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ABSTRACT

**DEVELOPING RELATIONAL COMMUNITIES: AN
EVANGELISTIC APPROACH TO
NON-ADVENTIST STUDENTS
AT SOLUSI UNIVERSITY**

by

Herbert Ndlovu

Adviser: David Penno

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING RELATIONAL COMMUNITIES: AN
EVANGELISTIC APPROACH TO
NON-ADVENTIST STUDENTS
AT SOLUSI UNIVERSITY

Name of researcher: Herbert Ndlovu

Name and degree of faculty adviser: David Penno, Ph.D.

Date completed: August 2010

Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine how healthy relational communities contribute to membership growth and the retention of non-Adventist students at Solusi University. Some of the effects of current public evangelistic approaches and the loss of community spirit were studied. The challenge of nurturing a community of meaning and relationship at Solusi was also explored.

Method

A self-reported questionnaire was completed by both Adventist and non-Adventist students. In order to verify the results of the self-reported questionnaire,

interviews were conducted with the church leadership, 10 church members, and 20 second and third year students.

Results

Analysis of the results showed that a relational evangelistic approach had a greater positive influence on students, was considered more attractive, and had better retention factors. It was found that marked differences existed in questionnaire scores between a relational evangelistic approach and a public evangelistic approach. In order to clarify this finding, another issue concerning student response to certain values was examined. Significant differences were found between caring for one another, preaching, diversity, and the remaining values. The analysis of One Anotherness practices also showed that Solusi students tended to value relationships related to small relational groups, relationship leadership style, and small relational worship centers.

Conclusions

Failure to recognize the power of relational evangelistic approach in reaching non-Adventist peers at Solusi has contributed to minimal success in penetrating religious barriers. Evidence supported the conclusion that community and relational communities were effective ways of sharing the gospel, which follows a biblical mode.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DEVELOPING RELATIONAL COMMUNITIES: AN
EVANGELISTIC APPROACH TO
NON-ADVENTIST STUDENTS
AT SOLUSI UNIVERSITY

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

by
Herbert Ndlovu

August 2010

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to Solusi University administration for the financial and moral support, especially for granting me permission to carry on my research right within the university. Furthermore, I would like to thank the Solusi faculty and student board community who all gave birth and embraced Solusi *One Anotherness* ministry.

Second, my gratitude goes to the following individuals: Dr. Danilo Poblete, my statistician; Prof. Samuel Awoniyi, my third reader; Christiane Dlamini, my grammar specialist; Lyod Makamure who worked on the layout; and Fanwell Ncube for assisting me with all IT related functions.

Third, faculty of theology members, Dr. L. Masuku, C. Sibanda, Y. Guirguis, Dr. C. Mkombe, and Dr. G. Orapeleng, for your pastoral care. I also would like to thank my two friends, Mr. Delma Lupepe and Mr. Alex Mnyaka for their financial and physical support. To my fellow SID cohort community with whom I dreamed of becoming a Doctor of Ministry, thank you, let the spirit of One Anotherness continue.

Fourth, I would like to express my greatest appreciation to the Defense Committee led by my advisor Dr. David Penno and Dr. Trevor O'Reggio for your searching questions, scholarly constructive insights, and comments. Dr. Stanley Patterson, I would like to say thank you for your formatting expertise, and Dr. Skip Bell, for your passion to see all of us graduate.

Fifth, my family is greatly appreciated: first and foremost, my only loving wife Ivonne; my son Jephthah; my daughter Simthandile; my beloved two big daughters Privilege and Sithandazile; my late father Luta; and my mum Nkazatho. You gave and did everything for me to become a doctor. Again, to my dear wife and children who were robbed of quality time during this struggle, I say *long live!*

Finally, praise be to God in the highest who supplied me with all the resources and provided me with health and wisdom to go through. Praise be to Him forever and ever.

CHAPTER 1

THE ADVENTIST CHURCH: A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As Seventh-day Adventists became more professional as a church, they moved away from a relational model and used mass marketing methods such as mega crusades and satellite and internet evangelism, experiencing minimal success in penetrating religious and cultural barriers. The challenge is made more important and urgent because of the increasing experiences of individualism, low baptisms, and high membership losses. The challenge is made even more difficult because many aspects of peoples' lives today indicate a loss of community. Most of our activities that formerly brought together enthusiastic groups of people who shared the same experience and played together have become professionalized and distanced from ordinary members. The purpose of this project is to encourage the church to move back to a relational method of evangelism because God is intensely relational and inclusive. Intensely relational means relationship is at the heart of God and the greatest demonstration of His relational nature is found in the creation of human beings to reflect His own nature (Gen 1:26, 27). During the age of theophany, for example, God revealed Himself to individuals more often than to masses. He revealed Himself to Adam (Gen 3:8), Cain and Abel (ch. 4), Jacob (ch. 28) and Moses (Exod 3). We humans are inherently social beings, and as such we seek to relate to other people. So in searching for a missionary strategy, which is true to the nature of humans, sharing faith through relationships could be more effective and productive.

This project thesis proposes that Solusi University Church must become a blue print centre within Seventh day Adventist faith communities that feeds and supports its members' need for meaning through community.

Statement of the Problem

The quarterly enrolment of non-Adventist youth and young adult students at Solusi University in Zimbabwe has increased from 450 in 2006 to 800 in 2009, more than 25% of the total student enrolment. During this 3-year period an average of 60 students per year, that is, about 13% of the non-Adventist students, were baptized. Despite low baptismal results, the strategy of student-focused evangelism continues to be public evangelistic campaigns initiated by the university church. Additionally, within the same period, active membership in the university church has remained essentially unchanged.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study were as follows.

1. A relational evangelistic approach will attract and retain more new members than a public evangelistic approach.
2. A stronger intimate community spirit will be found in relational communities when compared with public evangelistic meetings.
3. The more the church embraces one anotherhood concepts, the more it will enjoy good community spirit, and hence attract and retain non-believers.

Statement of the Task

The purpose of this study was to develop a pilot campus-based program at Solusi University Church that placed emphasis on relationships between Adventist and non-

Adventists. The study examined if and how a healthy relational community based on African cultural traditions contributed to membership growth and retention among non-Adventist Solusi students. This program was conducted for almost a year, and then evaluated.

Justification of the Project

Solusi society has been stripped of a community spirit as Adventist members have isolated themselves from relationships with their non-Adventist peers. Meanwhile the church has continued to use traditional public evangelistic methods, experiencing minimal success in penetrating religious barriers. This necessitated the development of a more relational approach to evangelism.

The single mega church approach at the university was leaving people starving for community and emotional support. There was need for building smaller relational communities that build warm fellowship and attract non-Adventist peers to Adventism.

Definition of Terms

Community: According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, the English word community comes from the Latin word *communitas*, meaning similarities or identity, or common possession or participation (Morris, 1969). Community as used in this study means possessing or sharing in common thoughts, feelings, values, and interests by members of Solusi community.

Koinonia: The Greek word *koinonia* means fellowship, association, community, communion, or joint participation (Thayer, 1981). What is called fellowship today is described by Morris (1969) as the condition of being together or of sharing similar interests or experiences, as do members of a profession, religion, or nationality—

companionship. Based on the literature reviewed and primary research in the New Testament, it is suggested that Christian fellowship or community is about people sharing common views, common goals, common dreams, common hope, and a common purpose. But most of all it means people who care about each other and who are dedicated to assisting each other, regardless of their needs.

Non-Adventist students: Students whose faith is different from what Adventists uphold are in this study referred to as non-Adventist students.

Relational: This concept refers to the ability or quality of having or establishing a relationship.

Allelon: Louw and Nida (1993) defined the Greek word *allelon* as “a reciprocal reference between entities—‘each other, one another.’ For the purposes of this paper *allelon* is understood to mean ‘one another’ ” (Thayer, 1981, p. 242). For example, a husband and wife should confide in one another.

Limitations of the Project

Because the survey was a voluntary exercise, some respondents did not read nor respond to some questions. It should be noted also that it was beyond my limitations to explore every possible biblical reference, as well as all scholarly literature relevant to this subject.

Description of the Project Process

First a biblical and theological reflection was conducted which focused on the following four subjects. (a) A theology of relational community was examined in the Bible. (b) The *us* and *our* Trinity concepts as models of healthy relationships were studied. (c) The view that a healthy church embraces *allelon* (one anotherness) motifs as

its effective evangelistic method was studied from a biblical perspective. And (d) the concept of empowering leadership applied in ministry by a pastor/chaplain was explored.

Second, an extensive literature review was conducted. This included books, articles, journals, and web sites focusing on strategies and principles of evangelism in a campus setting, and how relational communities are formed in the culture of Zimbabwe. Third, the data was collected and analyzed from the Solusi University Church from 2006 to 2009. Next, a growing African Independent Church in Zimbabwe was analyzed to identify factors in relation to its church growth. Finally, a pilot program was run for one year and evaluated through direct observation, questionnaires and interviews, targeting church leadership and selected students from different faculty. Strategies for creating relationships between Adventists and non-Adventists were developed and implemented.

Benefits From This Project

This project has developed my essential leadership competencies and skills as a pastor in Zimbabwe. It has provided user-friendly models and strategies for other pastors to generate relational communities. This project has also helped Solusi University Church, Beit Bridge, Pumula Districts, and other institutions in the Zimbabwe Union Conference.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RELATIONAL COMMUNITIES

Introduction

In response to meaningful life sought by people, society has spent much energy on relationships. The attempt to understand human relationships is known as sociology. The desire to know where humans fit in the universe has created science. From the search to understand how people relate to God is known as religion. As pointed out in chapter 1, God is intensely relational and inclusive. Community is part of His nature and expressed throughout His revelation. In searching for an expression of ministry that is honest to God, a relational community cannot be ignored. What are some of the biblical models, motifs, and accounts of successful relational communities? In the subsequent sections, this question is answered by examining those models, motifs, and accounts that are embedded in Old and New Testament passages that offer direction for relational communities. This includes the theology of community in the Bible: relational community within the Trinity, relational communities in Israel, Jesus' relational ministry, and relational communities in the early church, including the effectiveness of *allevon* in Christian witnessing and Jesus' patterns of relational leadership.

Theology of Relational Community in the Bible

A theology of community that seeks to deal inclusively through biblical diversity may be expressed using the following seven concepts outlined in the following pages:

community membership, interdependence, outer-directed service, love and justice, horizontal relationship, public and communal, and the faith community.

Community Membership

There is no human being who is an island; thus personhood and group-community membership are indivisible. Each person is indelibly imprinted by and undeniably rooted in the community of origin. In the creative work of human beings, God expanded community and relationships. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created *them*” (Gen 1:27 NIV, emphasis added). Adam emphasized his identity with Eve, his spouse, in this account. Both were of the same kind because they shared a name which sounded the same defining their important nature. While the Hebrew words for woman (*ishsha*) and man (*ish*) are not derived from the same root, the author of Genesis utilizes the fact that they sound similar to emphasize their oneness. Hence in human beings we find a demonstration of the relational nature of God. The profound thing to note is that in creating the first human being to reflect His own nature, God created a need in him for relationship. God created humans for community. Listen to what He said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18 NIV). Before that time no companion was found for Adam, so God created a helper comparable to him. Then Adam was complete—*imago Dei*—the very image of the eternal Trinity, made to commune with his maker and Eve, his spouse. Thus there is no human being who can claim personhood outside community membership. Bonhoeffer (1964) further holds that the individual person does not emerge except in community, and that he emerges at the same time that the “collective persons” arises, who is the person of the “community of men.” In the same work, he notes that it is

not that many persons, coming together, add up to a collective person, but the person arises only through being embedded in sociality.

Interdependence

The community leads its members toward interdependence with each other, being responsible for one another, and accountability with significant others. This concept shows that salvation is a socializing process that teaches persons to live effectively with their network of relationships, to conform appropriately to the shared values of community, and to join in working toward the goals of their significant group. In *The Encyclopedia Americana*, the following thought is propagated, “The community is one of the oldest forms of human social organization” (Grolier Educational, 1991). Biblically, this is well illustrated in the church in Acts 2, where its growth and expansion were the result of interdependence economically, socially, spiritually, and physically.

Outer-Directed Service

Community is a force for social change, a best unit for service to others, a group for social, spiritual, and economic action in the community. A healthy relational community maintains bidirectional movement because love is seeing others’ safety, security, and satisfaction as equally important. Acts 2:47 speaks about a community of believers whose outer-directed service offered non-believers a vision of life that is so beautiful it captured their attention.

Love and Justice

The theology of community in relation to love and justice proposes that the gift of unconditional acceptance invites the community to care for one another with unlimited

positive loyalty while working for equal justice for all members. The story of a woman caught in adultery in John 8 clearly illustrates how the principles of love and justice were used to spare the woman from her accusers.

Horizontal Relationship

The horizontal relationship between people is the central structure in a community. There is need to place emphasis on horizontal relationships and discourage people from being emotionally cut off from the community of origin. Christ also placed emphasis on horizontal relationships between people as key in building relational communities (Mark 5:20).

Public and Communal

The marriage contract must always be a public event (John 2). The community patterns of conduct are communal duties that exist within the matrix of larger networks of people as modeled by Christ (John 11).

The Faith Community

The faith community is the ultimate human concern worldwide and thus transcends all finite or temporal obligations. Theologically, the family of God uniting humans as sisters and brothers around the divine parent must be considered more serious than the representative family. Genesis 12 tells us about a faith community whose members, though different, enjoyed the community spirit.

Relational Community Within the Trinity

The Old and the New Testament is filled with accounts of relational communities. Bilezikian (1997, p. 16) states that, "indeed, the first three verses of Genesis reveal that

God is community of three persons in one being.” This is the first relational community ever mentioned which consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a relational community with a purpose. Their first mission recorded in the Bible was the creation of heaven and earth in six days (Gen 1). Genesis goes on to describe this relational community using personal pronouns. “Let us make man in our own image, according to our likeness” (Gen 1:26); “Behold the man has become like one of us” (Gen 3:22 NKJ); and “Come, let us go down” (Gen 11:7 NIV).

The relational community among the Godhead was also expressed in the throne vision of the prophet Isaiah who heard the LORD asking, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isa 6:8 NIV). Just like in the Genesis passages God employed a plural personal pronoun in reference to Himself. The plural suggests that there is a plurality of beings and a sense of community that exists within the Triune God. The use of “us,” not “me,” demonstrates that the Triune God operates not in isolation but in a relational community that involves shared decision making. The Hebrew object ending *-nu* is the first person plural form (English, us), rather than singular, affirming the royal plurality of collective effort. Nichol (1953) noted that, “the plural ‘us’ was regarded by the early church theologians almost unanimously as indicative of the three persons of the Godhead. The word ‘us’ requires the presence of at least two persons counseling together.” The text in Genesis also refers to our, not my. The Triune God not only does things together, but collectively possesses them. The “us” and “our” indicate a principle of healthy relationships that has kept the Triune God together. In all their endeavors, their operative principles are we, our, and us. As mentioned in the introduction, the us and our in Gen 1:26 affirm that the Triune God is intensely relational and inclusive.

Certain passages in Isaiah not only refer to God the Holy Spirit, but include Him as a Third Person in God's work of redemption. "And now the Lord GOD [the Father] and His Spirit [the Holy Spirit] have sent me [the Son of God]" (Isa 48:16 NKJ); "I [The Father] have put My Spirit [the Holy Spirit] upon Him [Christ, the Messiah] and He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles" (Isa 42:1 NKJ). These passages depict a unity of three co-eternal persons having a unique and mysterious relational community that can be characterized as both a loving and a working community as illustrated below.

A Loving Community

Christ and His father since eternity have enjoyed a loving fellowship. The only relationship was God to Himself. God's revealed inner working is relational (Gen 11:7). Lewis (1980) notes that,

Without a Trinity, God could not be love. The words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another person. If God was a single person, then before the world was made, He was not love. (p. 174)

Again this metaphor of the Trinity as loving community is expressed in the words of Ware (1995):

God is not just self love but shared love. God is a trinity of persons loving each other and in shared love the persons are totally 'oned' without thereby losing their personal individuality. . . . God is not just a unit but a union. God is social or dialogic; there is within him a timeless dialogue. From all eternity the First Person addresses the Second, 'Thou art my beloved Son' (Mark 1:11). From all eternity the Second replies to the First, 'Abba Father' (Rom 8:15). From all eternity the Holy Spirit 'who proceeds from the Father and rests on the Son' sets the seal upon this interchange of love. (p. 56)

The us and our principles employed in Genesis testify Ware's observation that from eternity the three have lived as coeternal and coexistent with utter self-giving and love for one another. To be together for so long bespeaks the perfect, absolute love, and

fellowship that exists within the Godhead. When John says, “God is love” (1 John 4:8), he means that each so lives for the other that they experience complete fulfillment and happiness. In addition, John is saying that love itself exists because of how the Trinity relates within itself. However, at Calvary when Christ cried out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34), He was suffering from the estrangement from His father that sin had brought. The author observes that sin then disturbed the original *koinonia* (fellowship) which Jesus had with His father when He took our sin, our place.

A Working Community

The Godhead has a good economy of function with no unnecessary duplicate work. Bilezikian (1997, p. 18) notes that “in whatever the Godhead undertakes to do, the three members of the Tri-unity function together—never independently of each other.” The incarnation doctrine demonstrates this working relationship model by the three persons of the Godhead as recorded in Mathew and John. The Father gave His Son (John 3:16) and the Holy Spirit gave Jesus’ birth (Matt 1:18, 20). In this good working community, different members of the Godhead perform distinct tasks in saving humanity. For example, God the Father seems to act as a source (John 3:16), God the Son as the mediator (1 John 2:1), and God the Holy Spirit as the actualizer or applier (Luke 1:35). Thus, there is a strong bond of community within the Godhead. Based on these accounts above, one can suggest that this is a relational community with a purpose, and the best working relational community that ever existed (Gen 1:26; Matt 28:19, 20).

Relational Communities in Israel

The relationships which will be discussed in this section offer models of Christian community for God’s people today. The three relational communities that have been

identified for discussion are relational community in the building of the Tower of Babel, relational community during the Mosaic time, and a relational community in Ps 133:1.

Relational Community in the Building of the Tower of Babel Project

The Bible mentions the dynamics which contribute to the development of relational communities in one of the best known community case studies. This account offers invaluable information on the concepts needed to develop and maintain a successful relational community. This account is recorded in Gen 11:1–9. The story of the building of the city yields some concepts that contribute to the establishment of relational communities with biblical references. The following list is proposed as direct concepts needed to develop successful relational communities for evangelism: (a) one shared vision (vv. 1, 4); (b) commitment to achieve a goal (v. 3); (c) acting and interacting together as evident by plural personal pronoun like “us,” “they,” “our,” “we,” and “them” (vv.3, 4); (d) unity among the people (v.6); (e) inclusiveness (vv.4, 7); and (f) communicating together (vv.1, 6).

Every organization, Solusi Church included, possessing these six concepts will be successful. Moses in Genesis records it as follows, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them” (v. 6 NIV). Notice that the Lord says, according to v. 6, that when people are committed to achieving a goal, acting and interacting together, have unity, and a good communication system, nothing is impossible for them to achieve. Unless God had stopped their project, they would have accomplished whatever they set out to do. Thus, God was aware that the community working on the Tower of Babel project had the key concepts for success and if He did nothing to stop them, they would achieve their goal

(vv. 7–9). Since they were not working on a goal that He endorsed, God stepped in and shut the project down. How did He stop the project? “Come, let us go down and confuse their language” (v. 7 NIV). God also came as a community, and disrupted their communication system. Once their communication broke down, their commitment to the project, their shared vision and unity were all destroyed, and the entire project collapsed. Nevertheless, had they been working on a project God approved, they would surely have succeeded since they used these key concepts.

Thus, tremendous power is generated in Christian community when people have one shared vision, act and interact together, are committed to achieve a goal inclusively, are united behind their commitment, and have an effective communication system. It seems that there is power in a community that embraces these six concepts.

Relational Communities in the Mosaic Period

Through the counsel of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, relational communities were established in the governance of the nation and in settling disputes under able persons (Exod 18:17-23). The principles that emerged from this passage creating a favorable environment for the development and sustenance of relational communities are (a) communalism rather than individualism, (b) relational communities in small groups, (c) identification of and delegation of authority to able people in each relational community, and (d) obedience to God’s design of relational communities.

Relational Community in the Psalms

David, one of the leaders in Israel, also promoted relational community. One of the clearest Old Testament texts which demonstrate the evidence for a relational community is Ps 133:1: “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers live together

in unity.” In this psalm, he affirms the power of relational communities among the Israelites when they gathered in Jerusalem for the great national feasts. Eaton (1967) aptly summarizes it: “From far and wide they have come to dwell in the holy City throughout the days of the great festival. The gathering is a sign of a great reality: the communion of saints, the society of love under God.”

A similar idea is expressed by White (1956):

In the cave of Adullam the families were united in sympathy and affection. The son of Jesse could make melody with voice and harp as he sang, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (p. 658)

The fugitive David, because of an empowering environment discharged by a relational community, could still praise God. Listen to him exclaim! “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is!” God exclaimed at creation, “it is good” (Gen 1:7, 9, 14, 20, 31). Again, through the mouth of David, He endorses community by saying community is good. God says community is also pleasant, but too often we allow individualism and modernization to strip us from it. It is good and pleasant when we communion together in peace and love.

Since Scripture describes community as good and pleasant, it is imperative to develop and cultivate relational communities if we desire to reach postmoderns through friendship and mentoring relationships. By implication, the text suggests that when people communion together in unity, they do so in God’s favor and they can expect His blessing.

To sum up, the use of the words “good” and “pleasant” in this passage suggest that there is nothing that equals relational community when it is working properly. Its potential is unlimited as it produces perfect and infinite unity where there is chaos. It comforts the grieving, like it did David, and heals the broken in the context of

community. It builds bridges to seekers and offers truth to the confused. It provides resources to the needy and opens its arms to the forgotten, the downtrodden, and the disillusioned. It breaks the chains of addictions, frees the oppressed, and offers belonging to the marginalized in this world. Whatever the capacity for human suffering, relational community has a greater capacity for healing and wholeness. Within the Triune God, during the monarchic period, and still today, the potential of relational community is almost more than can be grasped. No other strategy on earth is like a relational community. Nothing even comes close. Thus, if such a relational community could be established at Solusi University, we would transform this Solusi community and prepare people for the heavenly community. In addition, every prayer or strategic plan by the Solusi Church will gain more success if it is implemented from a relational community perspective.

Jesus' Relational Ministry as a Model for the Church

Reaching people begins with building relational bridges between us and them. It is these relational bridges that will enable them to walk over from where they are to where we wish them to be. They are unlikely to be attracted to our faith if they do not like us or they do not know us. The challenge is how to build these friendship bridges.

Jesus as a Bridge Builder

This section discusses various ways that Jesus built friendship bridges in order to reach different people. Each relational bridge reflects how people were enabled to walk from where they were to where He was. Here are some few examples on how Jesus built relational bridges in His ministry.

1. Jesus broke the great gulf that existed between heaven and earth—the gulf of a lack of understanding. The holy writings record this about His relational character as a bridge builder. “His name shall be called Immanuel, . . . God with us” (Matt 1:23). Being God with us, Jesus came to build a bridge between heaven and the lost on earth (Luke 19:10). He did not call from heaven to invite sinners to come over, but He came to lead us back to God. He said, “I am the way” (John 14:6). In light of what Jesus did to unite what Satan seeks to separate, let us say no to all that divides us. And let us also say yes to all that unites us.

2. Jesus built bridges between Himself and people. Throughout His ministry relational bridges were built between Him and people in these ways. Jesus took interest in people by visiting them in their natural life settings. For example, He went to joyful community gatherings like the wedding feasts (John 2:1–11), and parties. He went to their sad occasions like funerals (John 11) and visited the sick (Matt 8). He went to their places of work (Matt 4:18–19) and took an interest in what they were doing. As has been pointed out, “The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me’ [Matt 4:19]” (White, 1942, p. 143). What is paramount about Jesus’ ministry is that He never acted as one who was trying to use people to meet His own needs.

3. Jesus practiced simplicity to reach people. Another way Jesus was a bridge builder was through the practice of simplicity. Several cases in Scripture depict how He practiced simplicity to reach people. It is beneficial for the purpose of this project to review the following practices of simplicity in Jesus’ ministry and draw lessons on

reaching people today. Jesus practiced simplicity in praying. He discouraged complicated, sophisticated, and hypocritical pharisaic praying (Matt 6:5–13; Luke 11). Jesus practiced simplicity in teaching. Different settings were chosen to accommodate everyone, for example, in the temple (Matt 2:35), in a boat (13:2), by the seaside (13:1), on a mountain (chap. 5), and in a house (Mark 2). He used simple methods in evangelism. Simple relational evangelism was preferred and encouraged than public evangelism (Matt 4:18–22; John 1:45–49; chap. 3). He used simple food to feed multitudes (Mark 8:1). White (1946a) affirms this act as follows:

And by an act of creative power He supplied food sufficient to satisfy their need. Yet how simple was the food provided! There were no luxuries. He who had all the resources of heaven at His command could have spread for the people a rich repast. But He supplied only that which would suffice for their need, that which was the daily food of the fisher folk about the sea. (p. 344)

Again White in the same book (p. 345) gives this counsel:

If men were today simple in their habits, living in harmony with nature's laws, there would be an abundant supply for all the needs of the human family. There would be fewer imaginary wants and more opportunity to work in God's ways.

The points that emerge from White's statements are that Christ did not seek to attract men to Him by gratifying the desire for luxury. The simple fare He provided was an assurance not only of His power, but of His love, of His tender care for them in the common needs of life.

3. Jesus crossed human boundaries. In reaching people, Jesus built relational bridges by crossing several difficult boundaries. Below are a few human boundaries that He crossed to reach people. Jesus left heaven and crossed the boundary to earth. He crossed cultural boundaries to be born and live in our human culture (Matt 1:21, 23; Phil 2:7–9). He crossed food boundaries to eat earthly foods (Mark 2:15, 16). He crossed moral boundaries to live in a sinful environment (John 1:45, 46). He crossed social and

gender boundaries and mingled with women (Luke 10:38–42; John 4). He accepted people as they were that He might be able to change them (John 7:37). He did not come to pass judgment, but to open a door to a new life. He did not come to condemn, but to forgive and to set free (John 3:17).

Relational Communities in the Early Church

In the New Testament we find a model of relational community which was born at Pentecost. Acts 2 tells us that this relational community of believers was so totally devoted to God that their life together was charged with the Spirit's power. Bilezikian (as cited in Hybels, 2002) writes passionately about the Acts 2 church:

In that band of Christ-followers, believers loved each other with a radical kind of love. They took off their masks and shared their lives with one another. They laughed and cried and prayed and sang and served together in authentic Christian fellowship. . . . Those who had more shared free with those who had less until socioeconomic barriers melted away. People related together in ways that bridged gender and racial chasms, and celebrated cultural differences. (p. 101)

Again the biblical record in Acts 2 tells us that this relational community of believers offered unbelievers a vision of life that was so beautiful that it took their breath away. It was so courageous, so innovative, and so dynamic that they could not resist it. The author of Acts in v. 47 tells us that "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Some of the relational activities which attracted unbelievers are recorded below.

1. Fellowship: The New Testament records that those who were baptized into the church were also devoted to *koinonia* (Acts 2:42). Donkor (2008) states that "the word for fellowship is *koinonia*, which connotes a God-given unity of heart and mind and signifies a close connection among the believers for mutual support and involvement in each others' lives both spiritually and materially."

2. Corporate worship: Acts 2:42 mentions a list that seems to indicate an agenda for early Christian worship. Among some of the needful activities those that enhanced relational communities were teaching, breaking bread, and fellowship.

3. Mission and relational community: The power of the relational community as an evangelistic strategy should not be missed. Acts 5:42 reports that in the temple and in every house the disciples kept on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

4. Prayer: The church at Thessalonica was called to prayer. “Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith” (1 Thess 3:10). Similarly, another relational community of believers was also born in prayer meetings (Acts 4:31), and a prayer meeting was its source of power. Toler and Brecheisen (2003) stated that the “gospel ship” simply has to be in touch with the Harbourmaster if it’s going to successfully navigate the rough seas of this millennium. Jesus also endorsed small relational prayer circles (Matt 18:19, 20). On the basis of these New Testament activities conducted in the context of those relational communities during the early church, may it not legitimately and theologically be recognized that the power of relational communities today is the most effective form of evangelism?

The Effectiveness of *Allelon* in Christian Witnessing

The nature of the early church striving on relational communities for deepening individual and corporate communion with God can further be described using *allelon* a Greek word meaning one another or each other. Let us consider some of the New Testament models of *one anotherness* ministries Seventh-day Adventists can adopt in Christian witnessing.

Praying for One Another

One way the early church believers fostered strong relational communities among themselves was to pray for one another. The Apostle Paul is known for his intercessory prayers particularly for new members. While practicing Christian community today, think of a new member you know and breathe the same Pauline prayer as recorded in Ephesians. Paul, the author of this prayer, is known for praying for the new converts and also encouraged them to pray for each other.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what the hope of his calling is, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power. (Eph 1:17–19)

Greeting One Another

At least five times in the New Testament, people in the churches are encouraged to greet one another (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14). Thus, the church today needs to revisit its old good habit of members greeting one another. New Testament biblical writers are very emphatic on this expression of fellowship, perhaps because a greeting is a form of acknowledgement, a way of recognizing that the other is of worth. In most churches this good custom has disappeared as members no longer acknowledge visitors. However, God still blesses the efforts of churches which practice this good Christian community virtue. Stutzman (2002) mentions the Cedar Mill Bible Church as an example:

At Cedar Mill Bible Church, pastoral leaders Al and Roberta modeled hospitality for years. God blessed their efforts, and over 35 years they saw the congregation grow many times over. Every Sunday, Al led the people in greeting one another during the service. From the pulpit, he emphasized the importance of greeting guests. As a

result, people begin to naturally greet guests. One 16-year-old boy told Al he had been greeted sixteen times in one service. (p. 100)

Use Hospitality One to Another

The Bible lays much stress upon the practice of hospitality. Not only does it enjoin hospitality as a duty, but it presents many beautiful pictures of the exercise of this grace and the blessings which it brings. Foremost among these is the experience of Abraham.

In the records of Genesis [18] the patriarch at the hot summer noontide resting in his tent door under the shadow of the oaks of Mamre. Three travelers are passing near. They make no appeal for hospitality, solicit no favor, but Abraham does not permit them to go on their way unrefreshed. He is a man full of years, a man of dignity and wealth, one highly honored, and accustomed to command; yet on seeing these strangers, he “ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground” [v. 2]. Addressing the leader he said, “My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant” (Gen. 18:2, 3). With his own hands he brought water that they might wash the dust of travel from their feet. He himself selected their food; while they were at rest under the cooling shade, Sarah his wife made ready for their entertainment, and Abraham stood respectfully beside them while they partook of his hospitality. This kindness he showed them simply as wayfarers, passing strangers, who might never come his way again. But, the entertainment over, his guests stood revealed. He had ministered not only to heavenly angels, but to their glorious Commander, his Creator, Redeemer, and King. And to Abraham the counsels of heaven were opened [vv. 20, 21], and he was called “the friend of God” [2 Chr 20:7]. (White, 1956, p. 50)

Home Fellowship

In connection with hospitality, Stutzman (2002, p. 101) says that “the spread of the early church is linked to the fellowship of believers meeting in homes.” Like in those early days, hospitality is one of the most important *allelon* ministries of the church today. For instance, in those early days, members opened their homes for worship and fellowship. Here is a list of some New Testament hosts: Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19), Philemon (Phlm 1–2), Lydia (Acts 16:14–15), Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–9), and Mary (Acts 12:12). Relationships were developed with friends as people met in homes.

The home contact not only offered opportunity for hearing about the love of Jesus, but they also experienced it. It is difficult, if not impossible, to attract new people to the church without the gracious hospitality of individuals and groups in the church. Stutzman (2002, p. 102) argues convincingly that “there is no evangelistic substitute for the love of God ministered by the body of Christ.” Jesus Himself mentioned it this way: “Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another” (John 13:35). Such actions make love observable.

Self-Giving Love

These passages show that hospitality meets another person’s basic needs for rest, food, and fellowship. It is a tangible expression of self-giving love. Perhaps that is the reason why Jesus attached theological significance to hospitality when He taught that feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty were acts of service done to Him (Matt 25:34–40). Thus, if the world is to know about Adventism, it must be able to see our love for one another. We demonstrate our Christian relationships when we minister to each other. A lover of hospitality is among the specifications given by the Holy Spirit as marking one who is to bear responsibility in the church. And to the whole church is given the injunction to use hospitality one to another without grudging, “Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet 4:9, 10).

However, the ministry of hospitality should not be confused with the art of entertainment. The main goal behind practicing relationships through the principle of hospitality is to make the guest become the focus of attention, not the host. The reason is that visitors do not want to be impressed, but loved and accepted.

Loving Communication

In Col 4:6 Paul says that “let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each other.” A close reflection on this text suggests four aspects that enhance loving communication.

1. Wise talking: Like Jesus, there is need to provide hope rather than emotional damage, through our speech. “His [Christ] messages of mercy were varied to suit his listeners. He knew “how to speak a word in season to him that is weary” (Isa. 50:4); for grace was poured upon his lips, that He might convey to people in the most attractive way the treasures of truth” (White, 1946a, p. 254).

2. Active listening: James states that “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas 1:19). Because God gave people two ears and one mouth, it suggests that more time should spent listening than talking. A recent study (Rush, 2002) found that some situations retain as little as 7% of the complete message that is communicated in words spoken, 38% through tone of voice, and the remaining 55% is through body language or action (Figure 1). This research revealed that for loving communication to take place, the listener must train himself or herself to listen for the ideas and feelings being communicated behind the words.

Again in connection with loving communication, Rush (2002) proposes that we must become “perspective listeners,” learning to hear more than the words being spoken. A good example is Paul who showed his perspective listening ability when he said, “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious” (Acts 17:22). The apostle did not learn this simply by listening to the words of their philosophers. He also observed their

actions (v. 23). Rush (2002, p. 118) summarizes it as follows: “Perspective listening, then, focuses on listening for the meaning in body language and the tone of voice because

*Figure 1: How a complete message can be transmitted. This diagram shows how a complete message may be transmitted. Surprisingly what we say may not be nearly as important as the way we say it. Adopted from *Management: A Biblical Approach*, by M. Rush, 2002, England: Cook Communication Ministries, p. 118.*

that is what produces almost 93 percent of the message.” In Mark 8:13–21 we have a classic example of Jesus’ disciples failing to use perceptive listening and, consequently, misunderstanding what Jesus was saying.

3. Bargaining: In bargaining, one must be prepared to lose a little so that much may be gained. In fostering healthy relationship at church, one should approach it from a win-win perspective. For example, Jesus veiled His glory as well as His divinity for 33 years in order to accommodate humanity. Paul spoke vehemently about how Jesus veiled His divinity to the church in Philippi (Phil 2:6, 7). Through bargaining, Jesus was prepared to lose a little so that humanity may gain much.

4. Human-divine communication: Loving communication can also be explained using human-divine communication. Three avenues can be used in fostering loving communication with God and the soul. The first one is a private relationship with God. White in *Steps to Christ* admonishes us, "We should pray in the family circle; and above all we must not neglect secret pray; for this is the life of the soul" (1948a, p. 99). The second is family altar which provides family members the chance to improve their communication with God by assigning them different roles to increase participation during worship. The third is church communication. In the same book, White encouraged us to take advantages of prayer meetings provided by the church. So she writes:

Make every effort to keep open the communion between Jesus and your own soul. Seek every opportunity to go where prayer is wont to be made. Those who are really seeking for communion with God will be seen in the prayer-meeting, faithful to do their duty, and earnest and anxious to reap all the benefits they can gain. (p. 98)

Loving One Another

A recent study by Rice (2003, p. 15) reveals that "central to the work of Christ is his creating a community whose members cares for each other in ways that reflect God's love and who then project that loving life in the world." Rice's statement elevates the following texts to the level of a denominational charter: "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12); "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another" (1 John 3:14); "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). Rice (2003) advances the idea of taking these sorts of relationships, such as loving one another and praying for one another and making them the hallmarks of our corporate life. The pursuit and cultivation of these relationships should become the principal concern for the church.

Jesus' words also testify that there is a strong relationship between a relational community and witnessing (John 13:35). That is the acid test! That is the proof of Christianity. Christian community is the witness. Seventh-day Adventists can present sound truths with clarity, but if they have no love, they are "only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1). Coffin (2004, p. 11) emphasizes strongly "our greatest witness isn't the words we say—although we need to say the right words. It's not the perfection of our theology—although our theology needs to be right. Rather, it's how we let that theology work in our lives, manifested in the relationship we have with each other." On the relationship between fellowship and witnessing, Rice (2003) observes that the fellowship of believers thus becomes the means by which God's love is manifested in the world. Therefore, people's view of the church to a great degree determines the nature of its relational community. And the nature of its relationships determines how effectively it witnesses to the world.

Christian Communion

Bonhoeffer (1964) found this love at the very core of community and personhood. It is love, he said, that demands that Christians sacrifice their own interests, even if it puts at risk their own communion with God. The two great biblical examples that he cited for this are Exod 32:32 and Rom 9:1. Moses wished to be blotted out of the book of life for his people's sin, and Paul wished that he himself were accursed and cut off from Christ, not in order to be condemned with his brethren, but to win communion with God for them.

This kind of communion for the Christian, writes Bonhoeffer (1964, p. 132), is a state established by Christ of “being with one another” and “for one another.” He further explains it this way.

This active “being for one another” can be defined from two standpoints: Christ is the measure and standard for our conduct (John 13:15,34f; 1 John 3:10), and our conduct is that of a member of the body of Christ, that is, of one equipped with the strength of Christ’s love, in which each man can and will become Christ for his fellow-man, 1 Cor 12:12; Col 3:15. (p. 132)

Bonhoeffer’s understanding of being for one another suggests that the community, the collective person, is also an equipping entity. To summarize this whole section about loving one another, I used this illustration below. It shows what happens when we do not accept one another and how an unloving church can send visitors away rather than drawing them to Jesus.

Some years ago I was standing in the church premises before Sabbath School when a young woman came in wearing tight black jeans, heavy makeup, and a lot of jewelry. As she stood shy, unsure what to do next, an elderly deaconess walked over to her, and asked, “Are you a man or woman?” The young woman just looked at the deaconess and stammered, “I’m, . . . I’m a woman.” Then why you don’t dress like one, the deaconess asked. The girl turned and headed for the gate. I never saw her again. White (1948b, p. 68) makes an important observation on such attitudes toward visitors: “Some rash impulsive, yet honest souls . . . will accost those who are not with us in a very abrupt manner, and make the truth, which we desire them to receive, repulsive to them.” A sense of what is wrong about the person almost eclipses the sense of love for people and any desire to have the kind of fellowship with them that God longs for. Thus, if the church must reach out to the strugglers and postmoderns, those who have not yet

arrived at the standards the church holds, the church should be a hospital for sinners, a rehab facility for the failing and faltering.

Forgiving One Another

How are Christians to forgive? “Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Matt 14:25). However, some speech no doubt offends others. We need not be asked for forgiveness before we forgive, even if we are never asked. For a forgiving spirit is not just for the benefit of the person being forgiven; rather it is an experience of grace for the person who forgives. There is much that the church needs forgiveness for. It needs forgiveness for excluding from leadership those who have been underrepresented. It needs to repent of slipping standards as it falls under the influence of secularism. It needs to repent of intolerance between members. In Col 3:12, Paul tells the Colossians to clothe themselves “with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” He is saying, Let us live it! Let us walk the walk when we talk the talk. Forgiveness is divine, and it is part of the nature of God. Moses appealed to God to forgive the offenders (e.g., Exod 32:32).

Accepting One Another

The story of how Jesus received and accepted the children brought to Him shows how accepting one another kindles a desire in others to become disciples. The background is given in Mark 10:13–17. This story presents Christ’s ability to speak simultaneously to the rich and poor, to the professionals and the outcast in the community, and to people with no education at all. In Christ’s day this was unusual to the people, because most religions during that time did not accept everybody. The Greeks excluded slaves from social groupings. In the Jewish temple, worshippers were separated by race and gender. Rome had primarily male aristocracy. However, Jesus was a different

leader who accepted all alike (Rev 22:17). He formed a new faith community out of diverse people groups including children and the outcast in the society, and in the process kindled a desire in the heart of a young ruler (Mark 10:21).

Of all the significant events that the ruler may have seen, he was most impressed with the way Jesus treated the children. White (1946a, p. 518) affirms that when “He [the young man] saw all the love of Christ manifested toward the children, . . . his heart kindled with love for the Savior. He felt a desire to be His disciple.” There it is—practical gospel, people making decisions for Jesus just by His love in action.

One church growth expert sees a relationship between a loving church and its growth ability. Schwarz (1996, p. 23) found, “Research indicates that there is a highly significant relationship between the ability of a church to demonstrate love and its growth potential. Growing churches possess on average a measurably higher “love quotient” than stagnant or declining ones.” To see some of the one another-ness in action, in Figure 2, I have repeated a few in alphabetical order to stimulate thinking about the responsibilities we have toward our brothers in Christ, wherever they congregate around the world.

Accept one another
Bear one another's burden
Comfort one another (1 Thess
Do not speak evil of one another
Encourage one another (Heb 3: 13)
Forgive one another (Mark 11:25)
Greet one another with a holy kiss (1 Cor
Have compassion for one another
Intricately involve our selves with one another (Rom
Judge not one another (Rom 12:10)
Kindly show affection to one another (Jas 4:12)
Live in peace with one another (Rom 12:10)
Minister spiritual gifts to one another (1 Thess 5:13)
Never become conceited, provoking one another (1Pet 4:10)
Owe no one anything, but to love one another (Gal 5:26)
Pray for one another (Jas 4:16)
Quick to serve one another (Gal 5:13)
Regard one another as more important than ourselves (Phil 2:13)
Submit to one another (1Pet 5:5)
Teach one another (Col 3:16)
Use hospitality to one another without grudging (1 Pet 4:19)
Wherefore, do you/we also receive one another? (Rom 15:7)
EXhort one another daily (Heb 3:13)
You wash one another's feet (John 13:14)
Zealous about making progress on the other "one

Figure 2: One anotherness practices in alphabetical order

Jesus' Patterns of Relational Leadership

As a leader, what was Jesus' secret of getting along with people? Jesus Christ, according to 1 Pet 2:21, by precept and example, left us a rich legacy in the field of what scientist today call personal relations. White (1948c, p. 618) mentions this important point:

We cannot gain and possess the influence that He had; but why should we not educate ourselves to come just as near to the Pattern as it is possible for us to do, that we may have the greatest possible influence upon the people?

The following four relational leadership principles in reaching out to people seem to emerge from Christ's ministry.

Statements From Ellen White

In several works of White, the following four relational statements are mentioned in connection with Jesus' relational leadership.

Jesus Took Interest in People's Needs

Long before modern psychologists discovered the concept of influencing human behavior, Christ had taught how to enter into people's world in order to win them for the kingdom. Listen to Him speak to His disciples about the needs of the multitudes and His social concern for their welfare.

And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue, with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. (Matt 15:32)

Jesus is a compassionate friend, and one result of that compassion was that He chose to save us from our sins. He felt for humans in their physical weakness by expressing His feelings in sympathy. Matthew's report above shows that in each case He provided for

their needs. Several cases in the gospel suggest that at all times and in all places He manifested a loving interest in men. It is not surprising why the crowds always pressed around Him. White reveals, "The afflicted ones who came to Him, felt that He linked His interest with theirs as a faithful and tender friend, and they desired to know more of the truths He taught. Heaven was brought near" (1946b, p. 124). Paul also adopted his master's concept of human relations and taught and lived it. To the Roman believers, he said this powerful statement: "Take a real interest in ordinary people" (Rom 12:16). Thus to develop relational communities, we need to have interest in people regardless of their status, gender, or faith.

Jesus Sought to Avoid Giving Offense

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated this principle. When He was required to render to Caesar what was due to him, He was compliant rather than defiant about the payment. He said to Peter, "We do not want to give offense to these people, so go down to the lake and throw in your hook" (Matt 17:27). This is in sharp contrast to most leaders today, who charge hard into sensitive situations. One may have the truth, and be right, but sensitive natures may be wounded. Coldness or estrangement may destroy cordial relationships with them. This is not divine. White (1946a, p. 85) observes that "in every gentle and submissive way, Jesus tried to please those with whom He came in contact." If Solusi University Church follows His gracious example, what a wonderful campus this would be.

Jesus Attracted the People to Him by Being Friendly

White (1946a, p. 86) states, “The love expressed in Christ’s look and tone, drew to Him all who were not hardened in unbelief.” Behold Jesus as He meets with a rich young ruler whom He longs to lead into His kingdom. Mark has this record: “Jesus looked steadily at him, and his heart warmed toward him” (Mark 10:21). It seems the warmth in Jesus’ heart was reflected in His appearance. Again this was the Greeks’ hungering cry experience to see Jesus that also lighted up His countenance. Thus in all cases, He drew people to Himself by friendliness.

Reflection is warranted as to how Christians receive those who visit their homes and places of work. When desks are loaded with urgent and important matters in such instances, can they still be greeted cordially? The apostle Paul also cited an incident in which believers in Galatia received him as a sign of friendship (Gal 4:14). These Galatians evidently warmed the apostle’s heart with their hospitality. God’s people today have the opportunity to warm the hearts of non-Adventist students and other people who come to classes or offices on campus. Having learnt from the Galatians’ hospitality, Paul challenged the Roman believers to emulate them (Rom 12:10). Being warm and friendly to people will break down barriers and build up mutual confidence and respect. Sometime it may not be easy when people are a bit distant or abrupt, but there is a need to constantly “speak pleasantly” (Col 4:16) to win their confidence and draw people to Jesus.

Jesus was Thoughtful of the Feelings of People

White (1952) said that Christ was ever kind and thoughtful of others. Writing under inspiration, the prophet Isaiah foretold this about Jesus: “A bruised reed shall He

not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench” (Isa 42:3). In Isa 53, relational and servant leadership theology is well described with the use of personal pronouns like our, us, and their. As a relational leader, Jesus was not violent, nor did He practice oppression. Rather He identified with victims (vv. 7, 9) and transgressors (v. 12). White (1948a, p. 12) wrote, “He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, and never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul.” This could be the reason why the multitude loved Him. Thus, thoughtfulness breaks any kind of barrier. It is a Christ-like thing. Again White (1883, par. 6) gives this counsel: “Look to Jesus as your guide and pattern. . . . Study how you can be like him, in thoughtfulness of others.”

Statements From Christian Leaders

A growing body of scholarly works also embraces relational leadership traits in affirming this leadership style. In their book *Lead to Succeed*, Toler and Brecheisen (2003, pp. 15–24) list three powerful character traits modeled by Jesus in His relational leadership style: (a) Jesus was sincere in His relationships, (b) Jesus was sincere in His service, and (c) Jesus was sincere in His communications. Some accounts in Scripture further confirm that relationships change lives. For example, Jesus changed many people’s lives through relationships (e.g., Samaritan woman, John 4; Zacchaeus, Luke 19). He convinced people that life has purpose and meaning when they are experiencing it with those they love. A good example of a statement describing the power and impact of relationships is the following, developed by Morgan and Stevens (2005) of the Granger Community Church:

Relationships change lives. As a church leader, you must believe this. You must believe to your core that people who are in relationships with others in your church are more likely to grow. They are more likely to take steps in their faith. They are

more likely to invite their friends to church. They are more likely to share their faith and give time and invest their money. Relationships change lives! (p. 216)

In the book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, Coleman (1963) concludes that Jesus' concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi (1986) have championed and applied what I may refer as the basic insights of relational leadership, especially in his book *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*. Blanchard sees four basic relational leadership styles: (a) directing, (b) coaching, (c) supporting, (d) delegating.

What could be the relational leadership qualities that enhanced Jesus' ability to lead? Einstein (as cited in Lee, 2003) mentions the following leadership qualities in a tribute to his friend and colleague, H. A. Lorentz:

His never-failing, kindness and generosity and his sense of justice, coupled with a sure and intuitive understanding of people and human affairs, made him a leader in any sphere he entered. Everyone followed him gladly, for we felt never set out to dominate but only to serve. (p. 83)

In the same book, Lee (2003) notes that the New Testament has over 1,300 references to servant, serve, and service. Martin Luther (as cited in Lee, 2003, p.85) then summarizes it well: "A Christian is the freest lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone."

In the context of church growth and leadership, according to Ogden in *Unfinished Business* (2003), the pastor should be a visionary leader who constantly builds other leaders, casts the vision, and changes the culture and structure of the church, while doing all of this with an eye for mission, evangelism, and growth. A good model example that describes relational leadership components which was modeled by Jesus, developed by John Maxwell (as cited in Barna, 1997) consists of five progressive components:

1. I model—I do it
2. I mentor—I do it and you watch me
3. I monitor—you do it and I watch you
4. I motivate—you do it
5. We multiply—you do it and train someone else.

What seem to emerge from these Christian writers is not leadership skills only, but something less tangible, perhaps less teachable qualities of the person that includes attitude, even philosophy of life. This seems to be the position of the Bible when one equates on how Jesus model relational leadership.

The Family Ministry Model

Home is the beginning community for the gospel and provides spiritual roots for members of the family. Principles of real Christianity are put into practice and its value transmitted from one generation to the next. For instance, people learn to pray and sing at home. The Christian religion uses family relationships to express spiritual truth. Think of how many of Christian concepts depend on what is learned in families. God is the Father, believers are His children. In the following texts, the family metaphor represents God as a parent.

Family Imagery in the Old Testament

Isaiah 9:6 contains the expression, “everlasting father.” The psalmist, King David compares God’s compassion for His people to a father’s care for his children (Ps 103:13). The Bible attributes to God maternal functions as well. God is the one who gave birth to her people (Deut 32:18), who brings to them the blessings of the breast and womb (Gen 49:25), who comforts her children (Isa 66:13), and who will never forget them (Isa

49:15). God tenderly cares for her chosen people, teaching them to walk, bending down to feed them (Hos 11:3, 4).

Family Imagery in the New Testament

In the New Testament the family is the most fundamental and pervasive metaphor for the Christian community. Christians are brothers and sisters (Acts 9:17). God's comfort is like that of a mother. New life in Christ requires nurture as new born babies do (Heb 6:2). The church is the bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2, Rev 21:2). Thus a family not founded on religious roots deprives its members of a great spiritual nurture and heritage. The first advent of Christ was solely heralded by families with a message of restoration of families (Luke 1:15–17). Similarly, the Second Advent of Christ would be heralded and loudly proclaimed by spiritual healthy families (Mal 4:5–6).

Summary

This chapter has surveyed biblical models, motifs, and accounts and scholarly work surrounding (a) the theology of community, (b) relational community in the Trinity, (c) Christ' model of relational ministry, (d) relational community in the early church, (e) the effectiveness of one another's ministries in witnessing, (f) Jesus' patterns of relational leadership, and (g) the family model ministry. This chapter demonstrated the need for the development of healthy relational communities. The next chapter is a review of Christian literature, contributing to understanding the power of relational communities in evangelism.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

What will be the effective missionary strategy to non-Adventist students at Solusi University, a public or a relational approach? Preaching or relationships? What does literature have to say in regards to these questions? Emphasis in this chapter is on the scholarly contributions to understanding of relational communities in evangelism as well as the legitimacy of Scripture on this concept. God is intensely relational and inclusive, and in the search for an expression of ministry that is true to God's relational ministry, this reality is foundational.

Insights That Inform a Paradigm Shift

Sahlin (2003) found that public evangelism is not a common element in American culture today. He further reports that 60% of declining churches have had public evangelism in the last year. According to the General Conference of the Seventh-day Executive Committee Minutes (2007, par. 5):

Leadership across Adventism concurred, stating that the reasons most frequently cited by persons who leave local church fellowship are found in the realm of relationships, the absence of a sense of belonging, and the lack of meaningful engagement in the local congregation and its mission.

A study by Schwarz (1996, p. 36) found that growing churches possess on average a measurably higher 'love quotient' than stagnant or declining ones. White

(1948d, p.16) says that “the world will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives. The minister in the desk announces the theory of the gospel; the practical piety of the church demonstrates its power.” Based on these results and counsels from White changing from public evangelism to relational evangelism would be significant. To clarify the reason for the paradigm shift, I asked this question.

So which missionary strategy has a divinely generated magnetic power to bring Christian witness into secular areas of life? Chapter 2 revealed that God is intensely relational and inclusive and that both Moses and David embraced and promoted relational communities (Exod 18; Ps 133:1). Acts 2 reported that through relational communities the believers offered unbelievers a vision of life that was so beautiful that it attracted many to the church. It was so courageous, so innovative, and so dynamic that they could not resist it. Based on such biblical evidence, it is imperative to develop and cultivate relational communities if non-Adventists students at Solusi are to be won through friendship relationships.

If relational communities are to be developed and implemented, it requires pastors and chaplains who embrace relationships and practical piety of the church, not as a mere method, but as a core missionary strategy which is non-negotiable. Ultimately, for the long-term success of relational communities, the whole church must embrace and preserve this core missionary strategy.

In connection with the thought of long-term successful relational communities, the concept of pastors and chaplains as equipping agents was unpacked through the empowering leadership style model. Why then should there be such a paradigm shift from a well-established outreach method like public evangelism to relational evangelism?

This chapter justified the reason for that paradigm shift through a review of related literature on concepts and principles that contributes to understanding of the power of relational communities in evangelism and spirituality.

Defining Community

From the outset, the author would like to state that he feels that defining community is extremely risky, as each individual has a personal knowledge about what community consists of and who, or what, it should mean. Or as *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* states, the term community generally denotes any small localized political, economic, and social unit, whose members share values in common (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1975). The word community is defined in these expressions by Mead (1996) who states as follows:

We need to belong—to be part of a larger world. The need to belong drives us to community, a place where we know we belong. It is also a place where we will be safe—a kind of “home base” in the world’s chaotic game of tug. It is a place where you are valued for what you are in yourself, but also a place that often sees more in you than you see in yourself. (p. 444)

In the same book, Gardner (as cited in Mead, 1996) mentions two reasons why community is as bedrock of society and the church:

Families and communities are two ground-level generators and preservers of values and ethical systems. No society or church can remain vital or even survive without a reasonable base of shared values—and such values are not established by edict from the lofty levels of the society. They are generated chiefly in the family, school and other intimate settings (church) in which people deal with one another face to face. The ideals of justice and compassion are nurtured in communities.

Where community exists, it confers upon its members identity, a sense of belonging, a measure of security. Individuals acquire a sense of self partly from their continuous relationships to others, and from the culture of their native place. . . . A community has the power to motivate its members of exceptional performance. It can set standards of expectation for the individual and provide the climate in which great things happen. (p. 445)

The contention by Gardner suggests that community as a web of interdependency and mutual obligation is a powerful sphere of influence in evangelism. Not only that, but it has a central generative force in shaping people's personal lives and their sense of self-esteem. The community also has impact upon their understanding of the role of the church, by influencing the values people seek to live by and shaping many of the structures in which they live, such as families and churches.

To sum up, what seems to be core in these definitions of community is intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks, shared values, diversity, communication, shared security, and a number of other conditions that may be held in common.

Relational Community

As stated earlier, a stronger intimate relational community is thought to be a key factor in the hypotheses of this project, accounting for gains in evangelism and spirituality. It is deemed worthwhile to examine related literature on the subject in order to formulate an idea of what it encompasses and what it can achieve. In Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2010), the Latin word *relatus* (past participle of *referre*) when used as a transitive verb, means to have or establish a relationship, or to have relationship or connection. The foundation of relational community is that relationship is in God's character because all that existed in eternity past was in the Trinity (Gen 1:26). Lewis (1980) subscribes to the idea that relationship is tied to the heart of God, noting that without a Trinity, God could not be love. He further writes that even the words "God is love" do not have real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons.

It is clear that God wants humanity to know Him and the initiative is His. People do not possess the faculties to know God. They are creatures, He is the creator. However,

through His relational character it is His desire that everyone must be within His reach. It should be noted that in His relational nature, God seeks self-disclosure. It is amazing to know that God, in His grace, has revealed Himself and His plan to fallen, hateful man. The inspired writings are a powerful gift of love, for they reveal the nature of the mystery of God. For example, John 1:14 testifies that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” According to John, the Word did not become a committee or a program but became one of us and lived with us.

Thus, throughout the Scriptures, God shows Himself to be highly particular with His relationship to His people as demonstrated in Isa 2:1; Heb 2:9, 14, 17; Gal 4:4. The mystery of God’s grace is that God in truth loves us. This love is expressed to us through Scriptures that are incarnational in nature. The Scriptures, like Jesus, who was God embodied in flesh, are the revelation of God embodied in words. The love of God speak of someone who is friendly and whose words assure us that He is our friend and wants us to be His friends.

Small and Supple (2001), in their description of relational community, agree with at least one of *The New Encyclopedia Britannica’s* (1975) definitions that community consists of social relationships, activities, interests, and attachments that are not dependent on physical location. The related scholarly literature and biblical passages reviewed here perceive the community of believers the way Jesus intended it to be—small, relational, intimate, friendship based, gathering in homes or in intimate settings, over a meal, and sharing life in an intimate way. In connection with this study, the assumption is that small intimate relational communities have the best sphere of influence in terms of evangelism.

The Power of Relational Communities in Evangelism

The power of relationships in evangelism is no more clearly emphasized than by White in *Ministry of Healing* (1942, p. 143), where she gives the most paradigmatic passage on missionary strategy:

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."

The one study (Schwarz, 1996) found that unfeigned, practical love has a divinely generated magnetic power far more effective than evangelistic programs which depend almost entirely on verbal communication. His point is that people want to experience how Christian love really works than to hear us talk about love.

It seems to make sense that God wants a missionary strategy which includes relationships and social action as this brings Christian witness into the secular areas of life. White states emphatically: "First meet the temporal necessities of the needy and relieve their physical wants and sufferings, and you will find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seed of virtue and religion" (1948b, p. 227).

The work of Sahlin (2003) found that the recruitment of new members is something that requires personal contact and the development of relationships, especially in the consumer mentality and highly individualistic values of contemporary American culture. In an illuminating article White (1889) shows that she did not encourage an approach which focuses exclusively on preaching. Rather, she writes that preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. In the book *Desire of Ages*, White appeals to the example of Christ's relational approach to ministry which opens doors for the gospel into secular areas of life. She counsels, "The followers of Christ are

to labor as He did. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing, and inspire hope in the hopeless” (p. 350).

It may be beneficial at this point to address White’s five key verbs utilized in the above quote from *Ministry of Healing* (1942, p. 143) as discussed by Sahlin (2003) reflecting both aspects of relational evangelism and their effectiveness in reaching people.

1. Christ mingled: This suggests significant social interaction, involvement in the community, what contemporary ethnographers call *participant-observer* research. According Sahlin, the representative of Christ is to mingle with unbelievers from a position of concern, friendship, and caring, not disdain, condemnation, or judgmental attitudes.

2. Christ showed: In Sahlin’s perspective, to show means to display or demonstrate and, in this case, to show sympathy or compassion. In other words, representatives of Christ are to perform works of compassion as a way of conveying the reality of their friendship and God’s love for the individual unbeliever and the community at large.

3. Christ ministered: According to Sahlin, to “minister to their needs” means simply to provide services that meet the physical, emotional, economic, and educational needs of both individual unbelievers and the community.

4. Christ won their confidence: In this fourth verb, the direction of the action runs back the other way. Because the missionary mingles, shows compassion, and meets the needs of the community, trust builds and the community begins to have confidence in the

representative of Christ. At this point the missionary has won a hearing for the Gospel. According to White's understanding, the word "then" means Christ waited until certain conditions prevailed, and only after this did the Savior feel free to begin to talk about spiritual things.

5. Christ bade: Once the above actions have been taken (need have been met and trust has been built), the representative of Christ begins presenting the Gospel by proposing, or bidding, that the non-believer accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Community at the Centre of Our Identity

The importance of connecting people to community prior to church membership in evangelism is best explained by Rice (2003), who reports the following experience.

The rabbi told me that whenever he explains what it means to be a Jew, especially to an audience of young people, he emphasizes three basic elements: believing, behaving and belonging. Judaism involves all three as he describes it; but the most important is belonging. To be a Jew is first and foremost to belong to the Jewish community—to connect your life to the life of the community, to make the community central to your identity. (p. 14)

Rice gives a reason why we place community at the centre of our identity in evangelism. Consider this: "Because this is what the earliest Christians did. As the apostles describe it, being a Christian is more than believing and behaving, it is a matter of belonging, too, and this is the most important element of all" (p. 15). Again in the same article, Rice demonstrates that developing relational communities must be our first priority in terms of evangelism.

We have not developed an extensive understanding of community, and we have never made Christian community an essential element in the way we identify ourselves. Yet this is precisely where our quest for identity should begin—not with doctrines or lifestyle, not even with our witness to the world—but with a careful examination (to accompany an intense cultivation) of what it means for people to exist as the body of Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit; of what it means for us to live together in faith, hope, and love. (p. 14)

The Effectiveness of Relationships

Kidder (2008) conducted a study which showed that relational evangelism is the most effective means of sharing the gospel and the following factors were seen.

1. Relational evangelism provides a natural network for sharing the good news of God's redemption love.
2. Relational evangelism deals with receptive people.
3. Relational evangelism allows for unhurried and natural sharing of God's love.
4. Relational evangelism provides natural support when the web member comes to Christ.
5. Relational evangelism results in the effective assimilation of new converts into the church.
6. Relational evangelism tends to win entire families.
7. Relational evangelism provides a constantly enlarging source of new contacts.

These seven factors suggest that the most effective form of evangelism is a natural one—the one that takes place in the context of relationships as Kidder (2008, p. 10) and displays below in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Instruments Influencing Members to Join the Adventist Church in North America

Context	Percentage
Brought up in an Adventist home	59
A friend or relative	58
Reading of literature	49
Public evangelistic meetings	36
Bible studies in the home	34
Visits by a pastor	20
Television or radio programs	20
Bible correspondence course	19
Material on the Internet	7
Others	22

Note. The percentages show the relative strength of each of the nine possibly factors leading people to join a church. Adapted from “The Power of Relationships in Evangelism,” by S. J. Kidder, 2008, *Ministry*, p. 11.

Table 2

Win Arn's Study of Factors That Influence People to Join the Church

Factors	Percentage
Special need	1–2
Walk-in	2–3
Pastor	1–6
Visitation	1–2
Sunday School	4–5
Evangelistic crusade	0–5
Church program	2–3
Friend/relative	75–90

Note. The percentages show the factors that influence people to join the church. Adapted from “The Power of Relationships in Evangelism,” by S. J. Kidder, 2008, *Ministry*, p. 11.

The tables below show that, regarding people who join the church, 58% (Table 1) or 75-90% (Table 2) join as a result of either a friend or relative while public evangelism only brings into the church 36% (Table 1) or 0-5% (Table 2) of new membership. Based on these results, it seems that the key factors leading people to join a church relate to positive relationships and friends. This would seem to support the first hypotheses of this study, which is that a relational evangelistic approach would attract and retain more souls than a public evangelistic approach. What is striking in both tables is the fact that relationship becomes not only important in bringing people to Jesus, but also in retaining them in faith and the church. It seems to make sense to suggest that the more friends a new convert has, the more likely they will stay in the church. Based on these results one can suggest that people come to the Lord mainly through relationships, and stay in the church through relationships. Thus they should be disciplined, encouraged, and nurtured through relationships.

Although it is difficult for communities which are so focused on individuality to fully grasp the spiritual dynamic of community, the findings of Kidder and Arn demonstrate that people live in a very public world of social interactions. And although the writers quoted in this section differed vastly in approach, a fairly consistent picture emerges of the power of relational communities in evangelism. Again the literature reviewed reveals clear insights on the power of relational communities as a main mechanism through which the gospel must be shared with non-Adventist peers.

Community, Spirituality, and Church Growth

A review of literature reveals that there is a strong relationship between community, spirituality, and church growth. Sahlin (2003) found that the strongest item

in the cluster of church growth indicators is how well the congregation does in helping members deepen their relationship. This is strong evidence that spirituality is a key to church growth. This agrees with the reality that the church is a community founded by God to accomplish His redemptive purpose is the matrix for the formation of the spiritual life. Act 2:44–46 affirms that spirituality was never meant to be developed in isolation. In connection with this passage, I want to suggest that the church instructs persons in the spiritual life and at the same time provides a community in which spiritual exploration and experience may be cultivated. Westerhoff's (1989) observation is that God created life in such a way that it requires community. Schramm (1988) speaks of the church as the intentional community in which spirituality is formed as follows:

Intentional community gives us the possibility of experiencing ourselves as part of a people—a people affirmed, forgiven, and gifted. In such places we do not lose ourselves in some corporate identity. We find ourselves as unique persons but freed from the individualism so prevalent in our culture. (p. 52)

Schramm, in this passage, affirms a need for community in spiritual development, and also affirms individual identity. There is need for solitude in order to grow spiritually, but there is also a need for community. In his book, *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer (1954) underlines the need for community without eliminating times of solitude and silence. In fact, he points out that those who cannot be alone should beware of community, and those not in communities should beware of being alone. If community is necessary for spirituality, what spiritual disciplines should the community of faith encourage for deepening individual and corporate communion? The following two disciplines seem to foster spirituality.

The Discipline of Fellowship

Fellowship (*koinonia*) played an essential role in the early church and it should not be neglected today. Cox (1965) in his book, *The Secular City*, makes the following statement, which seems to be valid and relevant to the issue of community:

That the church is to be God's avant-garde by carrying out its threefold responsibility in Greek of "*κηρυγμα*" (proclamation), "*διακονια*" (reconciliation, healing and other forms of service), and "*κοινωνια*" (fellowship demonstration of the character of the new society. (p. 145)

The author of Acts 2 also qualifies his observation that fellowship played an integral part in the life of the church. Cox (1965, p. 145) makes it clear through the following statement that fellowship is the church's task: "*Koinonia* calls for visible demonstration of what the church is saying in its *kerygma* and points to its *diakonia*." He further observes that the church "already lives in the ethos of the new era" (p. 145).

In Cox's view, there is need to build warm fellowship and close interpersonal relationships between Adventists and non-Adventists at Solusi University Church, whereby brothers and sisters can edify one another through one another's ministries for the glory of God. What Cox is proposing is that if our local churches become too big for meaningful fellowship, as the case is now at Solusi, then we must plant small relational churches for fellowship that can provide *koinonia* for every believer.

The Discipline of Worship

Worship is another discipline of community that transcends individualism. What worship does to the church is well captured by Paul who wrote an admonition to the Hebrews (10:24-25).

In this passage, Paul points out that the worship experience should always draw the congregation near to God and to each other. At Solusi Church, like other Adventist

churches, the challenge is that young people are not interested in church, citing lack of warmth and love in the church. Dudley (1992) notes that whenever churches ignore Paul's advice, young people stop attending church. His advice is that local churches should find ways to foster the Christ-likeness that models acceptance of everyone, love to all, and significant caring for others. He further points out that "this non-judgmental, loving, accepting climate which typifies a grace environment is desperately needed in local congregation" (p. 185).

The metaphor of the church as a family also emphasizes a caring church community. Bradford (1986) proposes that in a caring church people are loved, respected, and recognized as somebody. In the eyes of Bradford church is a place where people acknowledge that they need each other, where talents are developed, where people grow, and where everybody is fulfilled.

In summary, the relationship between community, spirituality, and church growth could be expressed as follows. Discipleship occurs between believers when they are honest and transparent with each other. Community allows each member of the body to be strengthened by the others. The weaker disciples are mentored by the open sores of the stronger ones. The weaker ones can minister unto the stronger ones as well. God in His mercy uses the weak to confound the wise (1 Cor 1:27). As the stronger ones serve the weaker, they put themselves under the discipline of the Spirit and grow. Community strengthens each of us. Christian community is an important part of our personal growth. There is much more to this togetherness than simply networking, support, and the joy of friendship.

Therefore the need for community that is felt acutely in Solusi, Zimbabwe, where the project was developed and implemented, prompted this research. In the world of social scientists today there seems to be awareness that the extended family system common among Africans provides community spirit and emotional support for people. Regrettably, African peoples, Solusi residents included, are being stripped of this support system today because of individualism, technology, urbanization, and other related forces of modernization that comes to play.

African Roots that Inform Importance of Relational Community

There are two African roots that inform the importance of community which have been identified for discussion in this section. These are Traditional African community and African instituted churches, whose community dynamics are reviewed here.

Relational Community in a Traditional African Context

There is so much emphasis on community in most Traditional African cultures. This strong sense of community among Africans is highlighted by the belief that there is no existence outside community. In a traditional African context, community is the arena for interaction, forgiveness, and reconciliation. To an African, whatever disturbs the community (such as, prostitution, indecent dressing, witchcraft, and isolation) is not accepted; thus, to them sin is anti-community. Most African activities are community orientated. Conversely, other cultures treat only symptoms of a disease, but Africans say the cause of the illness ought to be known. To an African, disruption of unity causes illness. Louw (1994) recognises that among Africans humanity must be approached as a unity. In an African context human sickness is understood as follows: The whole person,

together with his network of relationships, is sick because the person experiences an imbalance.

Fellowship in Africa

Further review of the literature reveals that in their worldview Africans strongly believe that human beings are part of a system; hence an individual cannot operate in isolation. The work of Louw (1994, p. 27) supports this idea. "We could relate to the African's understanding of himself in roles and societal relationships, by referring to the church as a body with *koinonia* ties. *Koinonia* imparts a role of loving service amongst believers." In a Traditional African context, a relationship also exists between sickness/health and community. With regard to this relationship, Louw (1994, p. 27) states that "illness implies the harmony of societal order being disturbed. A person can therefore only be cured if his relationships have been repaired and if the community is healthy." This means healing cannot take place in isolation from the community, the family system or the tribal system. Saayman and Kriel (1992) advance the same idea: "What has to be healed is not a disease but a community." A writer on pastoral care within an African context agrees that pastoral care must be seen as a social and community issue. In his book, *Pastoral Care to Black Africans*, Eybers (1991) writes:

In an African context, pastoral counseling must undergo a metamorphosis, as the community and network of relationships are in the centre and the individual at the periphery. Caregivers must always be aware of the connection between the care-receivers, who form part of their relationship to the society. (p. 207)

Certainly fellowship is one of the classic activities of pastoral care in Africa.

Another specialist in pastoral care (Lartey, 1997, p. 31) states with clarity, "Fellowship has to do with the provision of opportunities for social interaction within communities.

Such communal activities include meals, games, celebrations and commemorations. Here the social nature of human existence is recognized and affirmed.”

Traditional Africans also place emphasis on kinship structure in relation to fellowship. They suggest that religion should not work against social structure by pulling the individual out of the extended family and isolating him. To a Traditional African, the kinship structure is very important because it affects all relationships. To an African, to be human is to participate in all the activities of the community group: be it social, communal, or belonging. This is known as *ubuntu* (Ndebele expression for being human) or *hunhu* (Shona expression for the same). The expressions *ubuntu* or *hunhu* are really not translatable to English.

***Ubuntu* in the Ndebele African Context**

In most African tradition today there is an outcry against the eroding value of *ubuntu* in homes, schools, and even in the church. *Ubuntu* expression entails a view of life with deep respect for people and conditions that make life possible. Du Toit (1998, p. 49) states it more succinctly, “It emphasizes a spirituality of belonging to the community and to the soil itself.” Regrettably, the aspect of African community which could be one of the major aspects of disciple-making has not been adequately addressed by Adventists and other evangelical churches in Africa. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa would be quite attractive to Africans at Solusi if it provided for this full expression of being human.

Community Impact in African Culture

At this point it is important to reflect on this question using the works of scholars: Why then should the Adventist Church, which seems to be growing so fast in Africa,

allow controversial doctrinally deviant movements to gain the upper hand in meeting human needs rather than embracing relational communities which directly address African needs? There is evidence from scholarly works that African community or culture has not been fully addressed. Walt (1991) in his book, *A Christian Worldview and Christian Higher Education*, asserts that by refusing to take seriously the African's worldview the gospel workers actually weakened the impact of Christianity in Africa. In Walt's view mainline churches, Adventists included, can only impact Africans and the global community if they accept that people are looking for a church where they can experience solidarity with their fellow church members as family members.

In his book, *African Religious and Philosophy*, Mbiti (1969) highlights the importance of community in Africa. He writes:

The individual can only say, 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.' This sense of inseparable bond with the community goes together with the sense of sharing (fellowship), hospitality and a strong desire for truth and reconciliation when conflicts and fights occur. (p. 56)

Furthermore Du Toit (1998, p.49) reinforces the same idea as follows: "African societies are family centered. Human life exists only to be shared. This naturally incorporates the idea of extended family, where life is shared for whom you have to take."

Speaking from a missiological perspective, Okoye (1997) states this valid point: "African solidarity, love for community, and respect for the aged as the most honored members of the family could be a significant contribution by Africans to the world." Embracing such a system (Mbiti, 1969; Du Toit, 1998; Okoye, 1997) means that orphans, elderly and widows would be cared for. In addition, loneliness and alienation, which

seem so common in communities, could be banished. The church in Africa today, Solusi University included, has one common problem, membership retention.

It may be beneficial at this point to review concepts (Nyathi, 2001) that are inherent in Traditional African cultures that can enhance Christian community if adopted and modified by Adventist churches. Interviews carried among staff and students at Solusi also affirmed that the *ubuntu* spirit among Africans is usually demonstrated through participating in social, communal, and religious activities.

Social Activities

1. Weddings: These are common and respected among Africans with the whole community, *isigaba* (Ndebele), and exhibiting fellowship in celebrating with those who are being married.

2. Births. As a way of expressing their joy, Africans coined the word *amhlophe* (Ndebele) an expression for congratulations. The new born baby is very special to the entire extended family and this is shown through gifts as was the case with baby Jesus (Luke 2).

Communal Activities

The most common communal activities include:

1. Death: The whole neighborhood meets at the diseased place, every evening to comfort the relatives not only through songs, sermon, and prayers but with food stuff like mealie meal, meat, and vegetables, as well as providing cooking and cleaning services. One staff member cited a community club known as “*Asazaneni Makhelwane*,” meaning “Lets help each other neighbor.”

2. *Ilima* (ploughing together): Africans strongly believe in pulling their resources together in the form of human resources, oxen, plough, and food to till each other's field. This is known as *ilima* (Ndebele). Adventists can adopt and practice *ilima* in evangelistic programs in their churches. The spirit of individualism and competition, now common among gospel workers, is neither godly nor African, hence, should be discouraged. White (1956, p. 541) warns that "he who shuts himself up to himself, is not filling the position that God designed he should."

Religious Activity: *Ukuthethela* (Holy Commemoration)

The significance attached to *ukuthethela*, a special clan ceremony, requires that every family member must be present regardless of distance or their personal situation, as they are informed in advance. The key objective is to bring the clan community together once in their life time—just to see each other, to wish each other well, to share joys with one another, to encourage each other, to laugh together, to eat together, to worship together, to pray together, and to know one another. In the Christian context, the Sabbath day offers both baptized and non-baptized members a chance to congregate together for a holy convocation (Lev 23). Regrettably, Christians, Adventists included, do not attach such significance to the Sabbath day as Africans do to *ukuthethela* ceremony.

Relational Community in African Instituted Churches

The sense of community in African Instituted Churches and how community spirit attracts African members is well documented, and it is not the intention here to give an exhaustive account of its influence. Rather, the goal here is to review literature which shows how an intimate community contributes to evangelism. White (1942, p. 389)

makes a very important observation: “Companionship [community] if not found at home or church, children or church members will seek it elsewhere.”

There is general agreement among scholars about the nature and importance of the fellowship dimension in evangelizing Africans. Daneel (1987) points out that *koinonia* or fellowship is very essential in an African setting. He mentioned that the need for warmth and fellowship is not only a spontaneous religious need among Africans, but expresses a yearning in the midst of the disruption and confusion of modern Africa.

Thus the Solusi University Church needs to recognize this and maximize on its fellowship dimension to be relevant among the students. The majority of our African students at Solusi University need a place to feel at home in the alien environment of technology and modern civilization, where the extended family is crumbling. It is not enough for them to be told to feel at home by Sabbath School superintendents, but they want to experience genuine love in an intimate community. Daneel (1987, p. 273) says that “the church can be that intimate community marked by mutual concern and voluntarily service.”

Bosch (1979) conveys the same message of building intimate church community in Africa. He recognized that so far the missionary church, the Seventh-day Adventists included, has failed to adequately meet this need. If the Solusi Church wants to reach non-Adventist students, then the church needs to live life according to the way it is portrayed in the Bible (John 13:35; Acts 2:42–47). In this way, it is in a position to meet the needs for spiritual nurture of its members and to have a positive influence among non-Adventist students. Bosch (1979, p. 77) strongly suggests that “it is time the church made it clear that it is truly the new community of Jesus Christ.” To accomplish that,

there is need for tangible *allelon* ministries as discussed on chapter 2. “At all costs, the church should endeavor to live according to God’s blue print” (Bosch, 1979).

Again, the interrelationship between fellowship, communion and missionary activity confronts the church with certain questions that call for urgent attention. In response to the spiritual stagnation and complacency that obscure community at Solusi University and other Adventist churches today, African Instituted churches present a blueprint to reflect anew on community in modern African life. Some examples of how African Instituted Churches are helping people cope with urban life using fellowship dimension to win and retain unbelievers will now be explored.

Urban Setting and African Instituted Churches

Daneel (1987) makes a very interesting point in that the kinship structure that forms the basis of the social order in rural communities is lacking in cities—hence new criteria for a satisfactory social structure are needed. In response to the absence of this African kinship structure, African Instituted Churches make an important contribution in providing fellowship to all lonely and neglected people. They emerge as reorientation centers with their wide ranging activities which can be best be depicted as a quest for belonging.

Daneel (1987) has much to say on those activities provided by African Instituted Churches for the urbanites to cope with challenges of change and uncertainty brought by modernization. Fellowship, social intercourse, sense of identity, protection, and information services and mutual help appear to be the most representative.

Fellowship

Individuals are encouraged to regard one another as *kinsmen*, which breeds a sense of solidarity. Common terms like *brother* and *sister* are used to express kinship between people unrelated by blood. This allows their members to develop a sense of kinship giving rise to a new kind of extended family which is an essential aspect and common among Africans.

Social Intercourse

African Instituted Churches provide an arena for forming friendships. In the impersonal metropolis there is a great need for the intimate circle of friends where the individual can receive recognition and feel at home. Thus the individual's denomination, which is also his circle of friends, enables him to cope with the problems of urban life in a wide sense.

Sense of Identity

In a society (urban setting) where the individual is isolated, crowded out and feels insecure, the development of identity is essential. Instead of isolation and frustration, African Instituted Churches afford members a new sense of personal worth, which is lacking in mainline churches including Seventh-day Adventists.

Protection

Urbanites are constantly faced with the uncertainties and competitiveness of urban life. In response to these challenges, independent prophets constantly give advice and help members in business matters and teach them how to find jobs. In such a community

God's help and protection feature prominently, and people feel secure when exposed to witness and proclamation.

Information Services and Mutual Help

Newcomers from elsewhere need to be provided with useful information on job opportunities, the workings of the transport system and where to apply for housing. In addition to spiritual assistance members are given material help. For instance, food is provided for the unemployed and help with funeral expenses is given to a household stricken by sickness or bereavement. On the other hand, some mainline church members are known for expressions like "my brother your reward is in heaven" when the member physically is in great need.

West (1975) gives a summary of the situation of Independent Churches, i.e., African Instituted Churches, in Soweto, Johannesburg:

Soweto's independent churches provide a blend of old and new which is particularly attractive to the people who join them. These people are mostly elderly, poorly-educated, and first-generation townpeople. For them Soweto has few voluntary associations, other than sporting clubs, and few opportunities. Against this background the African Instituted churches are very important as their congregations provide small reference groups in relation to the wider society. In them individuals are secure as part of a small community: they have their assigned places, each has an identity as a church member, and a ready-made group of friends. His group is able to give both moral and material assistance in time of need, and assists individuals in their adjustment to city life. (p. 73)

It needs to be pointed out that this wide range of activities provided to the urbanites by African Instituted Churches is relevant to African needs and relate to their setting. In the description given above on African Instituted Churches, it must be realized that they offer Christians everywhere what they value most like community, fellowship, protection, identity, friends, and mutual help. White (1915) gives this timeless counsel:

In laboring in a new field [in this case among Africans] do not think it your duty to say at once to the people, We are Seventh-day Adventists; we believe that the Seventh day is the Sabbath; we believe in the non-immortality of the soul. This would often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach. Speak to them, as you have opportunity, upon points of doctrine on which you can agree. Dwell on the necessity of practical godliness. Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will gain their confidence; and there will be time enough for doctrines. Let the heart be won, the soil prepared, and then sow the seed, presenting in love the truth as it in Jesus. (p. 119)

Small Relational Communities in the History of the Christian Church

Small relational communities have contributed so much throughout church history and will continue to be the most effective method even during the close of this earth's history. In this section a few examples will be considered from the works of Christian writers to show that the main purpose for community or fellowship was evangelism.

Small Relational Communities During the Reformation

The negative effect of church or state alliances and institutionalism on community or fellowship has been revealed in history. Kurt (1991) writes:

During the Dark Ages the church's spiritual fellowship and sense of community were exchanged for buildings, ritual, and formality. Nevertheless, the emergence of the Reformation changed things drastically. With the blossoming of the Reformation through Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, and other Christian agents, small fellowship groups began to revive. (p. 16)

He further mentioned that the reading of the Scriptures became an exciting event as small groups gathered around the evening fire and studied together, sparking a resurgence of spirituality in the lives of Christians. Following the Reformation, Christianity continued to enjoyed popular acceptance propelled by small relational communities. Today the emphasis on church institutional formality has returned and drastically affected Christian community and members are seriously starved from

community. However, God counteracted loss of community spirit through Reformists like John Wesley and George Whitefield, who, in the spirit of community, traveled extensively, organizing into small fellowship communities those who made decisions for Christ. Kurt (1991) states pointedly that “these societies met together in rented facilities for prayer, Bible study, fellowship and worship.” It is interesting to note that one of the reasons mentioned by Kurt for organizing societies was for fellowship or community. There is no doubt that the impact of these small organized relational communities gave birth to Methodism, which continued benefited from them. They also influenced Ellen White, who was very influential in the birth of Adventism, as shall be later discussed.

Small Relational Communities in Methodism

The Methodist class meetings were small fellowship groups. A review of the works of Stutzman (2002, p. 122) reveals that “these meetings led to the establishment of the Methodist church, so named because of the methodical way people and programs were organized for nurture. For 100 years, to be a Methodist was to belong to a small relational community.”

Small Relational Communities in Early Adventism

The influence of small relational communities in Methodism also inspired early Adventism in a unique way due to the influence of Ellen White, one of the pioneers of Adventism, who had a Methodist background. Spalding (1961) states that, “at an early age White became involved in the Millerite Movement and the subsequent formation of the Seventh day Adventist church.” In connection with White’s leadership experiences Spalding (1961) again reports that “White realized the positive spiritual benefits and

numerical growth in membership available through small relational communities'

ministry." White (1948e) asserts:

Preach less, and educate more, by holding Bible readings, and by praying, with families and little companies. To all who are working with Christ I would say, wherever you can gain access to the people by the fireside, improve your opportunity. Take your Bible, and open before them its great truths. Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart. By being social and coming close to the people, you may turn the current of their thoughts more readily than by the most able discourse. The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches. (p. 193)

Here the author argued in favor of small relational communities as the most effective evangelistic approach in intimate settings like the family, by the fireside and in small gatherings. The strength of relational communities is that it gives someone the opportunity of being social and coming close to the people, unlike sermons delivered in the open air. Again White (1979, p. 11) describes small relational communities quite pointedly in the following way: "Let small companies [communities] assemble together in the evening or early morning to study the Bible for themselves. . . . Let little companies meet together to study the Scriptures. You will lose nothing by this, but will gain much."

Embedded in White's statements is the view that small relational communities have a significant place in the Seventh-day Adventist Church's mission and outreach methodologies. At this point it is worth asking this question: Why are Seventh-day Adventists seemingly ignorant to the divine method, whereas other Protestant churches in this continent carry the torch of small relational communities near and far?

In view of the counsels given above, we can see that small relational fellowship communities are important for the life of the college campus church like Solusi. The

question that now remains is how can this method assist in reaching non-Adventist peers? First, fellowship communities allow for the full participation of all the members in the cell. The church should use small outreach groups in everyday community to reach out with biblical truth. It was revealed to White that when Seventh-day Adventist Christians are dispersed, small relational communities will be the norm, not the exception. Adventist believers will appreciate the company of their relational community as written in the inspired records. White (1982, p. 282) cites this revelation as follows: "I saw the saints leaving the cities and villages, and associating together in companies, and living in the most solitary places. Angels provided them food and water, while the wicked were suffering from hunger and thirst."

The Family Ministry Model

The family ministry model is simply looking creatively for ways to reach young people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Literature reviewed reveals insights on this subject in relation to evangelism. Wallace (1999) states that, "the church is a household of households." Foster (1998) emphasizes strongly that "the most basic place of our sacramental living is in our marriages and homes and families." What seems to emerge from the views of these scholars is that it is in the family where people learn how to relate others. In the family, one can practice loving, explore new ways to show God's grace, to make him real and to learn the meaning of conflict. In scientific terms, it is the laboratory of human relationships, infused with the Spirit of God.

Some interviews of people who joined the church revealed that the family had a strong influence on their decision. One person interviewed described the family as follows: "Thou art the nurse of evangelism." Evangelism has benefited from spiritual

healthy families (Mal 4:5, 6; Luke 1:15–17). The charge for the spiritual training of children was placed squarely on the parents. The idea is well reflected in Deuteronomy.

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk long the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut 6:6–9)

Palmer (1991) passionately asserts that “the family was not only created by God to be the ‘matrix in which the language of grace should be cast,’ but was also specially designed to fulfill the task.” God blessed each family with the gift of time. The Lord made the significant bond of time into the family structure and has revealed His desire that we use it to introduce Him to our immediately family members. Still today the home remains the nurse of evangelism, said one of the interviewers. Again a study on the purpose of family reveals that it is an agent of salvation. Rainer (2001) found that “the home is the place of salvation for many.” Even for elderly converts, the greatest influence has been determined to be family members. Thus, if family members have the ability through their healthy relationships to reach the unbelievers, then a need to develop new strategies by churches for reaching people through family relationships would be ideal.

Empowering Leadership Model

The subject of empowerment has received considerable attention in recent years (Blau & Alba, 1982; Pearce & Sims, 2000). What then is empowering leadership? Pearce and Conger (2003) define it as follows:

Whereas traditional models of management emphasizes power emanating from the top of an organization, the empowerment concept emphasizes the decentralization of power. The rationale behind empowering individual workers is that those dealing with situations on a daily basis are the most qualified to make decisions regarding those situations. (p. 12)

Under conditions of empowering leadership, followership is dynamically determined. Kelly (1988) describes good followers as those who

have the vision to see both forest and the trees, the social capacity to work well with others, the strength of character to flourish without heroic status, the moral and psychological balance to pursue personal and corporate goals at no cost to either, and above all, the desire to participate in a team effort for the accomplishment of some greater purpose. (p. 107)

Thus, the need for good followership skills to enhance empowerment in all team members is heightened: Team members need to be able to clearly recognize when they should be leading and when they should be following. In connection with the development of relational communities, empowering leadership is essential, as affirmed by research. Some church growth literature on the topic of leadership states that the leadership style of pastors in growing churches is more project than people-oriented, more goal than relationship-oriented, more authoritarian than team-orientated. However, a recent study produced different results which indicate that relationships are more important than projects. Schwarz (1996, p. 22) found that while pastors of growing churches are usually not *people persons* who lose themselves in interaction with individuals, they are, on the whole, somewhat more relationship-, person-, and partnership-orientated than their colleagues in declining churches.

What we encounter here in Schwarz's work is the key distinction that is probably best expressed by the word empowerment. It seems to make sense that leaders of growing churches focus mainly on empowering other Christians for ministry. Empowering leaders do not use other lay members as helpers in obtaining their own goals and completing their own visions. Instead, they recognize that every man or woman gifted and transformed by the Spirit is expected to contribute to the overall process of spiritual leadership that accomplishes God's will through His church. Thus, every member is

helped to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. Formal leaders such as pastors, chaplains, administrators, and local elected church leaders equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals, enabling them to become all that God intends them to be.

It is from this background that this section attempts to unpack this important concept of empowering leadership style in relation to the development of relational communities. White (1948f) states categorical that “the work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers.” The challenge is made difficult when the pastor wants to be both the player and coach of the team. He competes with the laity in ministries of the church. For example, he wants to be the best preacher, teacher, administrator, counselor, and everything. He goes from one evangelistic campaign to another and one seminar to another. No time is left for the family or to attend to social critical issues. Relations with close relatives are strained and the church is spoken evil of. This is all because the concept of empowerment of the laity is alien to him.

In connection with empowerment leadership style, the apostles applied this concept in dealing with the problem of the growing Christian community. Luke records as follows:

Then the twelve called the multitude and said, chose among yourselves men who are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, which we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:3)

The apostles identified leaders full of wisdom and spirit and equipped them to do the work of tending to the needs of the widows because this was not what God had called them to do. They said it is not desirable for them to neglect prayer and the ministry of the word. Here were the results of empowering leadership style: (a) the word of God spread

and (b) the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. To achieve similar results today, leaders are called to constantly identify new leaders to foster the growth of the church. Schwarz (1996) gives this comment on leaders who realize their own empowerment by empowering others.

Rather than handling the bulk of church responsibilities on their own, they invest the majority of their time in discipleship, delegation, and multiplication. Thus, the energy they expend can be multiplied indefinitely. This is how spiritual “self-organization” occurs. God’s energy, not human effort and pressure, is released to set the church in motion. (p. 23)

From Schwarz’s perspective, these leaders educate, train, and motivate members to be effective in sharing their faith with others. As a result their empowering leadership style, the church becomes a training ground, a motivating center. All obstacles are removed to make it as easy as possible for people to actively and effectively share their faith. Empowering leaders also have a deliberate plan to train and inspire members to share their faith naturally in whatever context they are in, whether in the home, the marketplace, or the neighborhood. Conclusions drawn from the empowerment literature reviewed above include the following benefits: (a) people will experience their potential, (b) effectiveness will be multiplied, (c) there is joy in seeing others grow, (d) creativity is unleashed, (e) participation increases, and (f) ownership increases.

On the contrast, it’s important to identify the barriers to empowering people which include insecurity, pride, resistance to change, lack of confidence in others, and insistence on controlling. To deal with these, leaders must understand that leadership is an act of faith in other people. Leaders must learn the art of empowering people by considering these factors in Jesus’ empowering leadership style (Matt 10; Luke 9). Jesus empowered His disciples as follows: (a) genuinely loved them, (b) trusted them, (c) looked for the best from them, (d) looked for their inner potential, (e) affirmed them

often, (f) gave them challenges, and (g) gave them what they needed, not what they deserved.

What seems to emerge from these concepts in Christ's empowering leadership is the need of finding the best people you can, give them all the development you could, and give them all the responsibility you can, with the authority needed for the challenge.

In initiating empowerment, the top is the place to begin. During a leadership intensive session Bell (2009, March) presented three keys that must be considered for empowerment to take place. First, leaders must share information with everyone. Second, leaders must create autonomy through boundaries. Third, leaders must replace hierarchical structures with teams.

Summary

Therefore the works of the scholars reviewed above on the subjects such as the power of relationships, relational community, family ministry model, African roots that inform community, role of relational communities throughout church history, and empowering leadership all have underscored the importance of developing relational communities as the most effective missionary strategy in soul winning and soul retention. The Seventh-day Adventist Church would benefit greatly if these concepts were adopted, modified, and implemented.

CHAPTER 4

CHURCH GROWTH PATTERNS IN
ZIMBABWEAN CHURCHES

Introduction

One of the major purposes of research like this one is to find out what worked and what did not work in growing churches. This is not a new topic of study. The church growth patterns of two churches in Zimbabwe were analyzed. The two churches were Solusi University Church, where this project was implemented, and Praise and Worship Centre Church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

The following was hypothesized in chapter 1.

1. A relational evangelistic approach was thought to be a more effective missionary strategy than a public evangelistic approach.
2. A strong sense of community spirit was thought to be a key factor in this.
3. It was also thought that the more the church practiced one another's concepts, the more it would attract and retain non-Adventist peers.

These hypotheses were investigated by examining the strategies used by Solusi University Church and Praise Worship Centre in their evangelism. Solusi Church will be dealt with first.

Solusi Church in Context

One of the key reasons why Solusi was established as a missionary station was evangelism. In light of this statement and in relation to this project, strategies employed in evangelism at Solusi were analyzed. This analysis includes a description of the following items: the neighborhood, the church's history, religious ecology, participation of members, membership change, and types of evangelism.

The Neighborhood

The Solusi University Church is located in a rural village with a population of less than 2,500. Typically this village campus has only a handful of entities such as student clubs, houses for staff, married students, and other related entities.

History of Solusi Church

This congregation was established more than 100 years ago, while other nearby congregations were started more recently. It was organized before World War II. Interviews revealed that this congregation has gone through a historic process that is in some ways comparable to the life cycle of any organism. For example, during the first three decades of life, this local church was vigorous and experienced most of its growth. Reports also indicate that during the next three to five decades growth leveled off and the congregation entered into a mature phase. However, currently this local church seems to have entered into a period of decline which, if not addressed, may last for a long time. The response below, given by one elderly member concerning the history of this church, seems to suggest some decline.

Question: Tell me what this congregation was like back when you first started to attend here?

Response: It has declined spiritually which is evidenced in terms of lifestyle and our relationship with outsiders.

Religious Ecology

There are students from several religious organizations in our campus community. The churches represented are Catholics, Zion Church of Christ, Baptist, Methodist, Guta Ra Mwari, and Pentecostals. Nearly three quarters of those who attend worship in the congregation are non-Adventist. Solusi is a church where the majority of worship attendees are from the baby boom generation (now 32 to 51 years of age) and the baby bust generation (now 22 to 31 years of age) who prefer high quality worship and a wide menu of programs.

Membership Participation

Membership participation and membership change is illustrated in Tables 3 and 4 below. Table 3 shows the results of Solusi Adventist members' participation in a variety of church and community activities. What I have tabulated here in the table are very different participation patterns. Although members of the Solusi Church participate regularly in public worship, the members are less active in congregational life, especially seeking new converts, church fellowship activities and visitation. Thus, Solusi members are unlikely to participate in evangelism efforts.

Table 3

Members' Participation in Various Church Activities

Activity	% Highly Involved	% Somewhat Involved	%Not Involved
Personal witnessing	7	17	76
Worship services	86	12	2
Prayer Band	45	1	54
Bible study groups	13	12	75
Small groups	65	30	5
Seeking converts and new members	9	3	88
Voice of prophecy enrolment	11	6	83
Visitation	5	21	74
Celebrations activities	8	19	73
Musical groups	54	13	33
Community services activities	12	11	77

Table 4

Membership Change at Solusi University Church: 2006–2009

	2006–2007	2008–2009	Change
<i>Average Members Added per Year</i>			
Baptisms	300	371	+71
Transfers in	22	28	+6
Profession of faith	1	0	-1
<i>Average Members Removed per Year</i>			
Deaths	16	18	+2
Transfers out	27	23	-4
Missing	93	115	+22
Ratio: baptisms to Death per year	18.75	20.61	+1.86
Ratio of transfers into transfers out per year	.81	1.22	+.41
Ratio of additions by profession to missing	0.01	0	-0.045

It is surprising that 88% of the members are not involved in seeking converts or new members. Few of these lay members see themselves as actively involved in seeking individuals who need salvation and thereby changing the community one person at a time. Their marching orders come from Matthew (28:18-20). Unfortunately only about one third of congregation's membership participates in different evangelistic efforts despite the large numbers of non-Adventist students who need to be reached with the gospel message.

On the other hand, it is encouraging that there is a high level of participation by Solusi's members in small groups and musical activities. Though there is no church choir, musical groups which are composed of Adventist and non-Adventist students are very active in this congregation. Hence this could be a good strategy for Adventists to build relationships with their peers. Similarly, we celebrate Solusi's large number of Sabbath School small groups' ministries.

At the same time one wonders why so few members of this church are not active in community ministries and personal witnessing. In the past 12 months, this congregation has not planned to embark on the following services to the community: food pantry or soup kitchen, job training or job-finding service, senior citizens program, and housing for homeless. Also, this congregation during the past 12 months has rarely participated in any interfaith activity with a group of students from other faith communities (such as Catholics, Pentecostals, etc.) on educational, fellowship activities, or community service.

Table 4 contains the average number of additions and removals per year for two periods: 2006–2007 and 2008–2009. The table shows several things about the changing shape of Solusi University Church's membership.

1. Baptisms are up an average of 71 people per year, and new members received by profession of faith are down by a smaller proportion. Over the 4 years, Solusi church's growth has come more from outside than from within. The percentages of those baptized from non-Adventist students are 64.4% and the percentage from the community is 35.6%.

2. The ratio of baptism to deaths is improving. In 2006–2007 the church reported 18.8 baptisms for each death; in 2008–2009 there were 20.6 baptisms for each death.

3. The ratio of transfers in to transfers out is also improved. In 2006–2007 the church's lose of membership through transfer was 22.7% greater than the number of transfers in (27 out to 22 in) while in 2008–2009 transfers in was 21.7% greater than transfers out (28 in to 23 out).

The statistical analysis presented here may indicate the need for specific new programs as well as helping the church identify the source of potential problems. For example, the church may need gets involved constructively in its Solusi community, providing significant services to non-Adventist students.

Types of Evangelism

The church leaders and students included in the evangelism study of Solusi were asked what is really happening at Solusi University Church in terms of evangelism.

Those interviewed and surveyed gave these stories and explanations, providing valuable insight into individual impressions and attitude regarding Solusi. We now analysis the various types of evangelism at Solusi University Church.

Preaching

The divine sermon is the high point of the worship service at Solusi. Preachers at Solusi are very focused on individual faith and in the process may neglect larger concerns. Almost 90% of the preachers focus on Adventist fundamental beliefs. The preachers seem to be less committed to overcoming the weakness of Adventist preachers in an earlier time that were more legalistic, judgmental, and less warm and caring. A church, regardless of how doctrinal its dogma and view of Scripture, can hardly expect to experience growth as long as its members do not live their faith or belief and share this faith with others, said one of the student elders. Schwarz (1996, p. 27) states that pure doctrine alone, as countless examples illustrate, does not induce growth. Leaders also concurred that doctrines do not win people to Jesus, friends win and nurture them.

Without healthy relationship between Adventist and non-Adventist peers, this preaching fails to reach the educated and influential, contributing to both the high dropout rate among young Adventist students and a largely unreached segment of our non-Adventist peers, said one of the church leaders.

Integration of Faith and Learning

Special classes like Christian Beliefs and Ethics intentionally expose students to Adventist beliefs and lifestyle. According to the chaplain, these classes are a seed planting approach preparing students for the week of spiritual emphasis which is a major harvest event.

Voice of Prophecy

Another seed sowing strategy at Solusi involves enrolling students in the Voice of Prophecy Bible lessons. The chaplain reported that a number of these students join the

church who cannot be reached through sermons. However, the only problem with this method at Solusi is that there are few volunteers for marking the lessons and for follow ups.

Week of Spiritual Emphasis

This is a major evangelistic strategy at Solusi Church, says the chaplain. At Solusi this constitutes the tried and tested method, but it is employed with decreasing effect on our largely non-Adventist students. When asked why, the chaplain pointed to two reasons: (a) pressure from classmates and (b) a resistant spirit among non-Adventist students. Members gave the following reasons. Four in five reported that we can get good results from the week of spiritual emphasis only if we improve on our relationships with non-Adventist peers. They further recommended that Adventist members must build healthier relationships with non-Adventist students prior to public evangelistic meetings. They also reported that the church needs revival weeks to teach members the power of relationships in evangelism.

The chaplain of the university summed it up as follows “The emerging relational evangelistic approach in the form of relationship leadership style, small relational centers of worship and one another practices could be good complimentary evangelistic methods.”

The following advantages were noted. Week of spiritual emphasis have won many souls to the Lord. It revives people’s spirituality as there are many contact sessions with God. This program also brings the entire Solusi community together for worship. There are considerable disadvantages of week of spiritual emphasis. This program is not nurturing individual converts; it is goal oriented rather than focused on creating disciples.

Follow up is very weak. Members are not involved in winning the souls. The invited speaker calls for conversion, but after he leaves, the newly converted are left unattended. It is a short lived program in the sense that it is an event rather than a process. For example, the steering committee is temporary, as it is dissolved immediately after the week of spiritual emphasis. Timing is wrong as the program is conducted a few days before the final examination. Another weakness is that it is compulsory worship. The program is a one man show with the majority of people being spectators. Finally, it is doctrinally focused rather than people focused.

Music

This is another powerful strategy of evangelism at Solusi University Church, reports the church chorister. Further interviews with members of the singing groups revealed that music attracts a lot of students, with some groups having up to 60 members. One of the church leaders says, “We appreciate the contribution of all our singing groups toward evangelism. Some of our students have joined the church in the name of music.”

Prayer Band

This is a seed planting strategy at Solusi University with participants testifying that they have witnessed souls won to Jesus due to prayer ministry, according to one of the prayer band members. Of late Solusi has witnessed two prayer conventions which engaged both staff and students. There was also a prayer breakfast. However, neither program had much impact on the large non-Adventist population, as is evident by a small proportion that attended, says one of the prayer band coordinators.

Worship Center

Solusi Church has several worship services in its beautiful temple. However, it seems one worship center has not sufficiently addressed the problem of fellowship and a sense of community due to the large number of worshippers. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Solusi Church included, the need for community is underlined by one factor: Adventists proclaim the message which calls people to come out of their communities. The call to come out to be God's people (Rev 18:4) is heeded by some students at Solusi, but the students called out of different communities should not be starved from relational communities. The following responses seem to indicate a lack of warmth and fellowship among Solusi students. Four out of five said they always are lonely and feel neglected. Two out of four said sometimes they have found the worship services inspiring and felt warmth and cared for. Only 6% indicate they find worship frustrating and 9% say they are often bored because the number of worshippers is too large in this worship center. Clearly, for some students, Sabbath worship is a very positive experience. On the other hand, for most students Sabbath worship seems to be a very frustrating experience because of the lack of fellowship and community. Thus the research demonstrated that the students at Solusi tend to believe that planting small relational worship centers could be the solution so that worshippers sense God's presence, as well as feel awe, joy, or inspiration during the worship services.

In light of these experiences by students, leaders responsible for personal ministry were interviewed in order to find a solution to this problem. The leaders opted for planting new small relational worship centers and cited the following reasons why planting such worship centers is central in church growth.

1. Planting new small relational worship centers is biblical. The great commission includes an ever widening circle of mission (Acts 1:8); the apostolic strategy involved planting new small relational congregations (14:21–23); and the laity were involved in planting new small churches (8:1, 4; 11:19–21). This is a kingdom activity, strongly endorsed by God Himself. Collectively, the community of believers at Solusi Church can scarcely feel they are obeying God if they fail to plant more churches for fellowship, and plant them intentionally and aggressively, say one of the leaders.

2. Planting new small relational worship centers means the survival of the Adventist Church as a denomination. He reported that Adventist members rightly feel their denominational emphasis contributes something important to the wholeness of the global church of God. But if the present rate of decline at Solusi continues for another 10 or 15 years, given the steady rise in the age profile of the present membership, the future is bleak. To reverse this trend, one of the essential ingredients is the vigorous planting of new small relational one day churches in strategic places around the campus and once every three months everyone meet at Solusi Jerusalem temple.

3. New leaders can be developed through planting new small worship centers. The following advantages were cited for planting such churches within the campus. (a) Church planting generates renewal and revival in the parent church. (b) Church planting will develop new leaders among the students and staff and will provide them more leadership opportunities as they serve the newly planted churches. (c) Planting new small centers of worship will provide greater opportunities for the development and exercise of spiritual gifts among church members. (d) New small churches grow faster than older churches. (e) Church planting will retain the largest proportion of new converts won

during the week of spiritual emphasis. (f) A new church provides new members the best setting for being disciplined and hence becoming growing active Adventist Christians. (g) Planting small relational churches provides a planned structured pattern of growth for Solusi Church. (h) A new church can more easily be taught and guided according to the highest values of Adventism (e.g. dress, diet, and other lifestyle issues). (i) Planting small churches within our campus will provide holistic church growth—growth in every area of church life strengthened by reaching out to plant and establish a new church. (j) Planting new small churches around the campus places the church among the students and other people within the university. (k) Planting new churches will stimulate our existing Solusi Church. We should not be reluctant to start new small churches for fear of harming our existing church, says the elder. A new small relational church, for example, at Solusi student centre will generally raise the religious interest of the students, and if handled well, can be a benefit to our existing church.

4. Planting small relational churches is efficient for reaching non-Adventist peers. There is no more practical or cost effective way of bringing non-Adventist students to Jesus in our Solusi community than being in the business of planting new small churches.

Barriers to Assimilation of Non-Adventist Students to Adventism at Solusi

A group interview with five students was conducted to find out about their experiences on barriers and possible solutions to these evangelistic impediments to non-Adventist students. The most relevant barriers were (a) Adventists display a negative attitude which drives prospective non-Adventist peers away, (b) some Adventist preachers are judgmental, (c) the church does not involve non-Adventist in church activities, and (d) the lack of an identifiable method to assimilate new people. Again this

researcher is able to report that the respondents did not only point out barriers but identified the following possible solutions to deal with these barriers.

1. Practicing Christian fellowship through one another ministries creates opportunities for people to sense that the church cares, before they move to another church where they can *get in*.

2. The church needs a strong and lively process by which people can be contacted and invited to appropriate activities within the congregation. The Church needs to ask questions: such as, how quickly do we contact and welcome people to the church after an initial visit? Is it easy to involve individual or families who show a genuine interest in the church? According the respondents, the church seems not to be prepared to involve new people in various activities. There is no specific procedure by which Sabbath School teachers, Youth clubs staff, or various church departments receive names of new people. Putting into place such a process may not guarantee involvement from those who show interest, but it will make a powerful statement about the church's attitude. The statement to non-Adventist peers will be "We love and want you!" One Adventist student put it this way,

We also need to revive the old culture of giving names of people who regularly attend our church to people who are in charge of various ministries. Those people should be encouraged to contact the new people promptly if the assimilation process is to work. Not only should they contact them, but involve new people in fellowship and service activities. For instance, our home Bible—study leaders could contact potential new members in their geographical area by inviting those new people to their group. This could work if the invitation made is promptly and genuinely. The goal of relational communities was to make it as easy as possible for non-Adventist students to get involved in growth and service activities if they want to.

3. The church should involve non-Adventist students to church activities. Another non-Adventist said that the church must allow non-Adventists to participate as ushers, song leaders, and offer prayers during the Sabbath School service.

4. Invited speakers must be oriented about the different faith communities represented at Solusi Church. If the speaker has been oriented prior to his/her preaching appointment, he/she will teach the truth in love, making the audience comfortable with the teachings, doctrines, goals, and purpose of the church, rather than attacking some of the worshippers. In brief, what is recommended to church leaders is that speakers should seek to avoid giving offense. Jesus as a preacher and our example demonstrated this principle. When He was asked to render to Caesar what was due to him, He was compliant rather than defiant about the dues (Matt 17:27), said one of the students. In the same line of thought, another student suggested motivational speakers can win the confidence of most young people at Solusi more readily than the offensive ones can. Finally, with the academic pressure experienced by most students at Solusi, there should be many social programs to relieve stress. The Lord planted a social aspect in people. Hence, socializing brings students together regardless of denominational differences. It seems to make sense that the creation of community opportunities by the church can make a difference at Solusi in terms of soul winning and membership retention, says one of the students in Family Consumer Science.

One Growing African Independent Church in Zimbabwe

Church growth is central to the life of each local church. A healthy, vital church is by both practical and theological definition, a growing church. The following is an analysis of the Praise and Worship Centre Church, one of the growing African Independent churches in Zimbabwe.

In seeking to know more about what is happening in this church, on March 2, 2010, I met with Bishop Trust Sinjoki, founder and the overseer of Praise and Worship

Centre, in his office to hear his views about a church that is planting worship centers around the city and outside. Before considering the strategies of evangelism of this church, the information contained in the brochure in Appendix D was reviewed to provide some details about this church.

Membership and Participation

There are 600 members in town, 2,000 in rural areas, and 200 in Johannesburg, South Africa. In terms of growth rate, the bishop gave Praise and Worship Centre a conservative figure of 100 members per year. With regard to participation, the report given is as follows: males (40%), females (60%), and youth (75–80%). It seems that members are very excited about the future of the church. The chief causes of this excitement were cited as follows:

1. Involvement of members in the mission of the church
2. Strong sense of belonging provided by various established groups
3. The love that church continues to give and express by this message,

Siyakuthanda, We love you.

Strategies of Evangelism

Arising from the interviews on the strategies of evangelism, Praise and Worship Centre employs the following strategies in evangelism.

Mission and Church Planting Team in Rural Areas

This team goes out to the rural areas solely to do crusades which have given birth to 12 churches so far.

Church in the House

The bishop reported that selected people go into the suburbs and treat each house meeting not as a cell group, but as church.

Gospel Blitz

The gospel blitz strategy takes Praise and Worship Church right into selected suburb within the city with flyers and brochures which are then distributed into every house prior to the gospel blitz. On set dates, the preaching begins every evening for a week. While the preaching is going on, there is a team on the ground which is involved in a one to one witnessing.

Special Services

There are four of these special services per year. Among the target groups are the medical professionals; uniformed forces like police, prison officers, security guards, army personnel; disabled groups; and transport personnel.

When a particular group has been identified, on a particular Sunday the group is invited to Praise and Worship church. The services on this day are strictly directed to this target group. In every song and activities, including the sermon, the message is *Siyakuthanda*, We love you.

City of Refuge and Virtuous Women

The city of refuge is the Joshua model of six cities of refuge, said the bishop. This is a men's ministry which has established six active groups of men who serve as their brother's keeper. Each of these six cities of refuge goes into the communities and targets males and brings them into these cities to shepherd them. The report revealed that these

cities of refuge have provided a strong sense of belonging to individual members in each city. What is interesting about these cities is that even if the main church grows quantitatively, the sense of belonging is not lost in each city.

While the city of refuge targets male counterparts in the communities, the virtuous women target women. The same strategy that is used in the city of refuge is used in the virtuous women. The names virtuous women found in the Bible, like Esther, Rebecca, Rachel, and Sarah, are used for the groups. Each of these virtuous women groups grows on its own, wins souls, and addresses the needs of each member in the group.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Having described the strategies used at Praise and Worship, I critiqued them and came out with the following observations.

Cities of Refuge /Virtuous Women

The strengths of cities of refuge surpass the weaknesses. Cities of refuge, as the name suggests, allow everyone in these small relational groups to feel cared for despite the growth the church is experiencing at a given time. In these groups, gifts and talents are easily identified and employed by each individual. Shepherding and nurturing becomes easy. People bring into the group those they are connected to or whom they associate with and this contributes to the growth of the church both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The disadvantage of cities of refuge is the creation of clicks or divisions as members tend to identify with their small groups only and ignore the large part in the church. Cities of refuge also create sectarianism with individual members concentrating

on the interests and needs of small cities while ignoring the needs of new believers and visitors coming to the church. This church is nondenominational in the sense that it is an independent ministry and only relates to other churches of like faith as sister churches but not as a denomination.

Special Services

The church becomes self sufficient through diverse professionals such as lawyers, drivers, artisans, accountants, etc. For example, each of these groups in return provides various services to the church as per their expertise.

Unfortunately, the program is not user friendly to certain people on that particular day as the focus may be on soldiers or medical personnel. What is obvious is that while trying to address a particular invited group, other people may be sidelined if they do not fully understand what the program is all about.

Gospel Blitz

Every soul is actually reached with the gospel flyers, brochures, and pamphlets and the ground team doing the one on one witnessing exercise. Gospel blitz focuses on everyone in a particular selected community and the results are immediate. Follow up is easy because all the resources are directed to this particular selected community where each individual is visited and personal details captured.

On the other hand, gospel blitz needs a lot of manpower to manage the evening program and do the one to one witnessing activity. It also requires a powerful sound system for the evening meetings so that everyone within the community can hear. The other challenge is that while trying to reach a wide area, chances of the interference of a secular band would be very high and competition is created. This program, however, is

very expensive to run as one would need money to produce enough pamphlets for distribution and food to feed the security personnel and a high quality address system.

Guidelines for Pastoral Ministry at Praise and Worship Centre Church

Here are some of the approaches used by the pastoral team at Praise and Worship Centre in view of the African context in which the church is operating.

1. The for-each-other formula: This formula in fellowship creates a networking of caring relationships.

2. Rituals: They use rituals to restore balance in the healing process. For example, they serve Holy Communion and engage in various liturgical acts. Some of the liturgical acts they use include the laying of hands on a patient, anointing the sick, and the singing of hymns, which are intended to make God's presence a reality.

3. The role of the pastor: In a certain sense the pastor assumes the role of the *prophet healer*. It seems that as a prophet healer the pastor plays an interpretative and listener's role, taking into consideration the unique cultural and religious milieu of the patient. It seems that both the pastors careful listening patiently to the story of the afflicted and his attention to their environment both make an important contribution toward their recovery. The pastor also indicated in the interview that the task of the pastor is not to provide answers to the question of why the patients are patients. Rather his role is to help them in the midst of mystery and to query the meaningful nature of relationships. It was also reported that the church enjoys the service of a pastor whose role in includes meeting social needs at events such as weddings, burials, counseling, etc. It was reported that the church has identified a pastor who will be in charge of burial

societies because of the spiritual deficiency in these societies. Other than offering spiritual guidance, he is also available for burial appointment.

4. The ministry of the Holy Spirit: A life force and empowering factor such as the Holy Spirit and the concept of God as the living God are both important allies for pastoral dynamics in this church which is mainly operating within an African context.

5. Prophetic and healing ministry: The concept of power is very predominant among Africans. If the church lacks this ministry, Africans secretly go to other churches which provide such services.

6. The absence of the sense of shame: Surprisingly, it was reported that though members may not have commentaries and have no professional training, they are bold enough to share their faith and the message of the cross.

7. The Church welcomes innovation and change: This item induces a positive attitude among the members, making them more excited about the future of their church. The church is described as spiritually vital and alive.

8. Strong prayer ministry: Praying for the sick and those with other challenges attracts people from all walks of life. What draws people to this church is that members are taught that prayer is to be engaged in with faith, simplicity, concentration, discipline, patience, confidence, and obedience.

9. Ordinary clergy and ordinary laity: Ministers are people with little education, they preach from the heart, and speak in the vernacular of that particular community. The clergy and laity are living simple lifestyles. They are not complicated and this simple lifestyle attracts many people from the community. They are a non-threatening community of believers.

10. People are approached as a community: Anthropology and psychology in an African context must not be a duplicate of other cultures. When asked what that means, the bishop responded by saying that this is the reason why we have a pastor responsible for social concerns. This pastor is the link between the church and members' extended families. He makes sure that members are not divorced from their communities; in brief, we do not disregard the culture of the individual. For example, in Africa there is unity in all spheres of life. Community and networks of relationships are pivotal while the individual is at the periphery, reported the Bishop of the church.

11. The discipline of confession: Confession of sin is an essential discipline in this church and one of the factors contributing to its growth. Sin is a reality and its presence in the life breaks communion not only between God and the sinner, but also between the sinner and other members of the church. Cherished sin may drive away a sense of God's presence, which is essential to spiritual growth. An analysis of this dynamic suggests that cherished sin is indeed a major roadblock to spiritual growth. Then, when asked how they deal with sin, the bishop revealed to this researcher that confession is the best way to deal with sin. He also cited an incident where an offender who had come from prison and had repented was encouraged to go back to the place of offence to confess his sin. This resulted in the birth of a new church. Here are the practical suggestions he gave on confession. (a) Confession is to be made to God, but if necessary it may also be made to God-fearing brothers and sisters. (b) Confession of sin may be made to those who have been hurt by the sins they have committed. (c) Confession must be specific, but sins are not to be dramatized in detail before mortal brothers and sisters as a parade of being righteous. (d) Confession time is allowed for the individuals to confess sins privately and

for the announcement of deliverance from guilt in the light of God's unconditional love.

And (e) mutuality in confession is biblical (Jas 5:16).

Challenges

Like other churches, Praise and Worship Centre has the following challenges.

1. The location where it is situated in town is not comfortable for other racial groups, who are concerned about their security.
2. The issue of class is one of the biggest challenges because the majority of the members of this church are of middle to lower class. For example, there are certain people who may not mingle with people of low economic class.
3. Financial income: The challenge here is that they cannot raise the standard in order to attract young executive and people of high status.

Despite the challenges mentioned above, Bishop Sijonki reported that in his 15 years of service the church has experienced some success in reaching other racial groups. Among the groups that are represented now are four whites, three colored, and the rest blacks. The Bishop attributed this growth to the nature of his ministry. He preaches nothing but the gospel as in Jesus. He is not so much concerned about religious doctrines or church traditions, resulting in many invitations to preach among Catholics and Adventists, though he is a Pentecostal. He recently published a book with lessons aimed to reach across denominational barriers. Several people and organizations have acquired the book including the Catholic community, which rarely works well with Pentecostals.

Summary

For Solusi Church to grow today, the congregation must get involved constructively in its Solusi community, providing significant services to non-Adventist

students, as well as providing sound spiritual experience for Adventist members, and becoming intentional about relationships as a strategy for growth. From the analysis, I want to say that it would be wrong for the Solusi Church to conclude that if it stops doing conventional methods of evangelism, such as the week of spiritual emphasis, prayer band, preaching, etc., that the church will start to grow. In fact, these tried and tested methods used at Solusi have worked and continue to foster the process of growth at Solusi. However, they cannot be expected to produce increased quantitative and qualitative growth by themselves.

Therefore, there are other details that may fine tune and compliment Solusi's current strategies of evangelism towards non-Adventist peers. The emerging relational approach such as one anotherhood practices, small relational groups, small relational worship centers, and relationship-oriented leadership style may be possible evangelistic strategies in reaching non-Adventist students.

The similar but different strategies and approaches used by the Praise and Worship Centre Church, such as cities of refuge, special services, church in the house, the role of the pastor, the prophetic and healing ministry, and the unity and sense of community that they foster, may also work for Solusi Church if adopted and modified for the Solusi setting.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction

Theological reflection, the literature reviewed, and the research conducted demonstrate supports a positive correlation between leading people to join the church and positive relationships and friendships. The research, for example, showed these relational programs scoring high effectiveness: (a) relational evangelism (51%), (b) small relational communities (95.3%), (c) and one another practices (67.7%). In the light of this evidence as to the power of relationships in evangelism, the approach to non-Adventist students at Solusi University should consider that relationships remain the most potent means of witnessing. Relationships, when they are healthy and intentional, will also help students to see in a concrete way how to live the Christian life effectively and with joy. As non-Adventist students who associate with Adventist leaders see that they are better staff members because of Christ—better lecturers, pastors, spouses, and Christians—the students are more likely to be attracted to Adventism. In this chapter, I present the strategies employed in building relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist students at Solusi. These nine strategies are discussed below.

Teaching on the Importance of Relational Community

I conducted the first seminar on the importance of relational community on Friday and Saturday July 5–6, 2008, with the regular students at Solusi Church. I held the second

seminar on 21 August 2009, with block release students at Solusi Church. I conducted another seminar at Beit Bridge 10–16 August 2009, during camp meeting. The most relevant concepts which formed the subject of discussion were us and our Trinitarian models of healthy relationships, the art of simplicity in life, one anotherness, and imagine a church. I am glad to report that the spirit of one anotherness was born in each community as relationships.

Involvement Ministry

Rather than adults doing ministry alone and planning programs exclusively for the young people at Solusi Church, I challenged key leaders of different departments of the church to spend some of their ministry energy integrating these young people into the very core of the church life. In my view, this is what involvement ministry is all about. In response to the challenge, leaders then intentionally inoculated Sabbath School programs, mid week worships, and vespers worships with student participation. In addition, we also squarely placed the jacket of mentoring on these leaders and adult leaders encouraging them into relationships with these young people. The few practical activities which gave both Adventist and non-Adventists young people the reins, and at the same time bonded them together are (a) planning and hosting Young Christian Temperance Contest in November 2008, and (b) one anotherness Talent Show in October 2009.

Now at Solusi we worry not just about attracting young people to church but about their involvement in the life of the church as a whole. This is because when we look at the role of young people throughout the Bible, it's clear that young people were never intended to be spectators, parked or sitting on the sidelines while the adults do the Lord's work alone. From Namaan's slave girl to the boy Samuel, from the boy Jesus in

the temple to the youthful Timothy serving under his mentor Paul, young people including children were always part of God's plan. This divine plan for Solusi University church is no different. Here is God's blue print or master plan from the works of White about young people's involvement in ministry: This army of youth [students], "rightly trained," can hasten the soon return of our Lord and Savior (White, 1930, p. 196). This statement affirms the divine ideal and what God intended originally about young people (students).

Thus, armed with such divine endorsement and with the blessing of the chaplain, in June 2009 a Sabbath involvement seminar for key elected church officers was conducted by the author to empower, train, and motivate members to be effective in sharing their faith with non-Adventist students. I am happy to report that every hindrance seems to have been cleared to make it as easy as possible for students to actively and effectively share their faith.

University Associations as Generators of Community and Support Base

Solusi University is a generator of relational communities within its own structures. In September 2009, I recognized the rich opportunities for generating community that already exists in common university associations and requested permission from the Student Council President to address the student board during the assembly. When the request was granted, the author addressed and challenged the student board for 20 minutes showing them the potential of becoming more relational communities as associations. The associations, which include the Accounting, Finance, Ministerial, English, Computer Society, Marketing and Management, Family and Consumer, Environmental Health, Ministerial, and Agri-source associations, were

challenged to recognize the rich opportunities for generating community and serving as a support base for relational community. Consequently, here are some of the statements that have emerged from some associations as an indicator that the associations embraced the idea of functioning as generators of community and support bases for community. "Pride in our togetherness, sophistication in our differences," said the President of Finance Association. "So far we are looking to have the Christmas cocktail and as for the proceeds we wish to forward them to an orphanage or old people's home of our choice, which is later to be identified," said the President of Marketing and Management. "In the spirit of one another the association organized a braai which attracted most of the different students and faculty, and students had a chance to bond and socialize," said the President of the Accounting Association. "We value one another where church members and the community at large meet to pray for and support each other socially, physically, and spiritually and rejoice in each other's growth," says the President of the Ministerial Association.

Apart from the associations generating community, the Solusi cafeteria staff invited me to promote community spirit during one of their devotions. The Director of Solusi Cafeteria said, "Every one of us owes the community and humanity as a whole and has a duty to create one another."

Building Warm Fellowship by Planting a Relational Worship Centres

In April 2009, I met with the chaplain in his office and shared with him the vision of building warm fellowship for non-Adventist students by planting small relational worship centers. The chaplain pointed out the challenge of facilities but later endorsed the idea after consultation with the elders of the church. I then promoted a paradigm shift

from one mega church to several small relational worship centers within the campus. When this question was asked during the survey, “In which church size are most people won for Jesus?” the predominant answer given was the small church (52%). Therefore this research further demonstrated that students at Solusi tend to believe that planting small relational centers of worship could be an intervention to our ministry issue of reaching non-Adventist students at Solusi University. The planting of more small relational centers of worship around the campus (if facilities are available), as observed by the chaplain, seemed to be the most immediate solution to reach non-Adventist students while aggressively creating small relational groups. In our first semester, May 2009, a second centre of worship, which caters to first and second year students, was planted. I consider this a great achievement towards the building of warm fellowship for worshippers, particularly for our non-Adventist students.

The Formation of Small Relational Groups in the Church

Being one of the proposed strategies of building relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist students, I consulted with the Sabbath School department on the idea of forming small relational groups in the church. The Sabbath School department then requested that I identify potential group leaders and thirty names were submitted to the department, which finally recommended the names to the church. In our first semester, May 2009, the small groups, each with a membership of 8–10 students, were set in place with appointed leaders. They meet in classes or under the trees while some remain inside the church and the hall.

In fulfilling the objective of building relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist, I then conducted an orientation exercise that focused on these groups

functioning as holistic small relational groups. The report I can give is that, despite the fact that group members come from different faith communities, some healthy relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist have developed. One group leader reported that his group sometimes met in his house to watch a Christian movie or have lunch on Sabbath and met during the week in a classroom to pray for each other. Another Adventist adult proposed this brilliant idea: "We need families to come forward now and adopt one or two students and invite them for one meal once a week or a month every semester until their program of study is over." Another group leader reported that his group celebrated the birth of a member and prayed for each other in view of the impending final examinations. The morale of group members has been boosted as members continue supporting each other physically, spiritually, academically, and socially, says one of the group members.

Not only has the formation of these groups helped Adventists to build strong relationships with non-Adventist peers, but it has also helped regular members to grow spiritually. So Solusi church needs to be in the business of generating small relational group opportunities in order for regular members to continue building relationships with their non-Adventist peers. I feel that it is of paramount importance that these small relational groups be tasked with no specific purpose other than being relational communities with one another within the context of faith. Generating small relational groups and helping them to nurture students must be the task, not coercing people into small groups. In light of such a task, it is important for the church to continually teach members so that they are knowledgeable about the world of small relational groups if they are to be continuously generated and maintained at Solusi.

An integration of ideas and experiences from group leaders and members reveal the following possible advantages of small relational groups.

1. Small fellowship groups offer full participation for all members in the cell. Just like the life of the body is in its cell, so is the small relational group in the Solusi campus church. If the cell (group) dies, the body (church) dies. When the cells multiply, the body grows. So when the students participate in the cell, they will learn to be friendly to each other, says one group leader.

2. Small relational groups act as a substitute family. Our time and our Solusi community are characterized by a lot of pressure from academic activities, mobility, and migration. Students are uprooted or uproot themselves from families and friends when they move to distant places. Loneliness is a common word on this campus to some students. These Sabbath School small relational groups have become a substitute family by meeting highly specialized needs of the students. Hence, the value of a Christian family and friendship is developed, and nurtured, says one of the group members.

Celebrating Special Events and Processing Sad Moments

Shenk (as cited in Dawn, 1989) described celebration as follows: "Celebration is the honoring of that which we hold most dear. Celebration is delighting in that which tells us who we are. Celebration is returning open arms and thankful heart to our Maker." For example, the Israelites in the Old Testament times took celebrating quite seriously! Each year they adjusted their programs and lives to fit into three annual celebrations. And these were not single day convocations. They did not lose the spiritual root of the festivals, and yet, with a full week to celebrate, there certainly was still time to play, too. From the beginning of the world's history the Sabbath has been established as a celebration each

week. At Sinai, the Lord reminded the Israelites about the Seventh-day Sabbath, a celebration for everyone—family, friends, slaves, foreigners, and even animals.

As the Israelites took celebration seriously, I challenged the Solusi community to emulate them and reclaim celebration with joy and expressiveness as God originally intended. It is true that when it comes to reaching young people, joy and happiness are paramount. I have engaged Adventist and non-Adventist students in celebrating special moments and sad moments at Solusi University. Here are some practical examples of how this strategy was implemented at Solusi University.

1. We celebrated the 50th birthday of one of the staff members on the campus. Students and staff members were involved in various tasks which included taking photos, serving as waitresses, cooks, ushers, dishwashers, and some presented poets and speeches.

2. In October 2008, with a seven-member committee of both Adventist and non-Adventist students I organized an Achiever's Day. This event was promoted through brochures and the notice board with the aim of bringing together Adventist and non-Adventist just to spend time together. Achievers awards included best lecturer, best couple, best student association, best soccer club, smartest student, and best preacher. The awards and facilities used were funded through ticket sales. I invited one successful achiever in Bulawayo, a businessman, who was the guest of honor.

3. In July 2009, I mobilized students and we processed a sad moment together when we lost one of our students. The spirit of oneness that prevailed during this sad moment at Solusi challenged the students and the staff to propose that an one anotherness

funeral policy be set at Solusi. The policy may not be documented, but when we have sad moments the spirit of oneness prevails, regardless of denominational differences.

Connecting Student to Community Prior to Church Membership

The following special relational activities were launched as an endeavor to connect students to community membership prior to joining the Adventist Church.

One Anotherness Driver's Community Project

In September–December 2009, I organized a five-member student driving license committee. This driving license committee designed some forms where staff members, faculty, and Adventist and non-Adventist students signed up their membership. I am glad to report that more than one hundred participants signed up to belong to this driver's community. This driver's community was successful in that when the Vehicle Inspector Department (VID) personnel came to test the participants 80% passed their learners' license. "I am a thrilled that I did not come to Solusi only for a degree, but now I am a prospective driver," said one of the participants. I see this project as a good strategy to connect students to Adventist membership because of their strong ties with the driver's community project which is an active and vibrant relational community at Solusi University.

One Anotherness Magazine Project

My Religion and Ethics in Modern Society class for September–December 2009 launched a one anotherness magazine project. The initiative was a result of my promotion of relational communities during my lectures and preaching appointments. This was embraced by the students and a one anotherness magazine committee comprising of a

coordinator, assistant coordinator, secretary, editorial team, layout and design personnel, and cameraman was created. This committee reported on community events such as soccer tournaments, wedding anniversaries, Solusi Primary community day, students at worship, and wedding celebration which formed part of the Solusi News magazine. This was a powerful relationship builder project between Adventist and non-Adventist students, with the majority of those involved being non-Adventists. The magazine was distributed during the graduation on March 27, 2010 to the graduates, parents, and special guests.

Solusi University Fusion Retreat 2008

As part of promoting relational communities, when I was the Youth Director of Solusi Church, I organized a Solusi University student Fusion Retreat during the second semester mid-break in 2008. Please refer to Appendix C for an outline sample of the Solusi Fusion Retreat of 2008.

Setting Up a One Anotherhood Association

This section is a brief overview of the setting up of one anotherhood association at Solusi University and in other communities in Zimbabwe.

Description of the One Anotherhood Association

The One Anotherhood Association (OAA) has its origins in the idea, born two years ago, that religious people, specifically Christians, should be different from non-Christians, that is, they should “love one another, . . . so that all men would know that you are my disciples” (John 13:35). Recognizing the power of relationships in evangelism, in 2008 I developed a faith-based non-profit university association called

One Anotherness Association, which uses a strategy of building relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist students. One anotherness works through volunteers drawn from the staff and students. Because students are our main focus, university students are One Anotherness Association's primary source of volunteers. Students are well represented on the One Anotherness Association board of directors. As a result, they play a major role in the decision-making process of the association. Hence their participation fostered healthier relationships among themselves regardless of denominational differences. The mission statement and the focus below are extracted from the one anotherness document which was adopted in 2008 as an official document.

Mission Statement

A diverse association welcomes in the spirit of Christ all students, staff, men, women, and children regardless of race, gender, nationality, marital status, family composition or socio-economic status, inviting all to participate fully in the life and ministry of our members and communities. We encounter Christ in each person and therefore treat one another with trust, love, care, and respect. One Anotherness Association also promotes the spirit of togetherness in Christ.

As for the purpose, this association brought Adventist and non-Adventist students together in sharing skills, creativity, and knowledge in order to build healthy communities. The core values are (a) we, us, and our Trinitarian models of interdependence and co-relation, (b) innovation and creativity generated by shared initiatives, (c) partnerships based on honesty and mutual respect, and (d) the spirit of community and giving as modeled by the Triune God.

The Officers

The One Anotherness Association is run by the one anotherness board. The key officers include the sponsor, the president, the vice president, treasurer, transport manager, project manager, secretary, public relations, and chaplain. The key officers are accountable to the executive council, which is composed of the various club/association presidents, the dean of students, and the key officers.

Meeting Place

The board members of one anotherness meet once in every semester to craft a program of each semester in room 7 college block, Solusi University. This is what the president said about the meetings.

Our meetings are characterized by decision accomplishment, with little decision rework, the decisions were good as they were thoughtful and reasoned, and actions taken made a difference to the association. Reports are also given by coordinators of various sub committees. The board members had fun, enjoyed and got involved in our meetings. We feel we spent our time very well.

Goals

One Anotherness Association is working to achieve these specific goals.

1. Creating healthier relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist students through socials, fellowships, community services, interfaith dialogue, vocational training, shows, dramas, etc.

2. Participation and contribution of Solusi University clubs in the social and humanitarian development of the university and communities at large.

Participants

Since the launch of One Anotherness Association in 2008, both staff and students have been involved in different activities. In October 2008, 1,300 students participated in one anotherness Grand March Awareness, which I led with escort services provided by Solusi security office. One history lecturer drove his car as part of the escort service. In each stop over point, that is, the Solusi clinic, married students housing, and Madumbeni village, the students distributed clothes and groceries as follows: At Madumbeni village, 30 families received clothes, shoes, and groceries; 15 Solusi senior citizens were given blankets, shovels, hoes, bath towels, and groceries; 31 youth received a bar of soap each; and 26 children received clothes and shoes.

Madumbeni village is part of the campus and this is where most of our general hand staff lives. At Solusi clinic, ten bath towels and groceries were donated to less privilege patients who visit the clinic, and, at Solusi Primary, five blind pupils were given uniforms, shoes, groceries, and bath towels. In each of the stop over points students presented speeches and dramas to infuse the one anotherness spirit within the Solusi community. Since then the spirit of one anotherness has engulfed Solusi community as evidenced by the following events within and outside the campus. In July 2009, I sourced and donated 1,500 pens to Solusi students, which they used during their final examinations. One of the Block release student majoring in history donated 50 pencils to Solusi Primary in 2009 and again this year he donated 100 exercise books. Two masters' students donated clothes, soaps, and shoes to Madumbeni Church in 2008.

This association again in collaboration with a service provider from Bulawayo provided more than 500 new cellular phone lines to students and staff members at a fee of

\$15.00 (U.S.) in October 2009. Students welcomed this gesture and felt honored. This is what students said, “One anotherness has connected us with our loved ones back home. Long live One Anotherness Association!” “I have acquired a line without having to go through a lot of stress. What a quality service that one anotherness has provided to students, regardless of denominational differences” remarked one of the student beneficiaries.

The One Anotherness Association also facilitated the success of the following activities by students at Solusi University in 2009. The Beit Bridge district pastor said this about one anotherness,

I would like to confess that one anotherness program introduced to my district by the author in August 2009 during camp meeting is divine ordained and has positively influenced my members to help one another. To date more than 100 orphans, widowers, and those less privileged have been helped in different ways with cash and donations approximately valued at \$1,250 (U.S.). The result of this program is that 21 people were baptized during the camp meeting and I also introduced the same program at Ntabazinduna during the camp meeting and \$600 (U.S.) was donated to assist orphans and the less privilege.

In July 2009, 174 students were involved in community services at Solusi Primary feeding and clothing the orphans. In October 2009, a group of 84 students got involved in Solusi local roads repair as part of their community service. In response to this gesture, the vice chancellor said, “One anotherness has done a marvelous work making our roads user friendly for us and for our visitors.” One of our Agribusiness student donated \$100 (U.S.) towards the registration of the one anotherness website. Then three students and two Solusi IT staff members contributed to the creation of a Solusi one anotherness website just for the purpose of networking all students who studied at Solusi.

The Needs of Solusi University Students

To know more about the needs of students at Solusi University, I conducted a survey which incorporated the following items.

The Subjects

The subjects for this study were students at Solusi University. The testing of students offered a number of unique opportunities; a large number of people were available and they had comparable denominational backgrounds and academic qualifications. They were all under some degree of calmness as it was not the examination week and still did not experience the pressure of preparing for the examinations. Opportunities to compare between evangelistic approaches, student values, church sizes, and leadership styles over a number of variables in the survey were available. There was also opportunity to check the relative strength of one another's practices in terms of its attraction factor of people to Jesus.

Method

The population for the study consisted of all the 1,500 Solusi University students who registered during the first semester of 2009 while subjects for the study were selected using the systematic simple random sampling technique. The alphabetical listing of all the students with their identification numbers was obtained from the registrar's office and every 50th name was selected for the study giving a total sample of 300 students.

The selected students had their university identification numbers printed and posted on the notice board with an invitation message to participate in the survey. During the student assembly a public announcement was further made reminding those students

whose identification numbers were posted to come for the exercise the next day at 1:00 pm. The survey was administered on July 23, 2009, at 1:00 pm and all the selected students were present and responded to the survey forms that same day. Participants were told not to talk to each other while filling out the survey form, but to address all their concerns to the researcher and his team. The survey forms were handed to the researcher as soon as the participant finished. The survey questions were framed in a way that it sought responses mainly to the following questions. (a) What they value most at Solusi Church? (b) Which outreach method is influential in soul winning and soul retention? (c) In which church size are most people won? (d) Which leadership style is practiced in growing churches? (e) Are small relational groups key in church growth? And (f) Do one another's practices attract people to Jesus?

Instrumentation

A questionnaire according to Fink (2003) is a self-administered questionnaire consisting of questions that individual respondents complete by themselves. Before the questionnaire was administered to the respondents, it was evaluated by the Institutional Review Board and director and in the office of Research Information and Publication at Solusi for content validation and adjustments. The questionnaire was adjusted according to the suggestions given.

Following the approval of the research proposal by the Institutional Review Board, the questionnaire was administered. Although the subject of this study is relational communities, it was felt that the questionnaire could be utilized in such a way as to discriminate between relational evangelism as a mission strategy honest to the nature of God and public evangelism which is accented as a monologue. The questionnaire was

further seen as suitable because it contained common Christian terms, using subjects from faith communities and English speaking communities, reflecting the predominant Christian language and church background of this present study. The validity most relevant in this type of questionnaire is content validity and this was judged to be valid by the Institutional Review Board.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected was coded and scored for each factor which was added for all respondents and then analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. The frequency score was used to determine the overall views of the respondents on each factor as a measure of central tendency while standard deviation was used to measure dispersion.

I investigated the differences between relational evangelism and public evangelism, and differences between a small and a big church as well as views of respondents on one another's practices. I expected the differences to appear as follows in the questionnaire.

1. Relational evangelism would score higher than public evangelism.
2. A small relational community worship centre would build warm fellowship more than a big worship centre.
3. One another's practices would attract and retain more people to Jesus.

The results of the analysis are displayed in Tables 5–7 and Figure 3 showing the frequency scores in the questionnaire and highlight the fact that differences between relational and public evangelistic approaches, Solusi student values, church sizes, and one another's practices are significant.

Table 5

Students' Evaluation on Evangelistic Approaches (N=300)

Relational	Public	Other	Missing	Total
153	105	39	3	300
(51 %)	(35 %)	(13 %)	(1 %)	(100 %)

As expected, relational evangelism scored far higher than public evangelism (48 points), which contributes to the validity of the questionnaire.

Table 6

Frequencies of Student on Values (N=300)

Preaching	Caring for One Another	Diversity	Other	Missing	Total
83	145	46	23	3	300
(27.7%)	(48.3%)	(15.3%)	(7.7%)	(1%)	(100%)

As illustrated in Table 6, it seems that caring for one another had the higher rate of selection than preaching in terms of what student value at Solusi. The difference (62 points) is significant indicating that caring for one another is seen as more valuable than preaching among students.

Caring for one another is shown to have significantly more value than preaching, which is a positive evangelistic factor and this is clearly linked to a strong sense of community spirit. So it seems students at Solusi do value caring for each other than anything else; hence making this an effective strategy for building relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist peers. Respondents were invited to indicate what this *other* meant. While not all did, the most frequent comment had to do with Christian education and relative or friend.

Figure 3: People won for Jesus according to church sizes

The presupposition is that small relational worship centers are, by definition, good churches. Is this thesis tenable? Although the results of the research do not prove that small relational churches are good, research findings showed that Solusi students tended to believe that small relational worship centers are good. The respondents were asked to indicate in which church size are the most new people won for Jesus. In order to define *big* and *small* more precisely, we examined sets of churches of specific sizes: those with 1–100 worshippers, 100–200, 200–300, 300–400, and so forth (see diagram above). The growth rate of churches decreased with increasing size. The survey responses revealed that churches in the smallest size category win an average of 52% new people; churches with attendance levels of 100–200 win 49%; churches between 200–300 averaged 17% new individuals; and churches between 300 and 400 win 15%. So these responses given by the student at Solusi seem to reveal that a small church may be the best in winning people for Christ. Though this data support what the students believe is true about a small

church, it does not mean big churches are bad. For example, a 100 member church would win fifty members in a year (50%). A 1,000 member church would win one hundred and fifty members a year. So the total number of new members would be greater in the larger church. Larger percentage does not always equal larger real number.

Using the concept of a healthy family, Papas (1988, p. 13) shows that small churches are good by focusing on 15 familial qualities of a small church listed below.

1. Communicates and listens
2. Affirms and supports one another
3. Teaches respect for others
4. Develops a sense of trust
5. Has a sense of play and humor
6. Exhibits a sense of shared responsibility
7. Teaches a sense of right and wrong
8. Has a strong sense of family in which rituals and traditions abound.
9. Has a balance of interaction among members
10. Has a shared religious core
11. Respects the privacy of one another
12. Values service to others
13. Fosters family table time and conversation
14. Shares leisure time
15. Admits to and seeks help with problems

Table 7

Frequencies for Students' Evaluation of Selected One Anotherness Practices

	Accept	Encourage	Love	Pray	Teach
Strongly Agree	188	189	171	186	156
Agree	72	67	76	68	81
Undecided	5	5	15	12	5
Disagree	5	3	2	2	5
Strongly Disagree	4	4	1	2	3

This set of questions in this table is a summary of one anotherness practices. Respondents were asked how one anotherness practices make the church attractive resulting in many people won to Jesus.

A *t*-test score of 203 in the survey suggests that students tend to affirm this evangelistic approach as an effective missionary strategy and likely to foster a strong sense of community. The mean for the one anotherness practices was 4.4079 and the standard deviation was .52455. According to Table 7 it was evident that one anotherness practices score far higher than expected. Thus one anotherness practices are seen as an influence factor in building relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist peers.

Summary

Many strategies could be employed on a campus to build relationships between Adventist and non-Adventist students. However in the case of the ministry context of Solusi University, I limited to the following strategies that seemed to have penetrated the large population of non-Adventist students with increasing positive effect. These included teaching on the importance of relational communities, celebrating special events.

and processing sad moments with non-Adventist, having university associations functioning as generators of community, setting of the One Anotherness Association, connecting non-Adventist to community members prior to Adventism, and researching the students' world and their needs and building relationships of integrity with them. Though the strategies differed in approach, all seemed to embrace healthy relationships component as a possible effective strategy to eventually penetrate the religious and cultural barrier of non-Adventist students with increasing effect.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine how healthy relational communities contribute to membership growth and retention of non-Adventist students. Theological reflection and the scholarly literature are in agreement on the power of relational communities in evangelism. One anotherness, a primary characteristic of relational communities, was demonstrated in the Triune God, in Israel, in Christ's ministry, and in the early church. In a similar way, small relational communities, connecting non-Adventist to community membership prior to church membership, involvement in ministry, small relational worship centers, and relationship leadership style are said to be effective strategies for building relationships with non-Adventist students which eventually leads them to joining the church. These prompted the researcher to carry out a survey using Solusi University students

The population for the study consisted of all the 1,500 Solusi University students who registered during the first semester of 2009 while subjects for the study were selected using the systematic simple random sampling technique. A total of 300 students were used for the study and completed the survey form. The data collected were analyzed using the descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, simple percentages, mean, and standard deviation.

The following are the major findings of the study.

1. On a self report level, student tend to believe that the relational evangelistic approach does have a positive influence in evangelizing non-Adventist students and this is shown by the frequency of 153 compared to 105 for public evangelism.
2. Relational communities are shown to have significantly better attraction factor than public evangelistic meetings, which is a positive evangelistic or biblical factor and this is clearly linked to their relational factor or aspect.
3. The aspects of relationship which are most implicated in this study are one another, community spirit, small relational groups, caring for one another, relationship leadership style, and small relational worship centers.
4. In terms of outreach methods there are distinct differences in both relational and public evangelistic approaches, with relational evangelistic approach showing proportionate increases in soul winning and soul retention.

In short, relationships matter: They contain key evangelistic factors which cannot be ignored in evangelism, and we cannot be justified in ignoring them.

Based on the major findings, conclusions and recommendations were made.

Conclusions

From this study it was evident that a relational evangelistic approach does have a positive influence in evangelizing non-Adventist students. Relational communities are shown to have significantly better attraction factor than public evangelistic meetings, the aspects of relationship which are most implicated in this study are one another, community spirit, small relational groups, caring for one another, relationship leadership style, and small relational worship centers and the relational evangelistic approach

showed proportionate increases in soul winning and soul retention. All these are indications that healthy relational communities contribute to membership growth and retention of non-Adventist students.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations were made.

1. Solusi Church leaders and members should intentionally build relationships with non-Adventist students because positive relationships and friendship are key factors leading people to join the church.

2. There has to be a paradigm shift at Solusi University Seventh day-Adventist Church, which is changing from a public evangelistic approach to a relational evangelistic approach. The reason is that the students at Solusi will be convinced not by what the preachers teach, but by what Solusi Church can provide to the hungry, naked, suffering, afflicted, and bereaved students as alluded in the theological reflection, literature reviewed, and empirical work.

3. Because of many social concerns among students, Solusi Church must identify and appoint a full-time pastor who will be in charge of all social concerns such as burial societies, weddings, sickness, examination pressures, counseling, and related issues. This pastor may serve as a link between the church and students' extended families.

4. Solusi Church leaders and members must embrace simplicity like Jesus. They must live simple lifestyles, drive simple cars, eat simple food, and avoid complicated lifestyles if they are to attract non-Adventist within the campus. In brief, Solusi Church must be a non-threatening community of Adventist believers.

5. The Solusi community needs to embrace one another's concepts such as loving each other, greeting each other, praying for each other, forgiving each other, comforting each other, accepting each other, bearing each other's burdens, teaching each other, etc. According to non-Adventist students, Solusi will be making this statement, *Siyakuthanda*, we love you. Everyone at Solusi must promote the spirit of one another's in church, in lecture halls, in dormitories, in committees, and get involved in one another's projects and activities.

6. The church must embrace not just small groups but small holistic relational groups and encourage the formation of such groups in church, in the dormitories, and in the neighborhood. To sustain them, there is the need to hold regular workshops to teach members about the world of small holistic groups.

7. If Solusi Church is to penetrate the large population of non-Adventist students, it must involve them during Sabbath School and vespers worship services as ushers, song leaders, and offering prayers.

8. Week of Spiritual Emphasis speakers must be oriented about the different faith communities represented at Solusi Church so that they will teach the truth in love rather than attacking worshippers. A revival program mainly for the Adventist members must be conducted prior to the week of spiritual emphasis to train them on how to relate with non-Adventist peers before, during, and after the evangelistic meetings.

9. A strong and lively process by which non-Adventist students can be contacted and invited to appropriate activities within the congregation must be set in place.

10. Solusi Students Fusion Retreat attracted and fused both staff and students together regardless of denomination differences; hence, it must be promoted and hosted every year.

11. Special days such as birth days, anniversaries, achiever's day, and guest day must be celebrated because they have a positive impact among non-Adventist students.

12. The driver's one anotherhood community project connects non-Adventist students to community membership and offered a strong sense of community to each member; it must remain a process not an event as it eventually connects non-Adventist peers to Adventist membership.

13. Solusi Church needs to embrace family imagery where church members refer to each other as brother and sister, rather than Misses or Mister because the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a long history of sibling language. For example, Ellen White is known to generations of Adventists as, *Udade kaWathi*, Sister White. Paul also encouraged this to the members of the Corinth church.

14. The church must be a community of believers, not a committee of believers, because community is tied to the nature of God. Solusi Church being an African dominated church must understand that in Africa there is no division but unity in all spheres of life. To influence non-Adventist Africans, a community spirit must reign at Solusi; people must divorce themselves from individualism and be encouraged to attach themselves to relational communities.

15. To reach the increasing non-Adventist population of young people, Solusi Church leadership should practice relationship leadership style and involvement ministry.

The young people who make up the majority of worshippers must be given the reins to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate a program.

16. To bring non-Adventist students to Jesus in a practical way, Solusi Church must be in the business of planting new small relational centers of worship.

17. Families at Solusi are encouraged to adopt one or two non-Adventist students and provide some highly specialized needs to them during their period of study.

APPENDIX A

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help our church develop relational communities. Simply check the appropriate box or supply required information as indicated. Please, do not sign your name on the questionnaire. We want to guarantee that your individual answers will be held in strictest confidence. Thank you for your cooperation.

This questionnaire has two sections (Section A & B), please fill in both sections.

Section A

I. Background Information about Yourself

Instruction—Tick ( ) or fill in as appropriate

1. Gender ( ) Male ( ) Female
2. Status ( ) Student ( ) Staff
3. Denominational Affiliation: ( ) Adventist ( ) Non-Adventist

II. Solusi Church Identity

1. What would you value most at Solusi church?

- A. ( ) The Preaching B. ( ) Caring for one another, fellowship and Friendship
C. ( ) Diversity D. ( ) other

2. Which of the following outreach methods is most influential in soul winning and soul retention?

- A. ( ) relational evangelism B. ( ) public evangelism
C. ( ) other

3. How are non Adventist students contacted after attending worship services or other activities?

- A. ( ) rarely, if ever, contacted B ( ) by mail C ( ) by phone D ( ) by e-mail
E. ( ) by text messages F. ( ) by personal visit G. ( ) send them materials about the church
H. ( ) other

6. What aspect of the church was more instrumental in your decision to join the church?

A. ☐ relationships B. ☐ doctrines C. ☐ other

7. In which church size are most people won for Jesus?

A. ☐ 1–100 worshippers B. ☐ 100–200 worshippers C. ☐ 200–300 worshippers

D. ☐ 300–400 worshippers E. ☐ other

8. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, decreased or remained about the same in the last few years?

A. ☐ increased

B. ☐ remained the same

C. ☐ decreased

D. ☐ other

8A. If your participation has increased, which of the following are reasons for that

A. ☐ More time available B. ☐ Better relationships C. ☐ Stronger faith

D. ☐ Accepted office or other responsibility in the church

E. ☐ More positive attitude toward the church f. ☐ other

8B. If your participation has decreased, which of the following are reasons for that

A. ☐ less time available B. ☐ poor relationships C. ☐ decreased faith

D. ☐ given up office or other responsibility in the church

E. ☐ more negative attitude toward the church F. ☐ other

9. How more important is it for us that someone be involved in a holistic small fellowship community as part of church outreach program.

Very Important -- -- -- -- -- Not important

10. Which leadership style is practiced in growing churches?

A. ☐ relationship orientated B. ☐ goal orientated C. ☐ partnership orientated

D. ☐ other

Instruction: Section B

In this section please Tick ( )

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
I. Solusi Church Programs					
1. During the past 12 months, did Solusi church have any of the following relational programs or activities with non Adventist students?					
a. Fellowships, Celebrations (such as weddings, parties) , or other social activities					
b. Support groups (such as bereavement, wellness)					
c. Community service activities					
d. Recruitment activities					
e. Study or discussion groups					
f. Prayer, meditation, or faith sharing groups					
2. During the past 12 months, did Solusi church participate in any relational interfaith activities with a church or group from a different denomination or other faith tradition (such as Muslim, Catholic, Pentecostals, and so on)					
a. Celebrations					
b. Educational or fellowships activities					
c. Community services activities					
3. During the past 12 months, did Solusi church do any of the following relational activities to reach out to non Adventist students or to make the church better known in the community?					
a. Established or maintained a web					

site for the church					
b. Contacted non Adventist students who recently moved into the campus					
c. Encouraged members to invite non Adventist students to their homes or rooms for prayers or meals					
4. How are non Adventist students contacted after attending worship services					
or other activities ?					
5. In the past 12 months, did Solusi church provide any of the following services to non Adventist students, either directly or in cooperation with another group?					
a. Cash assistance to struggling families or individuals					
b. Fees assistance to struggling families or individuals					
c. Food to struggling families or individuals					
d. Housing (homeless shelter, emergency housing, transitional)					
e. Christian Intimacy therapy					
6. Do you think the provision of the following by Solusi church could foster the development of relational communities?					
a. A Computerized database that holds the names and addresses of members and non members					
b. A Church web page or web site and email account					
c. Use of a member's or Pastor's personal email account					
7. Once a person has joined Solusi church, are there any planned procedures to ensure the new member becomes integrated into the system?					
a. Follow -- up by chaplain, lay leaders, or members					
b. Designated people extend hospitality and invite them for meals					

c. Invitation to participate in a fellowship or other small holistic group					
d. An Orientation class for new members					
e. Invitation to volunteer for service in the church or the community					
f. No planned procedures or activities					
II. Church Identity	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The practices of the following statements by members of the church enhance a relational community resulting in many people attracted to Jesus?					
<i>When people:</i>					
A. Accept one another					
B. Bear one another's burden					
C. Comfort one another					
D. Do not speak evil of one another					
E. Encourage one another					
F. Forgive one another					
G. Greet one another with a holy kiss? The operating word is Holy					
H. Have compassion for one another					
I. Intricately involve ourselves with one another					
J. Judge not one another					
K. Kindly show affection to one another					
L. Live in peace with one another					
M. Minister spiritual gifts to one another					
N. Never become conceited, and provoking one another					
O. Owe no one anything, but love to one another					
P. Pray for one another					
Q. Quick to serve one another					
R. Regard one another as more important than ourselves					
S. Submit to one another					
T. Teach one another					
U. Use hospitality to one another					

without grudging					
W. Wherefore, do we also receive one another					
X. eXhort one another daily					
Y. You wash one another's feet					
Z. Zealous about making progress on the other one					

APPENDIX B

PROTOCOL

Purpose of the Project

To demonstrate that a relational community is a divine approved approach and the best mission strategy to attract non Adventist subjects as it offers the representative of Christ a chance to mingle with their peers from a position of concern, friendship and caring, not judgmental attitudes.

Methods

Interviews will be carried among second and third years students. Each selected group will consist of six students aged of 18 and above. There will be discussions lasting for a half hour per session. During that period, group members will have a privilege to respond to the questions on the interview schedule. Ten selected university church members, the Chaplain, and other leaders will be interviewed. Questionnaires would be distributed to 300 selected students and collected during the survey exercise program at Beithall. Participants would be told that participation is voluntary and results would be confidential.

Time Frame: August 2008 to October 2009

Subjects

Subjects for the study will be both Adventist and non-Adventist adults (students and staff) of 18 years and above. Four groups made up of six people each with diverse

age (i.e: Later age (50+), middle-aged adults (30–49) and young adults (18–29) will be interviewed. The stratification according to age group is to allow for representation of individuals at different stages of life.

Recruitment

The subjects will be recruited through personal invitation by the researcher.

Benefits

This study will help the researcher and the Seventh day Adventist Church to adopt and adapt relational ministry in evangelism when bringing Christian witness into secular areas of life.

Confidentiality

There will be no names nor records connected to the responses given during this study. The only records that will be kept are that of the number of respondents who have participated for statistic purposes. If by chance interviews are recorded, names will not be recorded on the tapes. Rather, I will create a list of those interviewed and a corresponding code number. If the interview content is of an extremely sensitive nature but must be transcribed, I will employ a person outside the congregation to transcribe the tape.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Informed Consent Form

Title: Developing Relational Communities: An Evangelistic Approach to non-Adventist students at Solusi University

Purpose of Study

I understand that the purpose of this study is to demonstrate that a lifelong relational community is divine approved approach to communicate God's grace to the people as well as attract and retain them into Adventist faith.

Inclusion Criteria

In order to participate, I recognize that I must be a mature adult above 18 years.

Risks and Discomforts

I have been promised that there are no social, emotional or psychological risks to my involvement in this study, and that the researcher will maintain high degree of confidentiality in respect of information provided.

Benefits/Outcomes

I personally accept that I will not ask for any remuneration for my involvement, but that by involvement, I will assist the researcher and the Seventh-day Adventist Church arrive at a better understanding of lifelong relational community as a divine approved approach, and hence encourage the church to adopt and adapt this mission strategy in evangelism and soul retention.

Voluntary Participation

I am consciously aware that my involvement in this survey is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw my services at any time without pressure, embarrassment, or negative impact on my family and myself. I also understand that participation is anonymous and that neither the researcher nor his team will be able to trace my responses to me.

Contact Information

In the event that there are some questions or concerns with regard to my participation in this research project, I understand that I may direct them to the researcher, Herbert Ndlovu at ndlovuh@andrews.edu (+263 9 887124), or his advisor, Dr David Penno at penno@andrews.edu and his second reader/advisor Dr Trevor O'Reggio at toreggio@andrews.edu

I also have received a copy of this form for my personal records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Signed at: -----

APPENDIX C

SOLUSI UNIVERSITY FUSION RETREAT 2008

1st Fusion Spiritual Student/Staff Retreat

Overview: Fusion is what God would have us do as Christians. ~Come together.

When: October, 2008

Where: Masiye Resort, Matopos.

How much: \$30 Inclusive of food, registration, accommodation, tokens, transport and activities.

Who should attend: Everyone 18 years and above.

Fusion speaker:

- Alvern Ndhlovu—District Pastor, Queen Park West Zimbabwe Conference.

Fusion executive team: Representatives from each department

Fusion key features / programs

- Fusion within: Faculty of Business students
- Fusion outside: MENS and Agribusiness students
- Fusion family reunion: Family and Consumer Science students
- Fusion connections (Oneness): Peace and Conflict Studies students
- Fusion celebration: Department of Languages and Communication students
- Fusion worship (in-reach/outreach): Faculty of Theology & Religious students
- Social fusion: Artists—music includes Christian contemporary, gospel, folk, hymns and classical.
- Fusion recreation: All delegates

Fusion Recognitions—Sunday (10:30–11:30am)

- Anniversaries
- Birthdays
- Most behaved student
- Best Academic GPA~ per faculty
- The youngest ~ couple and single
- The oldest ~couple & single
- Friend of the people

- Smartest person
- Excellence

Fusion Newsletter Updates

Director: *Pastor Hebert Ndlovu, BTh, '97'; BPhil Hons '03', MTh, '04', DMin*

Candidate

- Only **120** delegates will be able to register. So register **ASAP**.
- If you are one of the first **120** to register by 8 July 2008, you will receive a special fusion souvenir. Registration at \$30 non refundable.
- For registration forms and/ or promotional sheet, call your fusion department.
- Full time Fusion retreat volunteer participant numbers is set for 18. If you have no responsibilities during the retreat and you wish to serve 8 hours per day, call your fusion department.
- Examples of a few full-time volunteers needed include
  - Medical
  - Media
  - Security
  - Registration
  - Spiritual Interest Coordinator
  - Public Relations
  - Food Service
  - Tent setup
  - Ushers
  - Corporate Fund raising
  - Daily newspaper/ News release writing
  - Flags Coordinator
  - Volunteer Coordinator
  - Lost and found Coordinator
  - Community Service
  - Pastors for Prayer Chapel
  - Transport
  - Marketing and Promotion

- Campsites: No question, this is **The Best** camping place for the following reasons.
- Sabbath eve ~ Banquette for all
- Typical retreat daytime & night time activities

Sabbath departure Solusi 5:30pm—a Arrival Masiye Camp around 7pm

Daytime & Night time Activities

- Fusion with Old Testament Sanctuary tent-Saturday (7am–9:30am)
- Late Night Concerts -Saturday (9:30pm–11:00pm)
- Friends Cafe–Saturday (9:30pm–midnight)
- Dinner—Saturday (7pm–9pm)
- Field Trip to Educative Sites—Saturday (2:00–4:00pm)

- Hanukkah (Candle boat lighting ceremony)—Sabbath sundown (7:00: 7:30pm)
  - Games area
  - Talent Bowl Area
  - Prayer Chapel—Saturday (6:00pm–9:30am)
  - Community Service activities—Sunday (6:00–7am)
  - Bathing and breakfast (7:00–8:30am)
  - Parade and devotion (8:30am–9am)
  - Faculty Museum display—Sunday (9:00–9:30am)
  - Departmental Exhibits—Sunday (9:30–10:00am)
  - Games/activities (10am–12:30pm)
  - Lunch (12:30–2pm)
  - “one anotherness” show (10:00–10:45am)
- Cultural display day
  - Night time programming includes:
    - Pre and post-show. (approx. 45 min. each)
    - Core program (max. 1h 15mins)
    - Programming will represent cultural diversity and sensitivity
    - Nightly themes:
      - Friday: “Fusion connection.”
      - Sabbath am: “Fusion worship.”
      - Sabbath pm: “Fusion celebration”

Our Scriptural Boost Text, “If there is one thing I know about God, it is that all power belongs to Him” (Ps 62:11 The Clear Word).

APPENDIX D

PRAISE AND WORSHIP CHURCH VISION AND MISSION

Our Vision

God has summed up the whole vision of this ministry in two words i.e. bringing His PRESENCE and His REALITY to His people.

- God the Holy Ghost has laid bare (sic) before us the hearts of countless multitudes, both Christians and heathen, who hunger and thirst to see God's PRESENCE and REALITY in their daily lives.
- The Lord Jesus Christ has put His holy burden on our hearts to minister love and life to His people from all classes, races and tribes.
- Praise and Worship Centre therefore purposes to impart this vision to as many saints as are called to serve in this ministry.

P.A.W.C. Purpose Statement

- To bring people of every kind into God's House, love them and prepare all unto every good work in Christ Jesus and to live as worshippers of the living God.

Ministry Outline

- This is a Centre of Worship and Praise to the Lord God.
- We believe that human beings were created for God's pleasure (Rev 4:11), thus, Praise and Worship must be our lifestyle. When Jesus Christ was lifted up to heaven, he drew all men unto Him (Luke 12:32). We believe that as He is lifted up today i.e. Praised and Worshipped, He still draws all men unto Him (that's the best place to be). God dwells, inhabits, and stays in the Praise of His people (Ps 22:3).
- To establish a centre for the teaching of God's Word—the Bible—for application in Christians' daily lives, making them vessels of honor fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work (2 Tim 2:21).
- Place special emphasis on the family and marriage, men being taught to love their wives and be head of their homes (Eph 5:23, 26).
- To open a school of Praise and Worship whose purpose is to teach, train and equip saints with the Word of God as Praisers and Worshipers. Skill in music and instruments will be part of the school curriculum.
- "And the men did the work faithfully . . . all that could skill of instruments of music" (2Chr 34:12).
- "Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise" (Ps 33:3).
- Helping the Saints find and fulfill their purpose in the service of God. Bringing the Saints to their full stature in God, mature, having integrity and living Godly lives (Eph 4:13).

Our Declaration

“HAIL KING JESUS”

We see Jesus as King over the Whole Earth and His Ministry touching the utmost parts of the world.

Our Message

“WE LOVE YOU”

We believe that only the love of Jesus Christ, from God to men, and then from men to men, can heal spirit, soul and body.

We Believe

In the whole Bible

-it is the word of God

In God Jehovah

-Creator of Heaven and Earth

The Lord Jesus Christ

-Saviour of the world

In the Holy Spirit

-The Third person of the Godhead

Ministry Scripture

“Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise therefore and build the SANCTUARY of the Lord God, to bring the ARK of the CONVENANT of the Lord and the holy vessels of God into the HOUSE which is to be built to the name of the Lord” (1 Chr 22:19).

Nine Biblical Forms of Worship and Praise

VOICE

Speak—“With one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6).

Sing—“I will sing to the Lord as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Ps 104:33).

Shout—“The people shouted with a loud shout and the sound was heard far away” (Ezra 3:13).

HANDS

Lift—“Let us lift our hands with our hands unto God in heavens” (Lam 3:41).

Playing Instruments—“And 4000 were praising the Lord with the instruments which David made for giving praise” (1 Chr 23:5).

Clap—“Come everyone and clap for joy” (Ps 47:1).

POSTURE

Stand—“I praise him with my whole body” (Ps 28:7).

Bow—“Come let us worship and bow down let us kneel before the Lord our maker” (Ps 95:6).

Dance—“Praise Him with . . . dance” (Ps 150:4).

Services

Sunday -1st Service —(English)

8:00am–10:00am

2nd Service (Ndebele/Shona)

10:30am–12:30pm

Wednesday—(Church in the house)

6:00pm–7:00pm

Mid week teaching service

1st Wednesday of every month

Friday—Prayer and Intercession
Place—Praise and worship centre
5:30pm– 7:15pm

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