract those who are not yet members. The church will grow inwardly and outwardly (reaching out to the unreached).

Engaging the laity in ministry is the main work for the pastor. He should train the laity in how to work for the Master. He should not just end with training but also empower them for the service of Jesus Christ. This way more work will be done because the truth of the matter is that the pastor cannot do the work alone.

The laity's work is to be willing to train and put into practice the principles of witnessing for Christ. They are to trust and obey Jesus' commission that says,

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all

things that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. (Matt 28:18-20)

Conclusion

Both winning souls and nurturing them are very important. The tendency to emphasize evangelism and soul winning at the expense of nurturing is unnecessary since evangelism offers some of the best opportunities for involving every member in nurture. Pastors and local leaders can devise plans for both soul winning and nurturing. In this way the churches will grow in a balanced manner. They will be engaged in soul winning and also in assimilating new converts.

The Seventh-day Adventist churches in Zambia are well-known for teaching exactly what the Bible teaches. This is good. However, when it comes to love, our church is surpassed by other denominations. Other denominations show love to people in an active manner. It is time for the Seventh-day Adventist churches not to just teach the doctrines of the Bible but to express practical love to others.

It is not possible for pastors to do the Lord's work by themselves. They are to train and empower the laity in ministry. The laity are available and will do mightily for the Lord. For them to do that, they need recognition, training, and empowerment.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO PASTORS IN ZAMBIA UNION MISSION

Questionnaire

Preamble: The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia continues to lose members every quarter. From 1987 to 1996 the church lost more than 20 percent of its members. The task of this questionnaire is to seek for solutions to the problem of losing members. Having worked for or known the Zambian church setting yourself, on the issue, the following questions will be asked that require your most honest response:

1. What do you consider to be the main cause for member loss in the Zambia Union: Identify and explain briefly.
2. What practical suggestions do you have for solving the problem? Mention as many as you can.
3. Is the way the new converts are prepared for baptism a contributing factor to losing members eventually?
4. In terms of proper indoctrination of new converts, which evangelistic efforts are better, small or large ones? Explain your answer.
5. Can keeping the new converts longer in baptismal classes before baptism help to reduce church member loss? Explain.
6. What do you think of church elders? Are they adequately equipped to prepare converts for baptism? Explain.
7. Is there a program in the Zambia Union for nurturing new and old members? Describe the program and show its positives and negatives.
8. What suggestions can you give the pastor that can help to improve member retention in Zambia?
9. Could the idea of goal setting for baptisms required by the higher organization on a quarterly basis be a contributing factor for losing members? Explain why you think so.
10. How long should the baptismal candidates stay in the baptismal class before baptism? Explain.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO THE LAITY IN ZAMBIA UNION MISSION

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The Questionnaire

1. How are most members added to your churches? Choose one.
  - (a) By baptism
  - (b) By profession of faith
2. Who prepares converts for baptisms in your church? Choose one.
  - (a) Pastor
  - (b) Elders
3. How long do the converts stay in the baptismal class before baptism?
  - (a) 1 - 4 weeks
  - (b) 4 months - 1 year
  - (c) 2 years
  - (d) Other
4. What percentage of your members leave the church on a quarterly basis?
  - (a) 75%
  - (b) 50%
  - (c) 25%
  - (d) 5%
5. In a month approximately how often does your pastor visit the church?
  - (a) One time
  - (b) Two times
  - (c) Three times
  - (d) Four times
6. Is there a program in your church for nurturing both old and new members?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
7. Briefly describe how helpful the program is in the space provided below.

8. Is age a determining factor for baptism?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
9. If yes, what age is appropriate and why? Write your answer in the space provided below.
10. Does your church provide study materials for new converts before and after baptism?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
11. Describe briefly the materials and how helpful they are in the space provided below.
12. Approximately what is the percentage of reading members in your church?
  - (a) 100%
  - (b) 50%
  - (c) 25%
  - (d) 5%
13. Does your church have Sabbath afternoon programs for its members?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
14. What type of programs do they have?
15. Approximately how many members attend the afternoon programs on Sabbath?
  - (a) 100%
  - (b) 50%
  - (c) 25%
  - (d) 5%

16. Who conducts the afternoon programs most of the times?
- (a) Pastor
  - (b) One of the church elders
17. What results have come from the afternoon programs?
Explain in the space provided below.
18. What about mid-week prayer meetings? Approximately how many people attend?
- (a) 100%
  - (b) 50%
  - (c) 25%
  - (d) 5%
19. Who usually conducts med-week prayer meetings?
- (a) Pastor
  - (b) One of the elders
20. Do the members attend the mid-week prayer meeting?
- (a) Yes
  - (b) No
21. If no, explain in the space provided below why they do not attend.
22. Where does your congregations meet for worship?
- (a) Church building
  - (b) Community hall
  - (c) Public school hall
  - (d) Other
23. Does the place of worship have seats for members to sit on?
- (a) Yes
  - (b) No

24. If yes, describe the type of seat you use.
25. In a quarter approximately how many times does your church receive some personnel from the field/conference?
  - (a) One time
  - (b) Two times
  - (c) Three times
  - (d) Other
26. Does your church receive study materials on nurturing from the conference?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
27. If yes, discuss how helpful the materials are for the church members.
28. Do you receive Sabbath School lessons from the field/conference?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
29. If yes, do you get them on time?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
30. What percentage of members have a Sabbath School lesson quarterly?
  - (a) 100%
  - (b) 50%
  - (c) 25%
  - (d) 5%

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