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ABSTRACT

REACHING THE UNCHURCHED: AN EVALUATION OF AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FLORIDA HOSPITAL
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH'S
DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY

by

Raymond Andrew McDonald

Adviser: Randal R. Wisbey

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: REACHING THE UNCHURCHED: AN EVALUATION OF AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FLORIDA HOSPITAL SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH'S DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY

Name of researcher: Raymond Andrew McDonald

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Randal R. Wisbey, D. Min.

Date completed: June 1998

Task

The task of this project was to evaluate and make recommendations for the future of Downtown Community, the Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church's contemporary, ongoing evangelistic ministry to reach the unchurched.

Method

After establishing the philosophical basis for the ministry, a careful review of the preparation for and initiation of Downtown Community was conducted. The effects of the ministry were ascertained by observations, focus groups, and surveys. In addition, comparisons were made with other area churches.

A number of unexpected effects from the ministry of Downtown Community were reviewed. This study is highly dependent on observations, testimonials, and opinions, which increase the level of subjectivity.

Findings

The evaluation of Downtown Community revealed that many of the expectations at the start of the ministry have not been fulfilled, while a number of unanticipated expectations have been met. Although there was a hope and intent to impact the lives of many unchurched people, in many ways the lives of those involved in doing the ministry have been most affected.

Downtown Community would have better served the local church had there been a larger base or cross section of the church thoroughly indoctrinated in both the philosophy and methodology.

Based on the focus groups and input from the leadership team and program participants in general, it is clear that Downtown Community has been a life-changing ministry for those whose lives it has touched.

Implications and Conclusions

The seeker-driven relationally based model of evangelism is a valid model for Downtown Community. For it to continue and increase its effectiveness, continuous evaluations and ministry adjustments must be a part of the ongoing ministry. Downtown Community and the methodology therein represented has a strong biblical basis and merits inclusion among other acceptable models within the larger church family, especially in North America. However, no method is adequate without care and concern for lost people.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY

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

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April 1998

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Justification of the Project

The goal of evangelism is to reach everyone everywhere with the gospel of Jesus Christ. While that may be an agreeable definition, traditional Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) evangelism in North America has targeted those with church backgrounds. The methods used seem to indicate a target market already acquainted with Jesus Christ who the church hopes will change brand loyalty. The cultural style of the program, language, illustrations, and music selection has catered to the church person. Recognizing the shrinking market of church people,¹ it is imperative that consideration be given to alternatives to the status quo.

Many of the unchurched are part of the “Baby Boomer” generation, or their younger counterpart, the “13th Generation.”² The Anglo SDA church in North America has not been able to retain this group in significant numbers, nor is it effectively reaching them with traditional evangelistic methods. This societal sector holds many who have

¹Lyle E. Schaller, *It's a Different World* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 71.

²Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, *13th GEN Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 7.

been disillusioned by the traditional church and many who see the church as irrelevant to their needs.¹ As a group they are extremely busy, and if the church is not meeting a need or catching their ear, they are quick to move onto something else.

Traditional SDA evangelism has been characterized by an annual or semi-annual series of meetings conducted in local churches. These meetings are most often promoted by a flyer sent through the mail. This promotional literature advertises both the meetings and the speaker, usually a guest, who conducts these meetings as his or her profession.

In this venue, evangelism becomes an event. The church prepares for the event, conducts the event, and then recuperates from exhaustion of the event.

In July of 1993, Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church (FHC) began a ministry called Downtown Community. This is an ongoing ministry that takes place every Saturday evening at 6:30 and is designed to reach the unchurched. Unlike the traditional once-or-twice-a-year-event evangelism, Downtown Community has provided an ongoing process evangelism. This method fosters evangelism as a vital part of the life of the church both individually and corporately. This process-evangelistic method is biblically based, relationship oriented, and offered to the public in such a way as to not cause embarrassment to either members or those invited.

For the continued health and development of Downtown Community, it is essential that the process be evaluated and recommendations be made for its future. While this project is limited to Downtown Community, the evaluation and

¹Mike Bellah, *Baby Boom Believers* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 141.

recommendations regarding it may have implications concerning the validity of the seeker-driven model for ministry among SDAs in North America. The SDA church's concept of missions must be inclusive of the millions of unchurched people in North America. If every person outside North America hears the gospel, the global mission of the SDA church will not be complete if that same gospel has not been heard concurrently in North America. If the Anglo SDA church in North America is going to grow among the Baby Boomer and 13th Generations, this project may offer a sound design for evangelistic ministry.

Statement of Purpose

The goals of the project are to: (1) evaluate Downtown Community's seeker-driven model of evangelism, and (2) make recommendations for that ministry based on the evaluation.

Definitions

The following terms are defined as used in this dissertation.

Unchurched: This term is one that researchers have struggled to clearly define.

The current literature offers two popular definitions. One defines unchurched as "those who are not members of a church or have not attended services in the previous six months other than for special religious holidays, weddings, funerals or the like."¹ A less exact definition designates the unchurched as a person who has not attended a church worship

¹George Gallup, Jr., and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion: American Faith in the 90's* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1989), 136.

service in a typical month.¹ Throughout this project, the latter serves as the definition of unchurched. Using this definition, unchurched could include people who are on the church roster but do not attend, former members of the SDA or other Christian churches, those who attended as children but never made the transition to adult participants, and, of course, those who have never had any association with church. While that is the scope of the term, most FHC members think of the term as primarily referring to the last two categories: long-ago childhood participation or no participation whatsoever.

Churched: The use of the term *unchurched* leads to the natural use of the term *churched*. While the Christian community has been somewhat comfortable with terms such as pagan and Christian, lost and saved, etc., those terms are not equated with *unchurched* and *churched*. Just because a person meets the definition of *churched*-people who are actively participating in the normal life of the church, it cannot embrace any kind of judgment call on that person's salvation. It must simply be taken to mean one who participates in the life of a local church.

Seekers: This term designates people who are looking for something that seems to be missing from their life. They may not perceive the void they are feeling as a need for God or a relationship with God. However, due to some internal or external dissatisfaction, they are "seeking" and are open to checking out what Christianity might have to offer.

¹George Barna, *Never on a Sunday* (Glendale, CA: Barna Research Group, 1991), 3-4.

Seeker-driven model: In the simplest sense, this is ministry targeted to seekers. For the purpose of this project, the definition must also include the understanding that this is a relational approach to evangelism. The model assumes that seekers are linked with the ministry of Downtown Community through relationships with church people. Following this understanding, the ministry of Downtown Community serves as a tool to be used by Christians for their seeker friends. In the seeker-driven model there is an intentional attempt to remove as many excuses as possible for a seeker to reject Christianity. The idea is that the gospel itself is radical and offensive enough to lost people without creating any man-made barriers due to language, culture, music, dress, or facilities. While all churches may desire to welcome everyone, a ministry following the seeker-driven model will evaluate itself on how it affects the seeker positively or negatively. It is possible to have a seeker-sensitive church without having a seeker-driven program, but the seeker-driven model assumes some offering that is planned with seekers exclusively in mind.

Limitations

This project is not an exhaustive study of seeker-oriented ministries but is limited to consideration of FHC's Downtown Community. While references may be made to other seeker-driven programs and ministries, the evaluation and recommendations are specific to Downtown Community.

Information in this project has been gathered from a combination of firsthand experience, reading, and research specifically related to Downtown Community. Any

implications for broader application must be made with the recognition that what has been or is working in one location may or may not produce similar results in other situations.

Expectations

The primary expectations of this project are as follows:

1. Produce a clear theoretical and philosophical basis for the seeker-driven model in contrast to the more traditional SDA evangelistic approach
2. Provide an opportunity for those involved with Downtown Community to learn from the review and participate in managing the ministry's future
3. Increase both awareness of Downtown Community and utilization of this evangelistic resource among the members of FHC
4. Furnish a set of guidelines especially designed for those who wish to replicate this seeker-driven model of creative evangelism in North America

Layout of Paper

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. This section concludes the first chapter consisting of an introduction to the project. The remainder of the project is laid out as follows:

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and theoretical base for a seeker-driven model. Support for the model is found in the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, Willow

Creek's¹ strategy and philosophy, and church-growth literature in general. Chapter 2 also attempts to answer some of the criticisms of this model and points to the importance of using this model.

Chapter 3 moves from theory to practice with a history of Downtown Community. From kindling the vision to review of the first two years of operation, this chapter acquaints the reader with the ministry.

Chapter 4 seeks to evaluate Downtown Community and offer recommendations for its future. Evaluation focuses on interviews, church-growth results, and message content. As a result of the evaluation process, recommendations are offered for various facets of the ministry.

Chapter 5 serves as a summary of the project and a description of implications. While this chapter contains personal and local implications, it also gives the reader advice and implications for the church in general.

¹Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, is a church that developed out of an intentional ministry to reach unchurched seekers. It has shared its vision and now leads the Willow Creek Association for the sharing of resources and encouragement in the development of ministries to reach the unchurched. Attending Willow Creek's Leadership Conference created a dissatisfaction with the status quo that led to the vision and eventual development of Downtown Community.

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE SEEKER-DRIVEN MODEL

Introduction

In this chapter, a better understanding is provided for the basis of the seeker-driven model. From both Old and New Testament, the writings of Ellen White, the experience of Willow Creek Community Church, and church-growth literature, support is demonstrated for this model. Near the end, this chapter will deal with some of the criticisms of this model and also note the model's importance for the church and its need for implementation.

Biblical Foundations for the Model

The seeker-driven model is a relational model which finds its roots in man's need for relationships. God created man both perfect and needy. Following His creative activity, God reviewed his work and pronounced, "It was good" (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25 NIV).¹ Adam's first job, naming the animals, led to the discovery that "but for Adam no suitable helper was found" (Gen 2:20). While all of God's creation was good, Gen 2:18 is His primal declaration that something is not good: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good

¹All scripture references are cited from The New International Bible unless otherwise noted.

for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”” Adam’s dilemma of aloneness, declared not good by God, is not good prior to sin.

It is evident that the sovereign God chose to create man in need. He created him with three basic categories of need: physical needs for air, food, and water; spiritual needs for a relationship with God; and emotional or intimacy needs—the need to not be alone. God’s answer for the meeting of his intimacy needs was to create another human being with whom Adam could share life. God created humans perfect and needy, teaching us that we not only need God, but that we need each other.¹

At creation, the human need for an intimate spiritual relationship with God was met in the open relationship between the Creator and His creation. Intimacy and emotional needs were met in the open relationship between humans, naked and not ashamed, and this appears to have been God’s eternal intention for the entirety of the human race. With sin came separation from God. While the Creator still intended a connected relationship with Adam and Eve, they no longer enjoyed the same openness with God. Having sinned, they hide from God in the garden and eventually are banished outside the garden. God still loved humankind, but the question remained as to how humans would know about that love and respond to it. What would God’s methodology be? Would He bypass the very way He designed humans, or would He attempt to restore the divine/human relationship in the context of human relationships?

¹Intimate Life Ministries, *Experiencing God in Marriage, Family, and the Church* (Austin, TX: Intimacy Press, 1995), 15-21.

Scripture chronicles God's pursuit of the restoration of that close relationship between Himself and His creation as He establishes and re-establishes His covenant with mankind. This began with the promise, wrapped in God's curse of the serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen 3:15). This promise is not limited to some select group, but is for the benefit of all humanity. At the point of this promise, there was no "chosen people," and there would not be such for several centuries. When God's activity brought into being the "Chosen," it was via a relational model. God renewed a relationship with a single human, Abraham, who was expected to use his relationships to reconnect others with God. This is the same as the seeker-driven model where people create friendships with the lost and serve as a relational bridge for them to cross to God.

The call of Abraham demonstrates God's desire for His people, those in a relationship with Him, to serve as human bridges to connect mankind with God. The Lord tells Abraham,

I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Gen 12:2-3)

It is through the natural connection of humans with humans that God intends to see His blessing to man spread. It is through the channel of regular human relations that God wishes to do His work. Abraham's grasp of his personal responsibility, even to

those outside his family and even beyond his community, is evidenced in his care for the travelers passing by in chap. 18 of Genesis on their way to Sodom.

From their earliest days, the children of Israel were instructed to recognize their responsibility to all people. The very commandment of God contains reference to an interest in the care of “the alien within your gates” (Exod 20:10). Long before Jesus was questioned by the lawyer in Luke, chap. 10, the Levitical law challenged Israel to “love your neighbor as yourself.” It also got quite specific about treatment of those outside our circle of familiarity,

When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the lord your God. (Lev 19:33-34)

While the seeds of the seeker-driven model are evident in the Old Testament as indicated above, it must be recognized that there were also counsels toward separatism from those who were not part of Israel. In the formation of the new nation we find God concerned with the ever-present danger that rubbing shoulders with other cultures, rather than evangelizing the heathen, may corrupt His children. Those aliens who come into Israel are to be treated the same as the native born, but the cultures and practices of the heathen are not to be tolerated as Israel possesses the promised land. In the new national borders, Israel was not to make treaties with the heathen nations or show them any mercy.¹ Any movement away from God’s will and plan must be avoided by the believers.

¹Deut 7:2.

In Israel, when family or friends would try to entice believers to worship other gods, Israel was instructed to show those people no pity, even putting them to death.¹

It is important to remember that in Old Testament times religion and politics were mixed. Israel has both a spiritual side and a governmental aspect. This dual arrangement must allow for both protection of the nation and national religion and, ideally, an openness to others joining that nation. Simultaneously, there was to be a rejection of adoption of any portion of the heathen religion.

It must be remembered that God communicates to people in line with their cultural frame-work and through progressive revelation. The chosen people were to witness to the world but not marry those who were not believers. In the New Testament that directive remains that believers are not to be “yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14). There was, and is, the danger that close association with non-believers, rather than influencing them toward belief in God, will instead pull the believer away from belief in and loyalty to the true God.

Thus far, it is evident that there is a foundation for the seeker-driven model from the creation and fall of man and throughout the Old Testament. In harmony with a belief in progressive revelation, however, it is important to now turn to the New Testament for a clearer and stronger basis for the seeker-driven model.

The New Testament begins with the life and teachings of Jesus, and it is here that the biblical basis for the seeker-driven model is most clearly found. In chap. 15 of Luke, Jesus tells the stories of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son. These parables teach the

¹Deut 13:7-8.

central truth upon which the seeker-driven model is built, that lost people are important to Christ, and if they are important to Him, they must be important to His followers.

In harmony with His stated purpose in coming to “seek and save what was lost” (Luke 19:10), Jesus modeled a seeker-driven ministry. When He appointed the twelve apostles, one of the reasons for this action was “that they might be with Him” (Mark 3:14). It was in this context of authentic relationships that He modeled how the kingdom of God was to look, feel, and act.

Much of Christ’s teaching was directed not so much at the masses as towards his disciples. The largest contiguous record of Christ’s teaching, the Sermon on the Mount, was primarily for the disciples and only secondarily for the multitude.¹ It appears that this may have been a pattern: The crowd would gather and Jesus would “speak first to His disciples” (Luke 12:1). On at least one occasion, the disciples themselves were confused as to whom Jesus was telling the parable: “Peter asked, ‘Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?’” (Luke 12:41). There are a number of examples of Jesus sharing a story, parable, or teaching publicly, and then alone with His disciples further explanation would follow as He shared Himself in a deeper way with those who were in an authentic relationship with Him.²

Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and Zacchaeus each demonstrate his relational sensitivity.³ While it appears Jesus was intent on wanting each

¹Matt 5:1-2.

²Matt 19:23; Mark 4:10; 10:10; 13:1-37.

³John 3 and 4; Luke 19.

of these people in His kingdom, He was considerate of their emotions, experience, and backgrounds. There was limited time in each of these scenarios, but Jesus worked quickly to establish a relationship that would serve as a bridge for His message of the gospel and of hope.

Jesus' affinity for the seemingly irreligious was one of the issues in Christ's life that most disturbed the religious leaders of His day, and they correctly accused, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). In three of the four Gospels, Jesus is recorded as having reminded His listeners that healthy people do not need a doctor—they are for sick people—and it was to call sinners to repentance that He came to our world.¹

In addition to His practice of building relationships with seekers, He taught that His followers were to be salt and light in the world.² These two illustrations certainly seem to indicate having a relationship with the people of the world, especially salt. It is only in mixing with what is to be seasoned that salt is able to add flavor and do its work, seeming to indicate a need for Jesus' followers to "mix it up" with people of the world. Jesus prayed to His Father, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). As with salt and light, this sending seems to indicate a need to rub shoulders with the people of the world.

The evidence above then adequately supports that Jesus both modeled and commissioned a ministry that would foster and use relational bridges. In associating with

¹Matt 9:12-13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31-32.

²Matt 5:13-16.

“sinners” He saw the opportunity to satisfy or awaken a seeking heart and then bring them good news of the kingdom and salvation from sin across a relational bridge.¹

Paul’s story provides the next biblical evidence to encourage a relational ministry that supports the seeker-driven model. In many of his letters Paul has numerous people to whom and from whom he sends greetings.² Not only are there people to greet, but his length of stay in many locations would allow time for the development of relationships with the new people.³

Not only did Paul practice a relational model, he wrote in favor of identifying with the target audience. 1 Cor 9:19-23 contains Paul’s famous statement, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” Here we find support for the contextualization of our message. Paul put himself in the shoes of those he wished to reach in order to closely identify with them, build relationships, and use those bridges over which to carry the gospel. Hesselgrave reminds his readers that the

¹It is important to note here that while Jesus’ ministry supports the very personal relational aspect of the seeker-driven model, He did speak to the multitudes. There seems to have been a working on three levels in His communication of truth. There were the one-on-one stories like Nicodemus and the Woman at the Well (John 3 and 4, respectfully). Much has already been written above regarding His time with the twelve disciples or small groups at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus’s home. And He spoke to thousands as on the day when He fed the multitude (Matt 14:13-21). The foregoing should not be understood to negate the work for the masses, but simply build support for the alternative of the more relational seeker-driven model.

²Rom 16; 1 Cor 16:5-20; 2 Cor 1:12-2:4; Eph 6:21-23; Phil 4:2, 3, 21, 22; Col 4:7-17; 2 Tim 4:9-21; Philemon.

³Acts 14:28; 18:11; 19:10; 28:30. It is evident from these texts that much of Paul’s ministry was not itinerant in any short-term sense. His efforts in a city might last years as he established or strengthened the church. This would allow for long-term relationship building.

responsibility for achieving cultural understanding and initiating the process of contextualization rests on the missionaries.¹ Apparently, Paul took that responsibility seriously as he closely identified with those he was hoping to influence for Christ.

This investigation of the biblical foundation for the seeker-driven model has revealed nothing that would fail to support it. While the words used vary, there seems to be consistent biblical support for a relational ministry, congruent with the seeker-driven model, where we witness to those we know versus witnessing to strangers. The concept is supported in Christ's instructions to the disciples before his ascension, "And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The biblical model of working from the center of our lives and close relationships outward in concentric circles toward the unknown person certainly supports the seeker model.² This method also seems to fit the way God created us, and it matches what was modeled in the ministry of the perfect man, Jesus Christ.

Ellen G. White and the Seeker-Driven Model

There is no direct reference in the writings of Ellen G. White to the seeker-driven model as such, but there are statements that could be understood as supporting the concept. While she is clear that we are to live lives separated from the sins of the world, there should be no question that she was equally clear that we are not to detach ourselves

¹David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 163.

²W. Oscar Thompson, Jr., *Concentric Circles of Concern* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1981), 20.

from the people of our world. She finds support for her thinking regarding this concept in the example of Christ who left heaven to become completely identified with humanity. She reminds Christians, “They are a part of the great web of humanity, and heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints.”¹

Within the writings of Ellen White support can be found for the concept of a slower process evangelism,² like the relationship-based seeker-driven model.

Christ drew the hearts of His hearers to Him by the manifestation of His love, and then, little by little, as they were able to bear it, He unfolded to them the great truths of the kingdom. We also must learn to adapt our labors to the condition of the people—to meet men where they are. While the claims of the law of God are to be presented to the world, we should never forget that love—the love of Christ—is the only power that can soften the heart and lead to obedience.³

It is in her reflections on the methods and ministry of Christ that support for this model is most noticeable. Reference is made to the simple language used by Christ to communicate His message. This simple language, combined with a tender, kind, and sympathetic manner, made it almost impossible to not understand His message.

¹Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 104.

²Process evangelism is a term that is used in this paper to describe the opposite of event evangelism. Traditional SDA evangelism has centered around the event of a “professional” evangelist coming to an area to hold an event, known as an effort, a series, a revival, a crusade, or a seminar. Evangelism came to be thought of as that event, rather than being part of the continual process of the church. Those church members involved in the seeker-driven model might, on occasion, wish to take advantage of an event but are in no way dependent on that event to be actively involved in evangelism.

³Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1970), 484.

The prince of teachers, He sought access to the people by the pathway of their most familiar associations. He presented the truth in such a way that ever after it was to His hearers intertwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies. He taught in a way that made them feel the completeness of His identification with their interests and happiness. His instruction was so direct, His illustrations were so appropriate, His words so sympathetic and cheerful, that His hearers were charmed. The simplicity and earnestness with which He addressed the needy, hallowed every word.¹

This model is predicated on member involvement, and support is evident for a work where church members sense their own responsibility for evangelism. She is clear that members each have a responsibility to be tender, pitiful, and kind to the people with whom they have contact, and if that is the case, their personal influence will produce 10,000 percent better results for kingdom growth.²

In addition to being Christian toward our neighbors, we are to be investigative with regard to their spiritual condition. Part of a suggested methodology for evangelism is that we become so close to our non-Christian neighbors, and like Christ identify with their interests and occupations, that we will know what they need spiritually and can be prepared to offer just the right direction at the appropriate moment.³

This methodology seems to assume a lengthy process: time spent in getting to know one's neighbors, in the course of that friendship learning how best to meet their needs, and eventually influencing them spiritually. In contrast is the tradition of getting

¹Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 24.

²White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 9:189.

³White, *Ministry of Healing*, 24-25.

close to one's neighbors only in preparation for an upcoming series of evangelistic meetings. In an effort to assure increased attendance and church growth, members are invited to get acquainted with the neighbors so they can bring them out to the meetings. As a result of this hidden agenda, in being friendly, it would be easy for neighbors to conclude that Christians are more interested in having "successful" meetings than caring for human needs. Pursuing friendship with neighbors in this manner would appear to be a contradiction of the idea of caring for people with no expectation of return, what Ellen White termed, "disinterested benevolence."¹

The seeker-driven model may be a better example of what she had in mind. Here one is invited to build a friendship that seeks to meet needs in the friend's life. In the course of that friendship discussions may arise and an opportunity present itself for the Christian to share his or her testimony. Having discovered a spiritual interest, the Christian's responsibility would be to invite the seeker to continue his or her spiritual journey and further explore Christianity.

¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:77, 650; 3:516; 3:218; and idem, *Early Writings*, 269. These five references contain the whole of White's comments regarding "disinterested benevolence." Considering the meaning of the individual words themselves can help give insight into her intended implication. Benevolence means an inclination or tendency to perform charitable acts. Disinterested means free from bias and self-interest, impartial. The references noted are each in a context speaking against selfishness or working only for self interest. This whole concept of "disinterested benevolence" is one that challenges the natural bent toward self interest. The seeker-driven model lends itself towards the end of "disinterested benevolence" because our interest in meeting people's needs is not relegated to that time of preparation for an evangelistic event, but is encouraged as part of everyday life on a continual basis. Caring for people primarily because they are people and not primarily because an evangelist is coming to hold meetings at the church.

This is nothing new for Christians. What makes it appear to be a new method is the lack of pressure of being in an artificial hurry to produce a decision. Previously, this pressure was felt due to the rapidly-ending three to six weeks of meetings. In contrast, the ongoing seeker-driven model allows for more customization for each potential believer.

It is important that believers not get stuck in one methodology, but instead be able to flow from method to method as best fits each potential believer. Just because the church has always done it one way is no reason not to experiment with new methods that are in harmony with the teachings of the Bible.

There must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. Means will be devised to reach hearts. Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the work in the past; but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism.¹

Methods are not necessarily sacred. Different times, circumstances, and cultures will demand that methods be altered. Christ's methods varied significantly as He adapted to His audience;² they were "peculiarly His own," unique to meet His times.³

¹White, *Evangelism*, 105.

²Matt 15:21-28; John 2, 3, and 4. These refer to several personal encounters with Jesus. His approach in each case is unlike any other. With the Canaanite woman He appears almost cruel, seemingly calling her a dog. At the wedding feast He appears rude to His mother, while later in the chapter He clears the temple. In contrast, He meets with Nicodemus in John, chapter 3, and then in the fourth chapter He engages a woman by a well. These stories demonstrate His adaptation of His own personal style to meet that of His audience.

³White, *Ministry of Healing*, 23.

As mentioned previously, even though White's writings do not articulate a fully developed seeker-driven model, there is much encouragement for experimenting with new methods and new approaches to evangelism. "New methods must be introduced. . . . God has men whom He will call into his service, men who will not carry forward the work in the lifeless way in which it has been carried forward in the past."¹

Two risks are counseled against when experimenting with new methodologies. First is the risk of compromise that would lower the requirements or expectations of new Christians. Truth must never be compromised in order to get converts. Instead we must seek to bring people up to the "high standard of the law of God."² Any new methodology must be careful to guard against the reality or the perception of lowering the claims of truth.

The second risk is the temptation to mimic the world,

We are handling subjects which involve eternal interests, and we are not to ape the world in any respect. We are to follow closely the footsteps of Christ. He is a satisfying portion and can meet all our wants and necessities. Our success will depend on carrying forward the work in the simplicity in which Christ carried it forward, without any theatrical display.³

Ellen White appears to lend support to the concepts and methods of evangelism under a seeker-driven model. It is evident that she encourages Christians to be uncompromising with regard to truth and innovative with regard to methods.

¹White, *Evangelism*, 70.

²Ibid., 137.

³Ibid., 139.

At this juncture, what can be concluded regarding the seeker-driven model from both a biblical basis and the writings of Ellen G. White? There is evidence that the God of scripture is a relational God. From the opening chapters of the Old Testament, and consistent throughout scripture, God seeks relationships with mankind. The concept of a seeker-driven model, while not fully developed, remains evident throughout the Old Testament. When a student turns to the New Testament, the seeker-driven model comes into clearest focus during a study of the life of Christ, the Apostles, and Paul in particular.

From a biblical perspective, the seeker-driven model is one where believers come into a friendship with the unchurched and allow God to use that relational bridge to bring the unchurched person into a personal relationship with God. From a church standpoint, this means providing appropriate programming and support for the members as they work the model, and here a ministry like Downtown Community comes into the picture. When an investigation of the writings of Ellen G. White is made, support is found for this model. While there are references that could be considered less than supportive of the model, it is important to remember that the reader also will not find material that speaks against the seeker-driven model.

With that background and support for the seeker-driven model from scripture and Ellen G. White, it is important that consideration be given to the most well-known practitioners of the seeker-driven model today.

Willow Creek's Philosophy and Strategy

Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, serves as the premiere model and instigator of much of the philosophy and terminology surrounding

the seeker-driven model. Willow Creek is a phenomenon in the Christian community. On October 14, 1995, the church celebrated its twentieth anniversary, “Life by Life,” at the United Center in Chicago. Twenty thousand people came together to celebrate God’s faithfulness over the first twenty years of Willow Creek, a church built on a seeker-driven model.

The development of this model at Willow Creek can best be understood in the context of the experience and vision of Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor. At a young age, Bill was already aware that seekers were different from the already persuaded, but he was unaware of where his perceptions and background would lead.

A conversation with his dad and an experience with a high-school classmate were anchor points of this growing philosophy. One day his dad asked if he remembered Bud Johnson. His wife had just found out she had cancer. Bud was scared, and Bill’s dad, realizing Bud’s need for spiritual help, suggested to Bill that he planned to invite Bud to church the next weekend. Thirteen-year-old Bill’s response was, “Dad, whatever you do, don’t do that. If this guy does have a spiritual spark flickering, you take him to church, and it’ll get extinguished in a matter of minutes! Spare him!”¹

The wildest kid in Bill’s high school was on his baseball team. After a breakup with a girlfriend, and making some poor choices of how to deal with it, this teammate asked if he could go to church with Bill and get things squared away. Bill said yes before he could catch himself. When the day came, Bill, for the first time, was at church

¹Lynne Hybels and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 31.

with a genuine, downcast, openhearted unbeliever at his side. Everything that the believers had grown up with seemed wrong to Bill for his friend. On the ride home after church, all was quiet, and for the next several days the two friends did not see each other. Finally, Bill tracked him down and asked if he was avoiding him. His reply went like this:

Look, Bill, I'm going to shoot it to you straight. I live on the wild side and you live on the religious side. But in spite of that I've always appreciated the fact that you are normal. You dress normal. You drive normal. You pitch normal. You talk normal. But what you took me to on Sunday was not normal. I've just been wondering why a normal guy like you goes to a place like that.¹

These two occasions were the fertile soil in which Bill's vision for reaching unchurched people grew. Later, when Bill was serving a local church youth group and had challenged them regarding the lost, it all began to come together.

These experiences grew in significance when Bill challenged a group of high school students to invite their friends to a special outreach event. The usual response to Bill's challenges was full steam ahead for these kids, but this time the kids were wary. They explained that while sitting on carpet squares in the basement of a church was okay for them, they couldn't ask their friends to do that. If they were to bring their friends, the music would need some improvement, eight or ten strings on a twelve-string guitar singing Kum-ba-ya would embarrass them. If friends were to come, they probably would not put up with forty-five to sixty minutes of Bill's Bible teaching, wandering from text to text and topic to topic, he would need to shorten and focus a bit. Finally, they thought that including the arts in the program would add to the appeal.

¹Ibid., 32.

Bill took in all the group's suggestions; he changed the place they met to somewhere that would not be embarrassing, he cut his teaching time to twenty to twenty-five minutes, cut his subject matter to deal with only one topic at a time, and determined that the messages would somehow relate to the young people's lives. In addition, they started playing upbeat music at the meetings. They even titled meetings "Son City." The first Son City meeting occurred in May of 1973. The changes quickly were reflected in increased attendance. The group grew to over 1000 kids by mid-1974. After some time, Bill felt that it was time to challenge the group of seekers about becoming Christians. They set aside a Wednesday night for Bill to make the challenge. The response was tremendous. Over 300 young people were converted to Christianity.

After this meeting in May of 1974, the enlarged group of Christian young people felt a burden to reach their unchurched parents. Under Bill, a group within the Son City youth ministry established a vision for starting a completely new church that would be based on similar principles that brought success at Son City. The group moved to Willow Creek Theater, located in a Chicago suburb, and started the Willow Creek Community Church. Around 100 teenagers left the previous Son City ministry to help start the new church. They invited their parents to the first service on October 12, 1975. At that time, the whole leadership team was donating their time on a volunteer basis. Within a year, church attendance grew to over 1,000 people. In the following three years, attendance tripled. In the late seventies, the church bought ninety acres of land and began construction of their existing auditorium. In 1981, the church moved their services to the

new site in South Barrington, just northwest of Chicago. They retained the name of Willow Creek with their move.¹

The philosophical base for the ministry of Willow Creek is that lost people matter to God, and if they matter to him, they must matter to his followers. The leadership realized that reaching seekers would not complete the task of growing them into believers. So they developed a clear vision statement, “We want to become a biblically functioning community.” This mission was then summarized in one compelling sentence, “We want to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Christ.”²

The method to meet the mission at Willow Creek is their “Seven-Step Strategy.” Followed intuitively by the group for several years prior to its being formalized, it is now taught to each member as a blueprint for accomplishing their mission.

Step 1: Build an authentic relationship with a non-believer

Step 2: Share a verbal witness

Step 3: Bring the seeker to a service designed especially for them

Step 4: Regularly attend a service for believers

Step 5: Join a small group

Step 6: Discover, develop, and deploy your spiritual gift

Step 7: Steward your resources in a God-honoring way.³

¹James Mellado, Willow Creek Community Church (Boston: Publishing Division, Harvard Business School, 1991), 4.

²Hybels and Hybels, 169.

³Ibid., 169-179.

The “Seven-Step Strategy” confirms the seeker-driven Willow Creek Model to be an evangelistic process. This is in contrast to the more traditional approach which has been centered around an event and the work of a “professional evangelist.” The Willow Creek Model finds strength in its ongoing nature and member responsibility for its success or failure.

Current Religious Literature

The earliest reporting of a seeker-driven model in SDA literature was in May 1991. That month’s issue of *Ministry* carried an article on Willow Creek Community Church.¹ The article offered the reader an overview of its origins, philosophy, and practice of ministry. The author concluded “that we as Seventh-day Adventists can learn a lot from Hybels about how to be more effective at reaching the unchurched around us.”² The article also suggested that this model might guide us in how to retain our own youth.

In a review of four churches which target the unchurched, Joe Engelkemier suggests that the SDAs would do well to consider strategies to reach the unchurched. Considering the methods at New Hope Community Church, Willow Creek Community Church, Saddleback Valley Community Church, and Grace Fellowship,³ Engelkemier

¹Joe Engelkemier, “A Church That Draws Thousands,” *Ministry*, May 1991, 14.

²*Ibid.*, 15.

³New Hope Community Church, in Portland, Oregon, was started by Dale Galloway and his wife. Their focus is on reaching the unchurched, and their use of trained lay pastors and small groups marks their ministry to more than 6,000 members. Willow Creek Community Church is located in South Barrington, Illinois. Pastored by Bill Hybels, the church reaches out to the unchurched; over 15,000 attend weekend services. Willow Creek has been instrumental in training people for reaching the

discovered six common factors among those churches: (1) leaders with a vision for the unchurched, (2) much prayer, (3) a strategy for reaching unchurched, (4) believers who build friendships with the unchurched, (5) creative church services, and (6) strong small-group ministry. While offering no references, he maintained that all six of these methods are scriptural and are supported in the writings of Ellen G. White.¹

Church leadership is catching up with the idea of diversity. Without giving direct support to the seeker-driven model, there is growing support for allowing a variety of methods.

We must remember that some people are not impressed by four-color brochures or satellite broadcasts. However, we must not fall into the trap of assuming that we should abandon these approaches just because some people don't appreciate them. No indeed, we must continue to do those things that reach certain segments of society. But we must also find ways to reach those we are not now reaching. . . . The gospel still goes to the whole world, one person at a time.²

unchurched. Saddleback Valley Community church in Mission Viejo, California, was started by Rick and Kay Warren to reach the unchurched. Today over 5,000 attend each weekend, and they have helped start 20 daughter churches in their area. Grace Fellowship is a church started by Jim Dethmer and his wife in Baltimore, Maryland, for reaching the unchurched. Before leaving that church, it had grown to 1,100 in attendance, and they had helped plant six churches in the area.

¹Joe Engelkemier, "Targeting the Unchurched: Can They Be Won to Christ?" *Adventist Review*, 20 August 1992, 19-20.

²Alfred C. McClure, "Cookie Cutters Are for Cookies," *Adventist Review*, 2 July 1992, 5.

There are articles in SDA literature about adapting to one's culture,¹ how to build friendships for evangelism,² becoming a welcoming church,³ and helping people for who they are without trying to make them church members.⁴ These are related to, but not directly about, a seeker-driven ministry. It seems that there may be a tendency to give lip service to innovation and new methodologies, but there is a hesitancy to risk the loss of the limited success of more standard methods.

The bent in SDA evangelistic method is still in the direction of the traditional set of meetings, held by a professional and referred to as the series, crusade, revival, or effort. While there seems to be some notice and even limited support for the seeker-driven model in SDA literature, the resources continue to flow to the short-term traditional approach.

Net '95, followed by Net '96,⁵ demonstrates a continued interest in the event model. In preparation for Net '96 meetings broadcast from Orlando, Florida, speaker Mark Finley met with area pastors. In these meetings, Net' 96 was referred to as

¹Borge Schantz, "One Message—Many Cultures: How Do We Cope?" *Ministry*, June 1992, 8-11.

²Monte Sahlin, "Friendship Evangelism," *Ministry*, September 1993, 6-10.

³Penny Estes Wheeler, "How to Become a Welcoming Church," *Adventist Review*, 4 November 1993, 14-15.

⁴Rex D. Edwards, "No Hidden Agenda," *Ministry*, October 1993, 22.

⁵Net '95 and Net '96 were a traditional set of evangelistic meetings aired via satellite to local churches. The program was shown on a large screen, and guests were invited to the "live" broadcast of the meeting. The technology was very contemporary, but the basic presentation was similar to the traditional offering.

“process” evangelism. That term must be understood as explained by Finley himself. He laid out the process as a string of events that build or lead to a culmination in the traditional public evangelistic meetings. This approach is similar to the “Felt Needs” model¹ where a number of “entry events” are held. This model might include classes on health, cooking, stop smoking, and stress, and would serve as potential avenues to funnel people into Bible classes and, eventually, the evangelistic series.

There is still, however, a strong commitment to the short-term intense dose of SDA evangelistic preaching. “God’s method of reaching the masses is still powerful evangelistic preaching.”² While that may be true, does it necessitate that the preaching be done in a concentrated event mode? In consideration of reaching the secular mind, I would tend rather to favor what Finley seems to acknowledge as the best method.

Personal evangelism is still the best way to win secular people. It takes people to win people. Programs don’t win people; loving people who graciously develop relationships win people. Usually people respond to kindness. Genuine friendship breaks down prejudice. One thing is for certain; you won’t win secularists to Christ by trying to out-argue them.³

¹The Felt Needs Model is based on the idea of reaching people at the point of their need. While the evangelist knows they need the gospel, in this model other needs are met first as entry points: cooking schools, stress seminars, and parenting classes are examples of meeting needs in preparation for eventually meeting the spiritual need for the gospel. This is also sometimes referred to as “sequence evangelism.”

²Mark Finley, “Reaching Secular People,” *Ministry*, October 1993, 17.

³*Ibid.*, 18.

If this is true, it is major support for a relational-based, long-term process type of evangelism like Downtown Community.¹ In the same article, Finley cites research that supports the idea of secular people coming to church if it provides a safe place to doubt, works for the betterment of society, and is marked by spiritual preaching. While these findings support a ministry like Downtown Community, they are less encouraging for the traditional evangelistic approach.

While his book, *Present Truth in the Real World*, is not about the seeker-driven model per se, much of what Jon Paulien writes has implications for the SDA relationship to this model. Paulien points out that the increasingly dominant secular culture of the first world is rapidly being adopted by the second and third worlds of our globe.²

If it is true that our traditional evangelistic methods target those with biblical backgrounds, then our market is shrinking if we cannot learn to evangelize the secular unchurched person. Part of this learning process has to do with making the everlasting gospel understandable and desirable to a secular audience. Our message is extremely important, but it must be made significant to a secular audience.

There is virtually no identity and little interest in the secular mind for much of what has been important to both SDAs and Christians of other denominations. An

¹The ministry of Downtown Community is introduced to the reader in the first section of this paper.

²Jon Paulien, *Present Truth in the Real World: The Adventist Struggle to Keep and Share Faith in a Secular Society* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 28.

illustration of this would be the SDA concern about Sabbath/Sunday issues. Paulien writes:

But what kind of signal does it send to the secular person? “These people are into issues that are totally irrelevant to me.” The issue is certainly not irrelevant in the eyes of God or of those who are in Christ. But to secular people there couldn’t be a more irrelevant issue than whether Saturday or Sunday is the right day to go to church. They aren’t even sure why anyone would go to church at all, so a debate over the right day to go to church sends a signal to the secular community that the meetings are not worthy of their time and attention.¹

What may be the largest challenge facing those who wish to reach the unchurched via the seeker-driven model is getting SDAs to develop and maintain friendships of integrity with people who are not churched. This is the most difficult step, but this personal influence is essential in order for Christians to make a significant impact on the secular world.

Paulien reminds his readers that another “barrier between SDAs and secular people is the group-oriented approach of our public meetings. . . . But secular people are rarely reached in groups.”² Support for such a statement comes not only from Paulien’s own experience working with secular people in New York, but it is supported by research conducted by Gottfried Oosterwal in the Lake Union SDA churches.

. . . 85 to 90 percent of all baptisms come primarily as a result of personal contact with a relative, friend, or pastor. Public meetings, Adventist media, literature, and journals are considered, by those baptized, to play a significant role in less than one out of four cases.³

¹Ibid., 35.

²Ibid., 37.

³Ibid.

As stated before, while Paulien's book is not a treatise on the seeker-driven model, or even proposing that model, he clearly supports personal effort over the mass appeal method. Further, he is clear that whatever programming is offered, it must be packaged in a way that is relevant to the secular person. His chapter "Outreach Through Worship" is full of principles that undergird the seeker-driven model. Issues covered there include the importance of using relevant normal language, technology, and contemporary music. The content must be highly practical with clear "take home value." Of course, the ministry must be done with excellence and include use of those methodologies which will speak to more than just the rational aspect of humanity.

It is clear that there is biblical support for a seeker-driven model. This support is found in the Old Testament and is continued in the New Testament in the life and ministry of Jesus and in the example and writings of Paul. While no reference is made directly to this model, it is evident that support for its philosophy is clearly found in the writings of Ellen G. White. Further support can be noted in church-growth literature. Although that is the case, there are some current detractors of the seeker-driven model. These sincere Christians deserve the consideration that follows.

Considering Criticisms of the Seeker-Driven Model

Almost anything new, or even something old from a new angle, will often spark criticism, and the seeker-driven model has certainly been no exception. Criticisms of this model must be given due consideration. Where there are grains of truth in the criticism,

those should be considered, evaluated, and course corrections made in the continued development and exploitation of the seeker-driven model.

Although the seeker-driven model, at least as practiced at Willow Creek Community Church, did not arise from church-growth strategies or marketing expertise, to say that one has not influenced the other would be naive. George Barna, former member of Willow Creek Community Church, founder and president of Barna Research Group, a full-service marketing research company, has had a significant influence on the church-growth movement.¹

Many of the techniques encouraged in his books are practiced in seeker-driven ministries. Saying that one is intending to be a seeker-driven ministry would convey that there has been some acceptance of the whole notion of marketing the church because it implies a target market. The whole concept of developing a service designed with the seeker in mind places that service in a marketing mode, and that has caused immediate discomfort within certain Christian circles.

Douglas D. Webster wrote *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong with Marketing the Church?* in response to these concepts and the idea of user-friendly churches. Webster raises some excellent concerns in his book. Most of these are meant to argue against marketing the church or having a seeker-driven ministry, but when expanded and understood they can turn out to be pitfalls to avoid, not reasons for rejecting that type of ministry. He writes, "Understanding the truth about Jesus was, and is, a matter of

¹His books include: *The Frog in the Kettle*; *Marketing the Church*; *Finding a Church You Can Call Home*; *Evangelism That Works*; *User Friendly Churches*; and *Generation NEXT*.

supernatural revelation. The power of persuasion lies not in human ingenuity and creativity, nor in techniques and methods, but in God's communication."¹

No thinking leader of a seeker-driven ministry would argue this point. However, if Webster, as the context indicates, is using this statement to discredit marketing methods, he must abandon all human ingenuity, creativity, techniques, and methods. It is impossible to do evangelism without some method. What marketing people and the most successful seeker-driven churches seem to be encouraging is a removal of roadblocks. While the church must never allow modern culture to dictate its teaching, there must always be cultural accommodation to methodology. Competent, well-done methods and techniques can certainly be an asset in preparing the way of the Lord.

Webster fears that churches will get so enamored with marketing that they will ignore the church's mission. There is a risk that with too narrow a target market, a church could become exclusive and narrow, cliquish, only wanting to have the gospel impact people like themselves. While this danger must be kept in mind, his logic breaks down when he tries to build a case against target marketing by pointing to the "unity of the Jewish and Gentile ethnic groups in the early church."² Let us not forget the Jerusalem Council, the neglect of the Greek widows, and the ministry of Peter and Paul to the Jewish and Gentile populations, respectively. Certainly there were marketing techniques employed, regardless of what they were called. Paul's own method, even in the Gentile

¹Douglas D. Webster, *Selling Jesus: What's Wrong with Marketing the Church?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 16.

²Ibid., 69.

world, was to start with the Jews in the synagogue and then progress on to other people groups.

A customized ministry to a particular type of seeker must be careful to be targeted and not exclusive. While the “bait” used may make it easiest to catch a certain type of seeker, the targeted, seeker-driven ministry must be open to those who do not fit the predetermined profile.

Webster argues the point that Jesus’ market niche was the whole world.¹ While this may be true in the sense that He wished for all to be saved, it certainly was not true for His three and a half years of public ministry. Those years were spent on twelve men He chose, primarily on Jews (although He did speak with a Samaritan now and then). He never visited Rome or Greece; His target was Israel.

John MacArthur, Jr., in *Ashamed of the Gospel*, finds fault with the seeker-driven, user-friendly approach to evangelism. He seems to confuse methodology of evangelism and cultural adaptation, or contextualization, with a compromise of theological truth. While reading his book, one would wonder if there could ever be new methods without compromising old truths!

Too many who have embraced the user-friendly trend have not carefully pondered how user-friendliness is incompatible with true biblical theology. It is, at its heart, a pragmatic, not a biblical, outlook. It is based on precisely the kind of thinking that is eating away at the heart of orthodox doctrine. It is leading evangelicalism into neo-modernism and putting churches in the fast lane on the down-grade.²

¹Ibid., 72.

²John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993), 65.

It appears as if MacArthur has wed the concepts of being user-friendly and sin-friendly and is not willing to consider either without the other. He is clear that he does not want an unfriendly church, but if somehow the cultural barriers are removed for the seeker, that will have to mean compromise with sin. In response to his thinking, the question begs to be asked, Can a church be uncompromising with sin, honest, committed, worshiping, self-denying, cross carrying, and still seek to remove all unnecessary barriers for a seeker? And can this be done without compromise?

There are dangers in a ministry to reach secular people. The whole seeker-driven model calls for a closeness and familiarity with “the world” that can put a Christian at risk. It is important to recognize that this ministry model is not for everyone. The Bible puts forth two contrasting models in Matt 5:13-16. Here we find the city set on a hill, representing the fortress model which is most familiar and comfortable to SDAs. Also in these verses we find the church compared to salt, which better illustrates an infiltration model.¹ It is important to realize that, while infiltration has its risks, it can also accomplish a work never attainable by those practicing the fortress model. So, while some may raise some objections to the seeker-driven model, it is in harmony with the biblically supported model of Christians being salt and infiltrating the world for Christ. It is important for the church to not insist on a solo method but rather adopt both of these models to fully accomplish its mission.

¹Paulien, 80-82.

Importance of This Model and Its Need to Be Implemented

There are several aspects of this model that contribute to its importance and the need of its implementation within a SDA ministry context. First, and maybe most important, this model is not in a hurry. The more traditional approaches¹ bear a certain mark of urgency, if for no other reason than their limited lifetime of three, six, or even twelve weeks in a community. This is the window of opportunity in which the “customer,” usually referred to as an interest, is urged to “sign up.” If that does not happen, it is left with the pastor to follow up, and that task is made more difficult by the natural letdown following the intensity of the previous three to twelve weeks of meetings. Within the program there is rarely any ongoing opportunity to work more slowly on making a commitment of one’s life to Jesus Christ. In addition, the evangelist, in trying to close the sale, may apply so much pressure that waiting may be thought paramount with refusing. The truth may be that what is needed is merely more time. Some people simply take longer to make a major life decision. There may need to be a larger social support network that will build over time or just longer acculturation into the SDA subculture. A seeker-driven, ongoing method of evangelism like Downtown Community offers this more relational, continual, and methodical approach.

¹The basic form of “traditional” evangelism follows three main currents with only minor divergences to match each evangelist. The forms include the eight day “reaping” crusade, the several weeks-long evangelistic series, and the extended Revelation Seminar approach. One common factor is that they are the exception to the day-in-and-day-out life of the church. Preparation is made for their coming and there is some relief, positive or negative, when it is over.

Second, the seeker-driven model, or some other model that is inclusive of an ongoing relational model, must find implementation because it is analogous to Christ's method and the entire relational nature of the salvation process and story. Jesus' model of coming and being Immanuel, God with us, is the model for His followers, the continuing Incarnation. This model demands involvement in people's lives, modeling the nature of God's kingdom, a relational domain.

Third, it is important because it is member-based, not clergy-centered. This model supports the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Each member is called to be an evangelist, a friend of some would-be seeker. The seeker-driven, Downtown Community-type methodology does not allow a member to wait for the "professional" evangelist to come to town because he is not coming. If the people of the community are to find salvation, it becomes the responsibility of each church member.

CHAPTER 3

A HISTORY OF DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY

Kindling of the Vision

The kindling of the vision for what came to be Downtown Community finds its roots in my experiences with evangelism. When I was a child, a public evangelistic meeting was part of the annual cycle of life at our local church. Occasionally, the church would have a series in both the spring and the fall. It was an event. There would be good or poor preparation for each of these events, usually dependent on pastoral leadership. We, as church members, were to help “support” the meetings by attending and by bringing our neighbors, friends, and relatives. There were pictures and Bibles and books to be earned if you brought someone new or brought the most guests on a certain night.

It was clear to me as a child that the vast majority of the adults became a bit wearied by the whole affair, and there was noticeable relief among the church members when the professional evangelist would move onto the next meeting site. Life at church would then go back to “normal,” with the rounds of Sabbath School, youth outings, socials, worship services, weddings, funerals, boards, etc., until it was time once again to “do” evangelism.

What happened to me in this process was that somehow I absorbed the idea that evangelism was something different from regular life. It was not part of who we were and what we did “normally,” but it was reserved for the time when the professional would come to town, and we could help him do his work (the evangelist was always a man, and his wife sang, played, made chalk drawings, or some other combination of these activities).

This picture of evangelism did not alter much as I progressed through the SDA school system. In academy, college, and seminary there were opportunities to work with traditional public evangelism. Each time I was impressed by the “hit and run” nature of the event. So, at a very early age I had already begun to wish for a new model.

Another inspiration to look for a new model was my own pastoral experience with the effectiveness of the traditional series of meetings. Here I will only recount the results of two series of meetings held at FHC.

The first series of evangelistic meetings was held in 1982 resulting in a total of twenty-four baptisms. Five continue to be active members, although one individual moved to another church. The four who remain active at FHC are the youth of the church who were baptized during the meetings. One person died and the other eighteen are inactive on FHC books, dropped as missing or their whereabouts are unknown.¹

The second series was held in the fall of 1984, accomplishing nineteen baptisms. None of those baptized are still active at FHC, but two are active in other SDA churches,

¹Church Clerk's Records, Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church, Orlando, FL, 1982.

and one remained an active participant until death. The remaining sixteen sort as follows: two are inactive at FHC, five were dropped from membership as missing, three were lost to apostasy, and the whereabouts are unknown for six.¹

The new model for which I had been searching was introduced to me in the fall of 1987. A fellow pastor in my first Doctor of Ministry class shared a tape by Bill Hybels about how Willow Creek Community Church came to exist. I was impressed and hopeful. It sounded like a model I could support, so I investigated attending the Pastor's Conference at Willow Creek Community Church.

In February 1990, I went alone to visit Willow Creek Community Church. Everything about the place impressed me: facilities, program, people, methods, teaching, etc. It is no exaggeration to say that my ministry has never been the same since. The methods used there were just what I had always wanted. There was clear teaching, a sense of mission, ongoing evangelism as part of the life of the church, strategy, excellence, people who seemed serious about making a sustained difference in people's lives, and the church had a track record of accomplishing those goals.

Returning to Florida, I was consumed with what I had seen. I knew it would be a slow process to transition a church from a traditional focus to one that was seeker-driven, but I was determined to do so or move on to where I could. Vision casting began among pockets of the congregation. I was overjoyed when only a couple of Sabbaths after returning to Florida, the young adult class was discussing why they would feel

¹Tbid., 1984.

uncomfortable bringing a friend or workmate to church. Quickly, I got copies of a tape on the philosophy of Willow Creek Community Church and shared them with numbers of our members.

Soon five couples began meeting on a regular basis to determine how to move the church in the direction of this vision. We had many more questions than answers. Where would we meet? Who would do music? Who knew anything about drama? How would we bring the church along with us? Who had really good, close relationships with unchurched people? As early as August of 1990, we were carefully defining the kinds of seeker we were searching for and the types of messages we believed would be significant for that seeker.

Early Attempts and Roadblocks

In February of 1991, our church sponsored three members (another member went on his own) and me to the Willow Creek Leadership Conference, and the vision enlarged. On returning to our group, we continued making plans and held to our hopes for a seeker program. In those days we had no church home. The congregation had moved out of our old church to await major renovations and additions, but when those were found to be severely over budget, the decision was made to pursue other options for a new meeting place. In the meantime we were renting a very traditional-looking Presbyterian church. It seemed impossible to us to consider offering what we believed to be a “true” seeker service in that environment.

Time and energy were invested in consideration of possible locations for this new ministry. Downtown we discovered the old Beecham Theater. Located in the heart of the city, it seemed ideal. Meetings with the leasing agents brought us to some degree of reality. Our second dose of reality came as we tried to imagine who would do all the tasks that needed to be done: music, drama, set up, take down, etc., while maintaining the regular ministries of the church, attempting to raise a million dollars, and designing and building a new facility.

A search for a location, the costs involved, and the progressing development of our own facility led us to believe that it would be best to wait until we had moved into our own space. To help answer the question of who would do all this new programming, the better part of wisdom seemed to be to postpone the development of a seeker service and instead develop an alternative contemporary worship service that was seeker-friendly versus seeker-driven. Though not fully intentional on our part, this service functioned as a place of leadership development for a seeker service to come at a future date.

The dream was not dead, just delayed. Relieved of the pressure to go off site and do a seeker's service, we found energy for the new first service, a seeker-friendly place. Drama, contemporary music, and rehearsals helped produce a worship service with some of the feel of a seeker's service, and this new worship style began at FHC on April 20, 1991.

This service was initiated, not for the novelty, but to truly meet a need felt among some of the members, and to provide more room. The church was at capacity for our one

service, and adding a second was the only option for having room to grow if we were to continue renting that facility. Soon it had a following, and second service was still well attended. Progress was being made toward the dream, even if it did seem like a snail's pace at the time.

The Final Year of Preparation

Having conducted the new first worship service for just over a year, it became evident that the time, energy, and manpower necessary to offer a seeker service would be a mammoth undertaking. Three of the five couples who had sat in the circle from the beginning moved away. The number of people involved in this process had to be enlarged and the base broadened if Downtown Community was ever to become reality.

In the summer of 1992, people were recruited by word of mouth to a series of special suppers which, for lack of any better term, were vision sessions. At these meetings there were in-depth discussions of philosophy, target audience, message selections, dress, rehearsals, etc. People from other SDA churches in the area joined in this process.

It was during this process that some leadership surfaced and others were recruited to specific tasks. Already it had been determined that team teaching would be part of Downtown Community, and the four primary speakers were confirmed. Drama team leadership was borrowed from the Florida Conference. Commitments were made to music, sound, prop acquisitions, and greeting. While there was a member of the leadership team responsible, no secondary leadership was established at this time for

follow-up classes for serious seekers or for establishing some social follow-up programming in general.

An interesting phenomenon in this whole process was that we never took anything about Downtown Community to the church body for a vote. Occasionally, there would be a report to the board about what was planned and how the finances would work, but it was sharing information, not asking permission. This process, along with the inclusion of help from other SDA churches and funding from Florida Conference Youth Evangelism, all combined to create some confusion about who was the "owner" of the ministry called Downtown Community. Some of that confusion is still present at this writing.

To prepare the congregation for the implementation of Downtown Community, it was decided to share the Seven-Step Strategy with the whole congregation. A graphic was developed for each of the seven steps, and these were enlarged and displayed each week as we presented an entire sermon on each step. This series was offered to the FHC members in the spring of 1993. For seven weeks, this extremely important material was given a single exposure to the congregation. With all the change and development going on at the time, and all the information being shared about that process, it should have been clear that one pass would not be sufficient.¹ More time was needed to understand

¹It is important to understand that Downtown Community did not happen in any kind of vacuum. While it was developing, so was the whole church program. In 1987 the congregation voted to proceed with renovations and additions to the old church, built in the late 1940s. Following fund-raising and development of the working plans, the project was to begin in July of 1989. In May of 1989, the air conditioning for the sanctuary quit, and in anticipation of construction beginning in July, the congregation moved out of its long-term facility. The plan was to be out for 6 months to a year. In early July, it became evident that the preliminary cost figures would need to be doubled to complete the project. It was then determined that the better wisdom, for that kind of money, would be

and then consider embracing this methodology. Here was a strategy that was never voted by the church, never adopted by any official body of the church, never debated, but clearly presented as the way we would be attempting to do church. Sharing of the seven steps was, in the minds of the presenters, a clear picture of why we were moving toward offering the community a seeker-driven service.

Implementation

With the move into the new facility in May of 1993, momentum was building for the start of Downtown Community. Months in advance it had been decided that the program would be offered at 6:30 P.M. each Saturday. Series themes and specific topics were selected two months prior to the first presentation of Downtown Community. This early selection allowed the music, drama, and graphics people adequate time to prepare their part of the program.

On July 10, 1993, the first Downtown Community began with the series, "In Pursuit of Peace." Two full rehearsals of the entire program took place earlier in the afternoon. Every person involved practiced each aspect involved in making the program

to relocate the church in a more favorable site. There were discussions about mergers or having the hospital build us a church, but in the end it was voted to trade with Florida Hospital for property on Orange Avenue, the equivalent of "Main Street Orlando." In an attempt to think long term, a master plan was developed for the site with the creation of a PUD (Planned Urban Development) with the city. The design of the new church was influenced to a large degree by an interest in reaching the unchurched or formerly churched. The land exchange was complete as were the plans designed for a new church, and ground breaking took place in September of 1991. Construction began in March of 1992, and the congregation moved into the new facility the third weekend in May of 1993.

run smoothly—moving props, changing lighting, walking on and off the stage, the drama, music, etc.¹

Downtown Community was off to a good start. The program went well, but the question many had was whether the same level of quality could be maintained week after week. The crowd was encouraging; just under 100 were in attendance. Over the next few weeks attendance built, slumped, and rebounded. In those early days it was obvious that people would need some time to gain confidence in the consistency of a meaningful and well-done program.

A Review of the First Thirty Months

Since its inception, Downtown Community has occurred week after week with an average of less than one week off each year. The most amazing aspect of Downtown Community is the dedication and commitment of those involved with making it happen.

Every Saturday afternoon, usually by 3:00, the music leader arrives at the church, well over an hour away from her home. Music that has been individually learned is now put together with the whole music team. Drama people appear on the scene, often rehearsing in another room. Lighting and sound, video and props people all converge, and at 4:45 everyone gathers for instructions and prayer. Then it is time for the rehearsal of the whole evening's event. That rehearsal is over at about 5:30, allowing time for one more run through!

¹See Appendix A.

The program begins promptly at 6:30 and rarely runs over the one-hour time slot. When it is over at 7:30 P.M., there are people to visit, props to put away, graphics to store, making it difficult to leave before 8:00 P.M. These three to five hours on Sabbath do not include the time it took to memorize music and drama scripts, or to write sermons.

With the high time demand and the level of excellence demanded, the fact that it is still going after thirty months is a testimony to the commitment of those involved. Over the life of this ministry, the core leadership has been maintained. Five people meet weekly for two hours to give oversight to the whole ministry. Topic selection is made in this group, and then the musicians and drama team find appropriate matches for each topic chosen.

Over the first thirty months the Downtown Community speakers have managed to provide topic selections three to four months ahead. Topics and series are chosen, and then a paragraph is written to summarize the focus and direction the speaker will pursue on a given topic. This has been highly demanding, but it has also been imperative, because it allows time for proper selections of drama, music, and other program elements. Early topic selection has also enabled the use of props and graphics that could not have been arranged without advance notice.

With more than thirty months behind the program, there is a need to evaluate the progress made in order to know how to address the future. The writing of this project is part of that evaluation process that can give both affirmation and constructive criticism as the program moves into the future. After thirty months, those at the heart of the ministry are both excited and tired. They have had a hand in raising the bar of excellence in SDA

religious programming in Central Florida and are determined to move forward with this ministry. They are a team of people committed to making Downtown Community both relevant and consistent with biblical truth and to maintain this tool for Christians in the area to use in their personal evangelism. The progress, in terms of the traditional measures of evangelistic success, is slow but coming. However, when other success measures are applied, like the number of people involved, people attending Downtown Community who do not attend any other form of church, and young people kept in the church because of a place to serve or attend, then the success may be greater than anyone ever imagined.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter Overview

Part of any evaluation process must include consideration of expectations and the success or failure at meeting them. In this chapter answers are sought for the following questions: What were the expectations at the initiation? How, why, and in what ways have those expectations been either met or missed? What unplanned or unintentional expectations have been met?

Consideration of those questions is followed by an examination of the effect Downtown Community has had in the lives of those involved in conducting the ministry. While the intent was to impact the unchurched, an unexpected benefit was the way this ministry touched those church people involved in doing the ministry.

No evaluation of a ministry of this type would be complete without accountability regarding church-growth results. At the onset, there was an expectation that the church would grow as a result of Downtown Community. How can it be determined if Downtown Community is affecting Kingdom growth? What kind of results have been produced from these efforts? What unexpected benefits has Downtown Community effected at FHC?

An influential factor which demands consideration in the evaluation process is the message content and the themes which have been addressed. A review of topic selection provides a source of information from which to judge how balanced the mix of presentations has been. Are the messages oriented too much toward relationship issues? Has too much emphasis been placed on apologetics? These are the kinds of questions addressed in this section.

Finally, to remain relevant, Downtown Community will demand constant fine-tuning and change. This chapter concludes with recommended changes for the various facets of Downtown Community.

Expectations

The idea of a target market¹ is a concept that is difficult for some people to grasp, especially when applied to the work of the church or evangelism. When a decision is made to actively market a particular segment of society, people often react that to do so is to be exclusive. This was certainly the case in focus groups held at FHC in the late summer of 1996. Among the members participating, there was a reaction against the idea of targeting a certain sector of the population for evangelism. This negative reaction was not with reference to age sectors but to educational and socioeconomic groupings.

¹Target Market is the sector of the population at which the ministry is aimed. This term is to help understand reaching a particular group as opposed to reaching everyone.

It was recognized in the preparation and early stages of Downtown Community that to target everyone would be both irresponsible and impossible. Traditionally, the need to reach everyone often seems so overwhelming that it can serve to squelch motivation. Any attempt to reach everyone is so general that it may contribute to not reaching anyone in particular.

More traditional evangelistic endeavors, while not necessarily intentionally marketed to a particular societal sector, have primarily attracted a certain market group to the SDA church. Each style of programming will, by default if not intention, attract a particular audience. Unintentionally, our methods have targeted Bible-based, individualistic people with some degree of hunger for the sensational.¹

It was never the intention of Downtown Community to exclude anyone who wished to attend, but the original target group was an unchurched Baby Buster or Baby Boomer. The expectation was that church members would practice the Seven-Step Strategy and bring to Downtown Community their unchurched Buster and Boomer friends.

Another expectation was that attendance at Downtown Community would build slowly and steadily. In the preparation stages there were discussions that expressed these hopes. However, once Downtown Community began and people came and observed the

¹This assertion is based on consideration of three factors in traditional evangelistic endeavors: (1) sensationalistic advertising, (2) presentations that assume a large base of prerequisite biblical knowledge, and (3) the call to leave family, friends, and social support systems to follow truth.

quality of the program, there was a new burst of optimism that within a year it would be difficult to find a place to sit because the crowds would grow so rapidly.

Today, on both accounts, there is some disappointment because of unrealized expectations. FHC members have not been aggressive in building relationships with the unchurched. Without those relationships there is little, if any, opportunity to share their own verbal witness about why they are Christians or to invite people to Downtown Community. This relates directly to the first unmet expectation, which is related to the target market. While many of the attendees of Downtown Community do fit in the age-specific target, the vast majority are not from the ranks of the unchurched.¹

The second disappointment concerns the number of attendees. Attendance at Downtown Community has fluctuated from a high of just over 200 to a low of 70, but has most consistently averaged around the 140-150 mark.² These numbers would be less discouraging if the lower numbers were in the first few months and the higher numbers were more closely identified with the time of this writing. The reality is that the largest attendance was during the first six months of ministry. Since then, it has remained relatively flat. Evidently the expectations of large numbers and many unchurched attending have not been realized.

¹Judgment regarding the ratios of churchd to unchurched are rough estimates by necessity. Part of the plan of Downtown Community is to make it a safe environment so people are not asked to say, sign, or give anything. In fact, one of the principles of operation has to do with protecting the anonymity of the attendee.

²These attendance figures are based on actual visual head counts taken by assigned staff once the program has started.

From my evaluation, the reasons appear to be twofold. There is evidence of the lack of a hunger and drive to reach lost people for Christ in the heart of church members.¹ Second, Downtown Community has relied on word-of-mouth advertising, and while that has brought many, there is room for many more. It is believed that not advertising outside of the word-of-mouth means has impacted the flatness of attendance.

In preparation for beginning Downtown Community, the pastoral staff at FHC preached a sermon on each of the stages in the Seven-Step Strategy. This once-over approach efficiently communicated the information but failed to plant the vision fully in the minds of the members. Much more grass roots preparation was needed prior to starting Downtown Community. It was as if the program would make itself needed instead of rising out of a crying need. That is to say that if FHC members had multiple relationships with friends who wanted more spiritual direction but with no safe place to go, then Downtown Community would have been meeting a felt need among the church membership. The question that continues to haunt the leadership of Downtown Community is this: Would we ever have gotten on track with our attempt to meet seekers' needs without observing the ministry of Downtown Community? Regardless of

¹Over a period of time, a shift has taken place in the thinking of many of the members of FHC. This shift has been from a more exclusive "we have the truth" stance, to a more inclusive acceptance of the validity of the salvation experience of those in other denominations. A result of a more inclusive understanding has led to confusion about what the SDA church has to offer to other Christians. Many of these same members have suffered a degree of theological confusion and lack of doctrinal clarity resulting from the issues raised by Desmond Ford and Walter Rhea in the 1980s. When members are unsure of their own beliefs and sure that Christians of other denominations can be in a saving relationship with Jesus, it combines to reduce evangelistic fervor to share their SDA version of Christianity.

the answer, there is still much catch-up to be done in continued education of our membership and in prayer for a hunger for the lost prompted by the Holy Spirit.

Effects on Ministry Presenters

Having considered the unmet expectations, it is also important to mention those needs that have been met where there had been no expectation. Some of those areas would include the upgrading of the church lighting and video systems, additional musical instrumentation, added church staff, and improved preaching. But by far the greatest impact that had not been anticipated is the difference that Downtown Community has made in the lives of those who have been involved in making the ministry happen week after week.

Effects on the Leader

Before telling others' stories, my own may offer some insight. I had always wished for a place to which I could comfortably invite anyone I met. The worship services of our church have served that purpose well when those I met were already believers. As fellow Christians, even if we did not share the same denominational focus, others could easily become comfortable in one of our worship services because they were worshipers. In contrast, the secular, non-Christian person could potentially find our worship awkward at best and strange at worst. I had longed for a safe place for people to explore Christianity without having to learn the church language, customs, and culture.

Downtown Community changed my life as a pastor in providing me with a quality program in a contemporary framework to which I would feel comfortable inviting any

secular person I might meet. As soon as it was under way, I remember the pleasure of knowing that no matter whom I met, there was something happening each week at our church to which I could comfortably invite my contemporaries.

In addition to providing this value, the planning and preparation required each week to make Downtown Community a thing of excellence demanded time with a leadership core. The weekly two-hour meeting with the other three principle speakers and the program director became both an accountability and growth group, along with an opportunity for Downtown Community oversight responsibilities. The personal benefit from that ongoing experience has undoubtedly met a need that had not been in any way one of the expectations of Downtown Community.

Another by-product of this ministry has been improved preaching.¹ The message time is shared by several speakers. Each speaker senses a need to not let the others down and to rise to the occasion of whatever topic or text has been selected during the planning process. Being part of a speaking team has been a good homiletical exercise as together we critique, compliment, and even criticize each other's messages.

Finally, Downtown Community has increased my belief in the commitment of some church members. For people to give up a sizable portion of their Sabbath afternoon

¹This is a subjective evaluation based on three factors. First, the preaching is shared by a team of speakers who meet both before and after to counsel one another regarding the message. At the weekly meeting of the leadership team, critiques are given of both content and presentation. Knowing this review is coming has motivated more thorough preparation. Second, advance topic selection allows for more developmental time for the speaker's sermon. The third contributing factor is the struggle to speak without the assumption of prior biblical knowledge of the listener. This forces careful word and story selection that should lend itself to improved delivery.

week after week to be part of this ministry has helped restore my faith in my fellow members. Their commitment has reminded me that many members would be willing to be involved if a credible means for that involvement was provided. Also, their commitment has challenged me to greater commitment.

Effects on the Leadership Team

To understand the effects of the ministry on the leadership team they were asked to fill out a simple four-question survey.¹ The questions were: (1) What effect has DC had in your life? (2) Has it changed you? If so, in what way? (3) If you could go back and start over, what would you do differently? (4) Would you do it again? Explain why or why not. Questions 1 and 2 are directly related to this section, question 4 has implications for this section, and question 3 was to gain some general insight regarding areas that might need to be strengthened or reworked.

There were no major deviations in the responses from the leadership team. While there was some variety of perspective, the experiences and perceptions were generally shared. The nature of the questions and the responses suggest that a summary would be sufficient to gain understanding of the effects of the ministry on the leadership team.

From the responses it was evident that Downtown Community has added to the complexity of the lives of those on the leadership team, but each one was sure that were they to have it all to do over again, they would. It has provided them with a new

¹See Appendix B.

understanding of how God can use them and the large variety of gifts of His people in doing ministry.

Mention was made of how valuable it is to be part of a ministry that developed both a safe place for people to explore Christianity and for Christians to exercise their gifts. This seems to have had a type of circular effect. The leadership team created the ministry and then not only enjoyed watching others grow as they participated, but they have observed that same growth in their own lives.

Without any hesitancy it was clear that one of the greatest values to each of the leadership team was the “small group” effect of the leadership team. The weekly meetings for ministry direction have also been for personal counsel, growth, accountability, and support. The time together “being the church” with each other has significantly impacted each member of the leadership team.

One team member mentioned that Downtown Community had “caused a reasonable degree of tension in my life” (some semblance of that sentiment was given from each of the leadership team), but simultaneously it enlarged this member’s appreciation of God’s grace. Involvement with the many people participating in the ministry has broadened the leadership team’s tolerance and understanding of others’ gifts.

Effects on Ministry Participants

Through occasional questionnaires, surveys, and group discussions with the participants in Downtown Community, the same effects have consistently surfaced. First has been a sense of pride—not a prideful spirit, but a healthy appreciation to be part of

such a ministry of excellence. Over and over, participants say how valuable it has been for each of them on their own spiritual journey; while they came to help others, it turned out that they felt themselves to be the recipients of the greater good.

There is no doubt that, for the regular participants, it has enlarged their vision of the need to do ministry and of their belief that they have something to offer the church. Occasionally, there has also been mention of how their involvement with Downtown Community has made them more aware of the people of their world.

For some, Downtown Community came along at just the right time. They were going through a lonely or difficult period, and this ministry provided them a place where they felt needed and at the same time protected. According to their testimony, connecting with the ministry team and being part of something larger than themselves improved both their spiritual and mental health.

Here is evidence that, while the leadership team was focused on the target audience, the benefit of the ministry was not limited to them. In visiting with the ministry participants, it is easy to discover the need to be sensitive and aware of the participants' needs. For authenticity to be maintained, those who participate in Downtown Community must allow the ministry to effect their lives in a similar manner to the hoped-for effect in the lives of the unchurched.

Effects on Attendees

In an effort to better understand Downtown Community's effect on those who attend, it was determined to use focus groups.¹ These focus groups were also used to

¹See Appendix C for a complete report of the focus group process.

determine attendee's desires and needs related to Downtown Community, learn how to better market the ministry, and determine where changes might be needed. Suggestions from these focus groups also contributed to the recommendations section of this chapter.

Two focus groups were conducted, one for SDA attendees, the other for non-SDAs. It was determined that someone not associated with Downtown Community leadership should conduct the focus groups to avoid a skewing of the results by unduly influencing either the manner of the questions or the responses to those questions.

Ben Holdsworth, of Lant-Holdsworth Associates, conducted the focus groups at FHC on April 5 and 12, 1997. A recording secretary sat outside the group and took notes on each session.

The SDA focus group was comprised of three males and three females. Four were Caucasian, one Hispanic, and one Caribbean. Their ages ranged from 17-48 with an average of 31 years, and their average time of attending Downtown Community was 2.5 years.

Focus group two was made up of four males and three females who were not SDA. All seven were Caucasian and ranged in age from 15-50 with an average age of 36, and an average time attending Downtown Community of 1.75 years.

The questions ranged from subjects as mundane as parking to as complex as mission. The "Life Impact" questions related most directly to how Downtown Community has affected the attendees.¹

¹See p. 113 of Appendix C.

In response to the question “Why do you attend Downtown Community?” there were some responses that hint at what effect the ministry has for the attendees. The SDA respondents called it an “hour for me to rest and reflect—spiritual renewal without distractions.” Apparently, the effect for some was spiritual renewal. In both groups there was reference to learning from real-life applications in a setting that is more appealing than the traditional church environment.

Probing further, the question was asked, “What difference does Downtown Community make in your life?” Among the SDA responses were references to finding a place to worship God without being “churchy.” One spoke about not attending for a month and how she got discouraged and had to come back. Another person mentioned that he had not been part of the church much and was cynical about God, but how Downtown Community had helped him come a long way in a very short time. While there were references to the music and casual dress, it was evident that the overall effect had been greater than just attending a good program.

The effect on the non-SDA attendees is best shared in the agreed response from that group to the question: “What difference does Downtown Community make in your life?”

We weren’t raised SDA or even Christian—this is a safe place to explore what it means to believe in God, understand who Jesus is, and to understand and get to know SDAs. It is non-threatening, safe, and has no pressure. My friends see the change in me and want to come. People with family and friends dying or sick or in need are looking for a place to belong. Brought my family together.¹

¹Ibid.

These comments give an insight into some of the positive effects of Downtown Community on both the SDA and non-SDA attendees, but there have also been some negative effects.

The intent of Downtown Community was that churched people would bring people to the program with whom they have ongoing relationships. While that has occurred to a limited degree, some people have simply “discovered” Downtown Community through the “grapevine.” Part of the plan for Downtown Community is to protect people’s anonymity. It was evident in the focus groups that, while they appreciated not being accosted or overwhelmed by investigative conversation, it has come across to some as lacking opportunity for social connection and interaction.

Comments that there were “lots of cliques” or that “no one seems interested in including new people” make it evident that one undesirable effect is a feeling of the lack of fellowship or of being connected to others at the program. One respondent said that she has lowered her expectations that people will talk to her or include other new people.

Another undesirable effect on the attendee is that some felt there was no opportunity to investigate further. This was in direct reference to not knowing about any method of communicating one’s interest in learning more about the SDA church or how to become a member. This failure to offer clear “next steps” may be the basis for low measurable church-growth results from Downtown Community.

Church-Growth Results

While it might seem that this would be a simple part of the evaluation process,

this is not the case. As in the situation with more traditional approaches, it is hard to know to which ministry each baptism should be attributed.

When John or Jane Doe accepted Jesus as his or her personal Savior, what was the causal factor? Ultimately, of course, the Holy Spirit gets all the credit for anyone making this life commitment, but what channel was the pathway to that new believer's heart? Some might have attended a parochial school as children, and the seeds planted by the faithful Christian teacher have finally sprouted and grown fruit! Maybe they remember a Christian Scout leader who planted some seeds of belief. Then there were co-workers, relatives, the person who invited them to Downtown Community, the singer whose presentation of a song touched them, that drama that was so much like their life, and the speaker's message. But it could even get more complicated. Even before becoming a Christian, he or she got curious and began to attend church. Was it the worship or that special Sabbath School class that pushed them over the edge to make a life commitment?

When the evangelistic method of a church is ongoing and relationally oriented, it is more difficult to award credit to a particular program. In fact, it would be unhealthy to tear the church program apart and assign Kingdom growth credit per department. It is a collaborative accomplishment of all the ministries of the church.

While every new decision to surrender one's life to Jesus is the result of the collaborative efforts of the whole church, there is almost always a clear connection to a friend or relative who served as the relational bridge to God. No matter how carefully and well run the ministries and physical plant of a church are, without relational bridges

the long term goals are unattainable. Each member must feel the responsibility for the people with whom they rub shoulders each week.

So, while those who pay for janitorial services so the church looks clean may share some of the “credit” for the baptisms, the vast majority of cause and effect lies with the one who invited the person to church. For Downtown Community to meet its potential for church growth, those who have supported the ministry from a distance must become full participants, regularly inviting the people of their world to Downtown Community.

It is evident then that some confusion exists over the effects of Downtown Community for church growth. To help ascertain some idea of its effectiveness, 32 of the 66 new believers at FHC since Downtown Community’s inception were asked, How influential was Downtown Community in your choosing FHC as your church? On a scale from 1, equaling no effect, to 10, equaling a high effect, the mean response was 6.3. From the new believer’s perspective, it has apparently made a difference in their choosing FHC.

Another number hard to measure would be the inactive SDAs who have been reactivated through this ministry. Since the policy of Downtown Community has been to protect the anonymity of the attendees, it makes identification of reactivated former church attendees very difficult. From a visual check by those who know the worshipping congregation, it is clear that a significant number who attend Downtown Community are not worshipping at FHC morning services.

When one moves from kingdom growth to sheer numerical growth it is clear that the overall program at FHC has attracted people new to the area. While credit certainly cannot be solely attributed to Downtown Community for the upward trend in both membership and giving, it is one of the factors influencing these aspects of church life. Table 1 shows the year-to-year changes from 1992-1997. When Downtown Community began in 1992, the average membership of the church for that year was 600. Five years later in 1997, average membership was 793, an increase of 193. During that same period, annual tithe increased by \$408,450.

TABLE 1

FHC TITHE AND MEMBERSHIP COMPARISONS

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
\$587,621	\$659,341	\$747,838	\$829,472	\$896,395	\$996,071
600	644	693	733	759	793

Note : Membership totals are the four quarterly reports averaged for the year.

A careful comparison was made among five local SDA churches with regard to both incoming and outgoing number of members. This comparison clearly demonstrated that FHC is very effective at attracting new SDAs locating in the area. Transfer growth, as a percentage of membership averaged over a four-year period, was significantly greater than the other area churches and well above the mean for all five churches combined.¹

¹See Appendix D.

TABLE 2

FOUR-YEAR AVERAGES AS PERCENTAGE OF MEMBERSHIP
(1993-1997)

Church	POF	Baptisms	Transfer +	Apostasy	Missing	Transfer -
Florida Hospital	.57	1.55	9.48	.85	.08	4.0
Forest Lake	.21	1.98	6.1	.10	.13	3.33
Kress Memorial	.13	1.93	3.42	.06	0	5.4
Markham Wood	.32	1.35	6.15	.07	0	5.8
Orlando Central	.18	2.44	3.4	.67	2.03	2.3
Mean	.28	1.85	5.71	.35	.45	4.2

Note: POF = Profession of Faith

The story was different when it came to baptisms. Here, FHC fell next to the bottom of the list of comparisons.¹ Why, with an available tool like Downtown Community, would there not be more church growth due to baptisms? Has the relational or process evangelistic model only influenced the internal life of the church? FHC's high transfer growth and low baptismal growth raises questions that will demand further study.

Certainly, there would be ample evidence that Downtown Community has influenced the church's transition from a more formalized, structured, and programmatic church into an informal, less structured, and relational body of believers. In casual surveys not related to this paper, some of the FHC Sabbath School classes have determined that the older members are more theologically attached to the church while

¹Ibid., 118.

the younger members are more relationally enmeshed in the life of the church. This, too, may explain the rapid decline in the mean age of the congregation.

When evaluating Downtown Community regarding church-growth results, it is important to remember that this method is dependent on church members building relationships with unchurched people. Public advertising has been avoided because those who would come from such a medium would not be in a relationship, necessitating the development of a relationship-building ministry to have them connect with existing church members. The problem is that this first step of intentionally building relationships with unchurched people has not happened.

A recent survey¹ of the congregation sought to discover which activities of the church are most beneficial to the attendee and whether there was a correlation between those who had attended FHC one to three years (Group A) and those attending four or more years (Group B). While the statistical analysis demonstrates that there is not a significant correlation between the two groups, there is agreement on the most and least valued.

On a scale where 1 equals the highest benefit and 6 the lowest, the most valued activity was the Sabbath School class with Groups A and B producing a grand mean of 2.38. In comparison, Downtown Community received the least favorable response with a grand mean of 4.29. The evidence indicates that, among FHC members, there is a low sense of need for the Downtown Community type of ministry.

¹See Appendix E for a photocopy of the church opinion survey and statistical analysis.

Why, among the ministries of FHC, is Downtown Community rated as the least beneficial? Although additional study would be required to fully discover the answers to that question, three options are suggested here: Members do not use the tool because they (1) do not believe in the methodology, (2) they have no need of such a tool because they lack relationships with unchurched people, or (3) they do have unchurched friends, but either they are not significantly interested in their salvation or do not believe the tool is an appropriate means to accomplish that salvation.

The results of the survey demonstrate that Downtown Community was not influential in the survey respondents choosing FHC as their home church, and their response was statistically significant at a .01 level. As expected, those who had attended FHC more than four years were not influenced much by Downtown Community in choosing FHC. Group A was influenced slightly more than Group B by Downtown Community, but it is statistically clear that neither group has been significantly influenced to choose FHC as their home church because of the ministry of Downtown Community.¹

Another issue that must be kept in mind when evaluating Downtown Community regarding church growth results is that this type of evangelism is long term and slow. This is exemplified by one long-term attendee who has yet to be baptized but is growing in his relationship with God. He attends church regularly, but has not yet decided to become a member.² As Paulien points out,

¹Tbid., 126.

²We have found that, with many of our long-term attendees, there is a concern about moving from the Christian experience to full membership in the SDA church. As they become acquainted with the larger SDA body, some begin to wonder if they can be

Patience is necessary when working with secular people. The move from a totally secular environment into a traditional Adventist environment is not going to happen in two or three weeks. In my experience it averages about two years. What we are talking about here is long-term commitment, and this may be more appropriate to the elders than to pastors in some circumstances.¹

Message Content

Much time and effort have gone into the selection of topics for presentation at Downtown Community. The constant goal has been to offer a balance between contemporary life issues and the more apologetic or doctrinal themes.

After reviewing the topics for the first four years of Downtown Community,² it appears that the variety has been good and relatively well balanced. The initial series was “In Pursuit of Peace,” dealing with happiness, materialism, status, and selfishness. This was followed by a series on God and what He is like. That has been the regular flow, a more contemporary issues series followed by a more overtly spiritual or theological issues series.

A concerted effort has been made to handle each topic in a biblical manner. This has been especially emphasized when dealing with social issues or more psychological topics. Biblical language, stories, or themes are not always overtly evident to the casual

“good Adventists.” Further study needs to be given to the question of whether there is a higher standard to be a Christian than to be a SDA or visa versa.

¹Paulien, 156.

²See Appendix F for a complete listing of messages.

observer because there is the assumption that the audience, at least the intended audience, is not familiar with the biblical content.

To better clarify the above paragraph, it is important to understand that each speaker seeks to have the Bible inform the presentation. Downtown Community is about helping people understand God's will for them in a contemporary culture. Therefore, the messages must be biblically based, even if the language or topic seems, to the casual observer, to lack biblical foundations.

Recommendations

Recommendations for improvement of Downtown Community fall into five specific areas: (1) Overall Ministry, (2) Leadership Team, (3) Participants, (4) Marketing, and (5) Transitioning Seekers to SDA Believers/Members. In the following sections each of these is considered individually.

Overall Ministry

When someone comes to Downtown Community from another SDA church, he or she is usually impressed with the level of programming excellence. By contrast, those who work with the ministry week in and week out have become aware of being in somewhat of a rut. Currently, this creative ministry has a bit of sameness to it.

The first recommendation, then, would be to invest some additional or redirected time in brainstorming for increased creativity. While attendees should find some comfort in the common elements of the program, efforts must be made to surprise them within those common weekly elements of programming.

The second recommendation may be helpful in accomplishing the first one.

The ministry needs a clearer formalized structure. Responsibility and accountability could then be easily understood and the division of labor might enhance effectiveness.

The structure recommended allows for every participant's input in the overall ministry every two months at a general meeting. The Leadership Team takes the input of the Mission Committee and oversees the ministry which is then broken down into three components: Production (subdivided into performers and technicians), Promotion, and Participation (issues like greeters, activities, classes, etc).¹

This recommended structure will enhance ministry effectiveness in the following ways. First, it will clarify areas of responsibility among the leadership team, and that division of labor will help reduce the risk of burnout. Second, with clear areas of responsibility there should be improved accountability. Third, those participants in Downtown Community will know with whom they should seek counsel for the area in which they serve. This will hopefully reduce miscommunication or the playing of one leadership team member against another in an attempt by the participants to get their way on some ministry decision.

The third recommendation for the overall ministry is that further study be given to ways to make the ministry more relational. Since we believe in the relational model of evangelism and have seen it work in many other faith communities, it is imperative that the overall feel of Downtown Community be more relationally focused.

¹See Appendix G for a flow chart of the recommended structure.

Leadership Team

The Leadership Team needs to continue to serve as both the guiding force behind the ministry and as an accountability group for one another. This unexpected benefit needs to be strengthened and made more intentional.

Many of the assigned duties of this group have been general and shared. As mentioned in the above section on the overall ministry, there will be value added as each team member assumes a more direct responsibility for various aspects of Downtown Community.

It is recommended that the leadership invest a portion of their weekly meeting toward innovation and creativity. This constant return to creativity can enable the ministry to avoid those occasional times of sameness that endanger the ministry's effectiveness. Leadership must also be involved in continual evaluation and further recommendations for this ongoing ministry.

Participants

There are two types of participants: those who help produce the ministry and those who attend. The recommendations from the Lant·Holdsworth Associates materials referenced earlier in this paper, are really recommendations for several areas but are included here because they were generated from the attending participants.

In response to the question, "If you ran Downtown Community, what would you change?" both SDAs and non-SDAs had several recommendations in common. These include more drama, shorter sermons, and follow-up with people. It is evident that part of

any recommendations list must include creation of more intentional opportunity to socialize before and after the program. It is also recommended that thought be given to ways to ensure the preservation of the accepting, non-threatening, non-manipulative style of Downtown Community. In addition, it is recommended that the mission or purpose of Downtown Community be noted in the weekly handout to educate everyone about that mission.

The recommendations with regard to the participants who produce the program is led by insisting that the number of participants producing the ministry must increase. Burnout is a constant risk when each participant carries more responsibility than is healthy for a volunteer to bear. It is recommended that no person involved in any aspect of Downtown Community be assigned responsibility alone; the work must be done in teams of at least two.

Training must be provided for new participants, as well as ongoing refresher instruction for all participants. Participants who become weary with one aspect of the ministry need to know how to easily move to another area that captures their attention.

Finally, participants must understand how essential and valuable they are to the program. Methods of recognition, inclusion in decision making, etc., will help them feel important.

Marketing

Recommendations in the marketing area will have major implications for the future direction of Downtown Community. The implications rest on whether to depart

from the original intention that Downtown Community would be a place and program designed for unchurched friends of FHC members. To seek, through marketing, for people to come to Downtown Community without already being in a relationship with one of our church members would be a departure from that philosophy.

While there is disappointment in the number of people availing themselves of Downtown Community, is it the right strategy to depart from the original method? At the start, it was understood and stated that members would develop relationships of integrity with unchurched people, share a verbal witness, and then at the appropriate opportunity invite these people to Downtown Community.

It has been suggested that, since FHC members have not brought significant numbers of unchurched to Downtown Community, and since there are many unchurched in our community, more aggressive marketing be used to attract unchurched seekers. This may have merit. A non-marketing stance for Downtown Community could be perceived as exclusive, as if only seekers who have a relationship with a FHC member are valued, rather than an openness that welcomes all seekers regardless of relationship connections.

Some of the leadership team and participants believe it is time to bypass FHC members and, via marketing, recruit a new core of attendees. It is believed that these new recruits, drawn to Downtown Community through marketing, will have more relationships with the original target market than do the members of FHC. Once Downtown Community has influenced these new recruits, they will, in turn, practice the first three of the Seven-Step Strategy and draw their friends into the ministry.

Part of my hesitancy to move in this direction, to go directly after the seekers in our community via marketing, is concern for those who might attend. If people come seeking a connection with God and with others, there may be some serious disappointment with the latter due to the same self-absorption that currently blocks attendees from bringing people to Downtown Community.

It is important to recognize that to aggressively market to those outside of our relational framework will necessitate the development of ministries affiliated with Downtown Community to build or draw newcomers into fellowship. Originally, FHC members were to mingle and build relationships with the unchurched away from Downtown Community. If more aggressive marketing is undertaken, mingling and relationship building will be demanded as an integral component of Downtown Community itself.

Therefore, it is recommended that, prior to marketing Downtown Community to the public, a host of ministries be developed to include others in a relational way. The following are some suggestions for the kind of activities recommended: social functions, group projects for the community, refreshments served before and/or after Downtown Community, and extension of the Whole Life Groups¹ into the ministry.

¹Whole Life Groups (WLG) is a new ministry beginning at FHC. Instead of "Small Groups" which have primarily focused on Bible study and fellowship, WLG range in interest from sports to Bible study, and from service to drama. The theory is that, as members get to know one another over a common interest, with the help of the group leader the group will broaden from a narrow shared interest to caring about one another's whole life. Downtown Community newcomers could be easily assimilated into WLG.

To resort solely to a marketing, handbill, direct mail, or media advertising campaign risks compromise of a relational model of evangelism. It resorts to attempting to attract person “X” with whom we have no relationship. Thus, while there is need to “market” Downtown Community better, it will be imperative that all marketing strategies find some harmony with the biblical basis for a relational model of evangelism.

It is therefore recommended that the marketing aspect have two simultaneous but distinct approaches. First, a whole new educational program is needed for the members of FHC. While this would include emphasis upon the Seven-Step Strategy, more is recommended. “How To” classes would be developed for each of the Seven-Step Strategies, and the church leadership would aggressively seek to have members involved in the steps of worship, group life, spiritual gifts, and stewardship prior to pushing for step 1 of building relationships with the unchurched. Once members were trained and personally involved in steps 4 through 7, the expectations would then be raised for implementing steps 1 through 3. These seven steps must become an integral part of the life of our congregation.

This first recommendation for marketing suggests that, to accomplish the intent of Downtown Community, a much larger foundation and structure must be built. The development of an educational program for members of FHC recognizes that these individuals cannot be expected to be involved in a relational type of evangelism prior to understanding their own giftedness or before belonging to a group that will support them in their ministry. Therefore, the implementation of Whole Life Groups for FHC members

and other ministries that enable members to grow spiritually and feel supported by one another will, in the long term, strengthen Downtown Community.

Although there is energy and time being invested in bringing the church toward this type of ministry, the second marketing approach would utilize standard marketing techniques to increase attendance. This can be accomplished on three fronts without compromising the integrity of a relational model.

First, the SDA community at large must be made aware of Downtown Community and how it can assist them in their evangelistic outreach. Every week a program is designed for their secular friends who are searching for more. This can be done by a major story in the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' monthly magazine that is sent to every member. In addition, a short video will be produced that introduces the ministry of Downtown Community.

The second effort is a direct mail campaign to former SDAs. While there may be no active relationship, there is a passive relationship with these "unchurched" due to some shared history. As they respond to and attend Downtown Community, another set of recommendations will be precipitated.

Third, the video tapes of our weekly program will be aired on the in-house television channel at Florida Hospital. This major SDA institution is just across the street, and many patients, patient families, and employees could easily make a connection with our church because of the impact of the healing ministry of Christ or their employment in that institution.

A fourth marketing strategy will eventually be to market to the public. This can be added to the overall marketing strategy once there are sufficient structures in place to establish relationships with those who may come “alone” to Downtown Community. All public marketing will need to be done in a way that supports the relational model of a seeker-driven ministry. Whereas attempts to reach person “X” seeker may not perfectly fit the original intent of Downtown Community, the ministry cannot ignore those who, outside of a relationship with a FHC member, are seeking what Downtown Community has to offer.

Transitioning Seekers to SDA Believers/Members

It was evident in the earlier evaluation of Downtown Community’s effectiveness in producing church-growth results that this area would demand some recommendations. Certainly it is the desire of those involved in making Downtown Community a reality that attendees become believers, continue to grow, and hopefully choose to join the SDA church.

To accomplish more church growth, it is recommended that the leadership team develop an intentional strategy to assist people in moving along such a course of action. This plan is to be developed with a clear understanding that timing, conviction, and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit. The plan will respect an individual’s freedom of choice and will in no way even hint at any coercive or manipulative tactics.

It is recommended that this plan include the following components. On the newly designed bulletins, a place should be provided where attendees can share information.

This would allow them to request more information about a subject, sign up for an upcoming class, order tapes of the service, etc.

Currently there is an ongoing class called Fundamentals of Faith that acquaints class members with SDA teachings in the context of the larger body of Christ. In other words, this class not only teaches the unique aspects of SDA beliefs, but also covers in detail the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

It is recommended that additional classes be offered. These could be on more specific issues such as parenting, family finance, dealing with divorce or any general life loss, and many others as needs present themselves. Classes would also allow attendees to have the opportunity to get better acquainted with one another and with church members.

More social events are recommended to serve as bridge builders. Social connections would help raise comfort levels in the attendees and increase the inclination toward membership. An example of this bridge building would be refreshment times following Downtown Community.

The paths to Christianity and to SDA membership are slow paths at Downtown Community. The expectation is that each person will both need and take a lengthy time in coming to a decision for Christ and even longer to join the SDA church. While this fits the philosophies and methodologies surrounding Downtown Community, it is recommended that a faster path be developed for the occasional person who is more comfortable moving quickly. This might simply be the option for one-on-one work with that type of person. Such work should be done in a manner that does not compromise the reasoning behind a slower process type of work to connect people with God.

This slower pace creates additional issues with which we must wrestle.

Thoughtful SDAs today at FHC struggle with questions regarding the timing and meaning of baptism. What is the difference between Christian baptism and being voted into membership of a denomination? These are separate events, but could or should they be pushed further apart? This subject is important because, in the slower path of process evangelism, attendees may, after months of attendance, decide to give their lives to Christ; however, they may not be at a growth point where they are ready to be SDA members. This poses the problem of what to do with them. They are committed to Jesus, they have come to a point of major surrender to Him, but the Spirit has not yet convicted them on all SDA practices or beliefs. Can there be acceptance and even encouragement for these new Christians to fellowship with the SDA church while the church waits for the Spirit to convict them to be of the same mind on all the points of a denomination?¹ More research and discussion must take place on this important issue.

A consistent theme among the leadership of Downtown Community is what a joy the ministry would be if that were all we did. Staffing is an issue. While a third-time program director is employed, the others on the leadership team have more than full-time responsibilities for other ministries. Can Downtown Community flourish and grow to what God intends without more staffing? If it is impossible to hire more staff, how can Downtown Community be better structured to utilize more volunteers? While constantly

¹FHC has been wrestling with this issue for some time. The most recent church directory is titled "Members and Friends of FHC" so that attendees who are not members can feel a sense of belonging.

pushed to the back burner, it is recommended that study be given for development of better staffing and volunteer management.

The challenge of Downtown Community is to continue submitting to regular evaluation and recommendations. Downtown Community should not assume to have an eternal life now that it has begun. It is only a methodology and may, at some future date, need to be laid to rest in order to embrace a more effective ministry. Until then, it is recommended that the ministry continue to move forward, adapting as necessary to share the gospel with a contemporary culture.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapter Overview

This concluding chapter is intended to be a help for anyone wishing to start such a ministry as Downtown Community. There is no need for those wishing to move toward this model to repeat mistakes or fail to learn from those who have gone before. While each ministry will have a certain uniqueness to it, there may be more similarities than are noticeable at the first consideration. Five suggestions are shared here that may assist in easing the trauma associated with the start-up of this type of ministry.

Following this counsel are implications for three areas. First are some reflections on the personal implications. Second are implications for the ministry of Downtown Community. Then third, the chapter ends with a summary of the implications for the North American SDA Church.

Counsel to Those Wishing to Implement This Model

The implementation of any ministry, especially a new model for ministry, demands vision-casting to the point that there is a clear and shared vision. It is imperative that this vision first be clear to the leader. However, solo clarity is insufficient; it must be shared. Any ministry vision can too easily be owned by only one

or two people, but for success it must find a resonance with larger groups of the membership until it is part of the congregation's¹ shared vision.

To accomplish the shared vision stage of development, it is crucial for the leader to have or catch a vision for lost people that will undergird the ministry. A ministry such as Downtown Community is not just a program complete in itself. Instead, it is only one step in the "Seven-Step Strategy" to move people from being lost to becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Without sharing the overall vision of a ministry, there is a risk of perceiving any one element as complete in itself.

The task of the leader to have his or her vision become a shared vision can be a time-consuming and slow process. Begin with a small group of select people. These will likely be people who you already believe resonate with your vision. It is this core that will give support to one another and help keep the vision alive during its infancy. It is important to move quickly to include more of the church leadership as early in the process as possible. This challenge will be easier where there is an atmosphere of openness to new ideas and more difficult in those churches that naturally resist change. It is also important to seek a good mix of people from the congregation who, when fully franchised in the idea, can assist in countering the negative members and in selling the ministry concept to the larger body.

¹*Congregation* here refers to an actual organized congregation. It is indicative of a larger portion of the body of Christ than just several visionaries. Wherever there is an attempt at such ministry, there needs to be a thorough adoption of the ministry vision by that larger group. This is not a vision that can be accomplished by a very small core.

While this paper is about a complete, weekly seeker service, it is crucial that careful evaluation be made as to what is best and most realistic in each area. There are multiple options for ministry to reach unchurched people. In areas where it is possible, the tool of a ministry such as Downtown Community can offer the advantage of an ongoing public program opportunity. There may, however, be limiting factors that make such an outreach impossible. In those cases, and even in instances where it is feasible, careful study should be given to a variety of existing options, as well as brainstorming of new ideas and models that the Holy Spirit may wish to initiate.

As the vision becomes the church's, and with a definite ministry in mind, it is important to begin to develop and train people for leadership and to form ministry teams. Success will be more likely if people share responsibility in teams rather than feeling the burden of responsibility all on their own. It is also in these teams that another level of internal ministry can take place.

Leadership will be needed for every facet. A ministry like Downtown Community would include areas such as: speaking, drama, music, lighting, greeting, social follow-up, programming in general, sound, special props, finance, program printing, congregation singers, classes for serious seekers, and more. In order to develop this leadership, the core team of initial leaders will need to train and develop leadership for each of the individual ministry aspects.

This training aspect should not be allowed to overwhelm anyone. Training is simply telling people what you want them to do and how you want them to do it, follow up with the trainees after they have completed their assignment, review both positives and

negatives, and give regular feedback. While each participant is allowed to continue in their role with periodic review, it is also important to recognize their contribution to the overall ministry.

Once the vision is shared by the larger body, a variety of ministry options has been considered, an option has been chosen, and leadership and ministry teams have been developed, then at some point the ministry must be started. It is important to attempt to have everything ready prior to initiating the new ministry, but you cannot wait until everything is perfect. History indicates that it is rare for a ministry to feel ready for its initiation, but at some point you must start.

With the program up and operational, there will be many areas of constant adjustment. Incorporate into the program regular opportunities for evaluation and input from both those involved in “producing” the ministry and from those who take advantage of their efforts. Constant evaluation will help catch problems in the early stages and avoid major mishaps.

The evaluation should cover several areas. First, how successful is it in accomplishing the intended mission? As consideration is given to this area, adjustments may need to be made both to the ministry and to the vision. Leadership must be open to the Holy Spirit’s direction and redirection of both the vision and the ministry of the church. Second, how are the various elements working from a programmatic viewpoint? Are the structure and flow of the ministry working well, and what can be done to move them toward greater excellence? Third, how are those involved being affected? Are people being worn out? What is the level of enthusiasm for the ministry? Is the way we

are operating teaching the same message we are verbally communicating? Is it evident that people are more important than programs or vice-a-versa?

In review, the five words of counsel are: (1) create a shared vision, (2) consider multiple options to meet the vision, (3) develop and train leadership and ministry teams, (4) initiate the ministry, and (5) constantly evaluate to move to greater excellence. These five guidelines can help protect those who adopt this ministry style and can assist them in developing a ministry of excellence.

Personal Implications

Careful consideration of Downtown Community has increased my bias toward those methods of evangelism that are relational and are part of the ongoing process of the church. More than ever before, I am convinced that true success in evangelism will come only as Jesus' model is followed:

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."¹

In that same vein of thought, this writing has made me more disheartened by both my own and the church members' lack of involvement in the lives of unchurched people. A glaring implication for me is that, to be authentic in this ministry, I must increase my intentional interaction and friendship-building with the unchurched.

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 143.

In relationship to Downtown Community programmatically and as a ministry of FHC, there are serious implications for me as the leader of both. There must be a more significant and intentional educational program implemented for the members of the church in regard to Downtown Community. It is evident that I have made too many assumptions regarding the membership's understanding and support of the vision of Downtown Community. Therefore, I must go back and repeatedly re-vision this ministry.

An additional personal implication of this process is that I must learn to better coalesce people different from myself, who can counterbalance my weaknesses. I tend toward the broad brush-stroke perspective and therefore need more "detail" people involved in each undertaking. Incorporating people different from myself will include opening myself up to ideas about marketing to the public, and not needlessly limiting the audience of Downtown Community to friends of FHC members.

The final personal implication is that I need to take more risks in ministry. Having completed this evaluation and recommendations for the future of Downtown Community, it is important that I continue to lobby for this and other new methods that arise. With the bulk of denominational resources being expended on the traditional evangelistic approach, it is important that efforts be made for support of new methods. The implication is that I will need to speak out to attempt redistribution of the evangelistic dollars.

Implications for Downtown Community

The suggestions for the ministry from the evaluation section simply need to be implemented. Implementing the recommended changes will both strengthen the ministry

of Downtown Community and protect it from continuation beyond its usefulness. With ongoing evaluation and the implementation of ministry changes, it could remain an effective approach for a longer period of time.

Adjustments in the ministry programmatically and in reference to its target market will not be easy transitions for Downtown Community. There will be the inevitable pain of growth and change, and Downtown Community must be prepared to pass through those growth points to avoid getting into ruts that lead to mediocrity. This spills over into an implication for FHC in three areas. First, the congregation must be open to innovation and continual development of the ministry. Second, there must be a willingness to properly resource the ministry to assure continued effectiveness. Third, study must be given to ways of increasing the evangelistic fervor among the FHC members so they have an interest in both getting to know the unchurched and to see those friends become part of the kingdom of God.

Implications for the North American SDA Church

The North American SDA Church is growing, but it is doing so most slowly among the Caucasian population. Combined with this issue is the fact that the vast majority of public evangelism is targeted toward evangelical Christians. This becomes a serious concern since that market is shrinking. Secularism, Eastern religions, the New Age movement, materialism, occultism, and other forces have infiltrated our “post-Christian nation,” and if Christians in general and SDAs in particular are going to make

an impact, methods must be developed to reach these increasingly larger sectors of our society.

The seeker-driven model is not “the” answer; no method is, but the seeker-driven model is a method that deserves serious consideration. The North American SDA Church is desperate for innovation, and the seeker-driven, relationship-based method offers a better way.

The very fact that this model has met with tremendous success in North America outside of the SDA church should compel us to give it serious consideration. The SDA church in North America is at risk if it fails to seriously explore new models for evangelism that connect with this generation, and Downtown Community is just such a model.

There is resistance in some minds due to the contemporary nature of the program; it is so different from church. However, it must be realized that evangelism for the public has always been very different than church. Multiple screens, better than average music, different songs than are generally used in the worship service, chalk drawings, movies, slides, and persuasive preaching can all vary considerably from regular church. The excuse that it is too contemporary cannot be allowed to squelch this methodology. Surely the gospel, as ancient as eternity, is still contemporary in every generation unless the church chooses to make it antique.

This method is soundly based in Scripture, modeled by Jesus, and supported in the writings of Ellen White. In fact, philosophically it may be the best model to

accomplish reaching people the Jesus way—building friendships, meeting needs, winning confidence, and then inviting people to follow and commit their lives to Jesus Christ.

The seeker-driven model has met with great success outside of Adventism and has experienced a degree of effectiveness in Downtown Community. The North American SDA Church should, therefore, in seeking to reach this generation with the everlasting gospel, be compelled to give serious consideration and support for adoption of this model for evangelism.

APPENDIX A
DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY WORKSHEET

**** Singers Janet, Sarah, and Mauri go up at this time with Andy - get mics on piano on right - enter extreme right - and stand on lines during welcome, announcements and focus. Move up to XXX's as intro to "MY ONLY HOPE IS YOU" is being played.**

Lighting:	Sanctuary -	House lights 50%			
		Stage lights 100%			
			Janet	Sarah	Mauri
			_____	_____	_____
Audio:	Andy McDonald - 1 Wireless mic				
	Janet: _____		X	X	X
	Sarah: _____				
	Mauri: _____				

**** Musicians prepare for congregational.**

CONGREGATIONAL "My Only Hope"

Lighting: Sanctuary - House lights 50%
Stage lights 100%

Vocals: Andy McDonald - lead
Janet Nelson
Sarah Wickham
Mauri Lang

**** Singers step up XXX's as intro is being played.**

Audio: Need 4 Microphones

Musicians: Joyce Phelps - Kurzweil Mark Bond - Guitar
Larry Culey - Piano Chris Lang - Bass Guitar

**** After Congregational, Chris goes to front row seat left side.**

OFFERTORY "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

**** Andy will call for the offering.**

Lighting: Sanctuary - House lights 50%
Stage lights 100%

**** Andy exits front and gives lapel mic to Mike.**

**** After Andy calls for offering, singers exit stage right, place mics on piano and take seats.**

Musicians: Larry Culey - Piano & T-1

***** LIGHTS BLACKOUT *****
5 SECONDS

***** Musicians get in place for "Busy Man" - stay in place during drama so are ready to go.**

DRAMA **“The Broad Jump”**
Denise Badger, Fred Armstrong

**** Denise & Fred enter stage right. Lights come on when Denise & Fred are in place.**

Lighting: Sanctuary - House lights off
Stage lights 100%

Audio: 2 Wireless mic

LAST LINE OF SKIT:

Coach: “That’s more like it—okay—take a deep breath and let’s get back to work—You’ve got a long way to go.”

Denise: Lets out a long sigh.

***** LIGHTS BLACKOUT *****
5 SECONDS

**** During blackout, Chris enters stage left and stands on X in center. Mic will be handed to you as you go up.**

**** Denise & Fred exit stage right & sit down in reserved seats front right.**

SPECIAL **“Busy Man”**

Lighting: Sanctuary - Indirect cove lights 75%
Stage lights 100%
Wing lights 40%

Singers: Chris Lang - Solo/Lead
Mark Bond - Background Vocal
Larry Culey - Background Vocal

Musicians: Mark Bond - Guitar/T-1 and Synth.
Larry Culey - Piano

Audio: Need 3 Microphones

**** After song Chris exits on left and hands mic to stage person on left and takes seat on front left reserved.**

**** Musicians LEAVE INSTRUMENTS SET for last song “I’ll Give You Peace”, and take your seats in folding chairs behind instruments.**

**** PEACE - spots on - left mic cord moved if necessary for Conna to stand by piano.**

**** Pulpit - Put in place on center X.**

MESSAGE Mike Fulbright

Lighting: Sanctuary - Indirect cove lights 100%
 Stage lights 100%
 Wing lights 50%

Audio: 1 Wireless mic

**** Follow last page of sermon to know when to get in place for special music.**

**** Musicians begin intro to "I'll Give You Peace" - Mauri and Conna will come up as intro is played.**

SPECIAL MUSIC "I'll Give You Peace"

Lighting: Sanctuary - Indirect cove lights 100%
 Stage lights 100%
 Wing lights 50%

Singers: Conna Bond - Receives mic from left stage crew and stands by piano
 Mauri Lang - Get mic from piano and enters stage right. Stand on middle X.
 Joyce Phelps - Backup
 Larry Culey - Backup

Muscians: Joyce Phelps - Piano
 Mark Bond - Guitar, Drum Machine
 Larry Culey - Kurzweil/JV880

Audio: Need 2 Microphones

**** After song Mauri steps back while Mike stands center floor level to offer prayer. Conna remains standing by piano.**

PRAYER Mike Fulbright

Lighting: Sanctuary - Indirect cove lights 100%
 Stage lights 100%
 Wing lights 50%

Musicians: Continuing Special Music

****EVERYONE MEET IN GREENLAW'S ROOM FOR A FEW MINUTES AFTER PROGRAM AT 7:45****

APPENDIX B

SURVEYS OF DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Survey of Downtown Community Leadership

Name

Patty Wofer

What effect has DC had in your life?

DC has given me an outlet to do Ministry in a non traditional way - It has brought more meaning to my relationship with God & to the church and the people in the church - (Also, I get no Sabbath AM naps) It has also given me a small group to be a part of.

Has it changed you? If so in what way?

Yes, It has helped to broaden my tolerance & appreciation of all sorts of different gifts & personality types. It has helped me recognize AGAIN that we are all at different places in our relationship with God & that EVERYONE can have a ministry & is

If you could go back and start over what would you do differently?

Be a better spiritual leader, - Build Teams, involve more people, train more people to do leadership things, Encourage more people to have input, develop (intentionally) small groups

Would you do it again? Explain why or why not.

Yes, It has been a satisfying & most often energizing ministry - It has ~~been~~ also been the most intentional, authentic, ~~the~~

major will be given in authenticity of my church.

Survey of Downtown Community Leadership Name Stan Jolikus

What effect has DC had in your life? Absolute breath of Fresh air
compared to the old model of evangelism which
had a very poor retention rate. DC is the
most exciting aspect of my current ministry.
It is relevant, it is contemporary, it is
real life and it works for my generation.

Has it changed you? If so in what way? Yes, I have seen the
potential of program to reach a tough culture.
The program still needs to be improved and
must evolve continually but it has had an impact.
I will never look at the old way of evangelism the same.

If you could go back and start over what would you do differently? I have only
been here the last 8 months so I have just
seen the results of 4 years of hard work. I
would not change much, my only desire would
be to have been a part of it from the beginning.

Would you do it again? Explain why or why not. Absolutely without
question. In some ways the process is more
important than the product. DC has a large
number of people involved on a weekly basis in
ministry. Not only does the audience benefit so
does everyone involved. Instead of just sitting
back and complaining these people are willing to
try and do something.

Survey of Downtown Community Leadership

Name Bill CroftonWhat effect has DC had in your life? Added morework ... Added joy from
watching people share their gifts
in a safe environment.

Has it changed you? If so in what way? _____

GREATER appreciation of
God's grace. Caused
a reasonable degree of tension
in my life

If you could go back and start over what would you do differently? _____

Not much - realistically
EDBALLY. Have 50% of
church buying the philosophy &
start from scratch

Would you do it again? Explain why or why not. _____

Absolutely !!The journey & learning
has been invaluable -Most importantly - My Small
Leadership Team That meets
weekly ... Great experience
& challenge.

Survey of Downtown Community Leadership

Name JEFF CINQUEMANIWhat effect has DC had in your life? IN REVIEW IT HAS PROVIDED

A FAIR AMOUNT OF STRESS AND HAS PROBABLY TAKEN
A NUMBER OF EVENINGS AWAY FROM MY, WOULD BE, EVENTLESS
SATURDAY NIGHTS. HOWEVER, I HAVE GROWN PERSONALLY
AND PROFESSIONALLY IN WORKING ON ISSUES AND MEETING

WITH INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS ON VARIOUS LIFE ISSUES. MY WHOLE
FAMILY HAS GROWN IN THE ASPECT OF MAKING PERSONAL SACRIFICES FOR THE
 Has it changed you? If so in what way? _____

SPIRITUAL
DEVELOPMENT
OF OTHERS

MY OUTLOOK OF OTHERS AND HOW THEY PROCESS BIBLICAL
TRUTH. I HAVE BECOME LESS ASSUMING OF OTHERS
AND MY ORIENTATION TOWARDS CHRIST AND

HIS ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS AT LEVELS OTHER THAN MINE
I BELIEVE IS HEALTHIER

If you could go back and start over what would you do differently? _____

BECOME MORE TARGETED ON GOALS - AND MORE
INTENTIONAL ON LOOKING AT WHAT IS WORKING AND
GO WITH THAT. I BELIEVE WE MISSED AREAS

THAT STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS - (EVEN THOUGH THAT IS ASIDE FROM
THE PROG. ITSELF)

Would you do it again? Explain why or why not. YES, I STILL

BELIEVE THAT THIS ALOT MORE NATURAL &
CHRISTLIKE IN IT'S APPROACH TO ALLOWING
OTHERS TO SEEK AND FIND CHRIST IN A
TIME FRAME THAT IS SPIRIT LEAD & NOT EVENT DRIVEN.

APPENDIX C
FOCUS GROUPS

Florida Hospital SDA Church

Downtown Community

Focus Group Process

April 5, 1997

Purpose & Objectives

Florida Hospital SDA Church has embarked upon a deliberate reevaluation of the processes and effectiveness of its Downtown Community (DC) program. As part of this endeavor, the church and individuals leading DC have determined to use focus groups to:

Gauge attendee desires and needs regarding future program development.

Determine how to market DC to build attendance.

Define program elements which need changed to enhance the DC worship experience.

Define program elements to enhance learning about Christianity and Adventism.

Process

Two focus groups will be conducted, one for SDA attendees, the other for non-SDA's. SDA's are defined as people who were previously members of the SDA Church, or exposed to its teachings. Non-SDA's are defined as people who before coming to DC had a non-religious or non-SDA Christian background.

Each focus group will experience similar group structure and questions regarding DC. The focus groups will be about 1.5 hours in duration. The sessions will be held April 5 and April 12 from 5:00pm to 6:30pm. Both group sessions will have:

A facilitator

A person taking notes and managing the session taping.

Refreshments such as sodas, water, cookies & fruit.

At the end of each session, a report will be prepared that summarizes its results and presenting recommendations to benefit DC based on the findings. The reports will be presented to pastoral staff and the DC marketing and steering committees.

Questions

Questions will be structured to follow the DC fellowship experience and will be open to individual response and interpretation. The following are proposed questions for these sessions. The questions will cover the following topics:

- 1) Should the time DC is scheduled remain the same or be different during the year?
- 2) Is the FH SDA Church the best place for DC to be experienced or conducted?
- 3) Is the parking at FH SDA Church adequate? Where do you usually park?
- 4) Is it easy to get into the church? Do you have any problems getting in?

For those of you who need child care tell me about the experience of:

- Location?
- Having the right people to care for your children?
- Program adequacy?
- Availability?

What is it like to meet a greeter? Are they:

- Friendly?
- Direct you where you need to go?
- Make you glad you are at DC?
- Give you a program?

The programs that you are given at the door are they:

- Attractive?
- Give you information you use or need about the program?
- Help you be better prepared to worship?

- 8) When you come in to the meeting are their seats available? Are they comfortable?
Can you see the people involved from where you sit?
- 8) Often the lighting changes in DC. Should it remain constant? Can you see OK when its not up? Can you read your program?
- 9) Is the room temperature in DC usually hot, cold or comfortable? Does it distract you from your worship experience?
- 10) Music is often played live or from CD or tape before DC begins at 6:30.
- 11) The first part of the program is the welcome. Is there anything you would change about it or would communicate differently?
- 12) DC takes a voluntary offering at the beginning of worship. Should this be done differently? How? Should it be voluntary?
- 13) Often one or two songs are sung by the people with the band and song leaders. How do these songs affect your worship experience or learning about Jesus? Should there be more or fewer? Quieter or more joyful? Softer music or rowdier? Are there any musicians or instruments you would add or take out?

14) DC often has a drama. How do these dramas affect worship or learning about Jesus? Are they too long, too short, impacting your life? Make listening to the talk that comes later better?

15) DC has a special segment called Focus. Does this segment help you think about better about the talk the preacher gives? Does it add to how you learn and feel about DC? Why or why not?

16) Almost every week DC has a special song before the preacher. Do these songs help your worship or learning experience? Do they relate to the talk? Do you like the style of music?

17) Sermon - presenters, content, pertinence to life, learning, spiritual growth and appropriate topics.

18) How does the final song that is sung – usually sung by the musicians – how does that affect your worship experience?

19) There is usually a closing prayer at the end of DC. How does this prayer affect your worship or learning about God.

20) Socializing after DC in the church.

21) Socializing after DC outside the church.

22) Socializing in church fellowship room.

THE REALLY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS!!!!

23) How did you learn about DC?

24) Why did you want to attend?

25) What about DC keeps you wanting to attend?

26) If you ran DC what would you change:

- in programming
- people involved

27) If you have a favorite DC you remember, what made it different than others?

28) Is your attending DC helping and changing how you deal with life?

29) Is your attending DC changing how you see God? How & why?

30) Do you invite friends or neighbors to DC? Why are you comfortable or uncomfortable inviting them?

31) If the church were to advertise DC to the community, what should be different before you would invite other people to come?

Downtown Community Focus Groups Results Florida Hospital SDA Church

Confidential

April 21, 1997

Purpose & Objectives

Purpose:

Assess Downtown Community's (DC's) effectiveness as an outreach program and means of evangelistic ministry.
Discover reasons for declining attendance.

Objectives:

Gauge attendee desires and needs regarding future program development.
Determine how to market DC to build attendance.
Define program elements which need changed to enhance DC's worship experience.
Define program elements to enhance learning about Christianity and Adventism.

Methodology

Methodology:

Focus group invitees were identified by the following:

SDA or Non-SDA

SDA's were identified as current or previous members of the SDA Church.

Non-SDA's were identified as individuals who were non-Christians or had no exposure to SDA's before attending DC.

Group session elements:

Sessions were held at the same time (4:30pm to 6:15pm) on consecutive Saturdays.

Sessions addressed the same question categories and specific questions.

Sessions were conducted by the same facilitator and the same two people recording notes and monitoring session taping.

Both sessions were provided refreshments.

Room design and temperature was consistent for both sessions

Questions

Questions:

Attendees were asked to address the following question categories:

Timing and location

Support elements - parking, greeters, programs, child care, temperature, seating, lighting.

Preliminary program elements - introductory music, welcome, offering.

Music - timing, styles, instruments, group, congregational, and solos.

Drama - style, timing, length, presenters, impact.

Focus - introduction of the topic.

Preaching/teaching - presenters, content, style, length, pertinence to life, learning/teaching, spiritual growth, topics.

Prayer - Length, timing, relevance.

Post Program Elements - Socializing after DC in church, lobby, outside the church.

Life impact - relevance, addressing life questions, perception of God, desire to invite others and advertising and marketing.

Attendee Demographics

Focus group one - SDA:

Gender: Males - 3 Females - 3

Race: Caucasian - 4, Hispanic - 1, Caribbean - 1

Age: Range - 17 to 48, Average - 31

Average time attending DC: 2.5 years

Focus group two - Non-SDA:

Gender: Males - 4 Females - 3

Race: Caucasian - 7
 Age: Range - 15 to 50, Average - 36
 Average time attending DC: 1.75 years

Timing and Location

Group One Results - SDA:

Location:

Convenient, good facilities, comfortable.

Timing:

General consensus that timing is adequate, no changes to be consistent.

A minority suggested consideration be given to varying time to match sundown.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Location:

Convenient, good facilities, central location, non-threatening.

Timing:

General consensus that timing is great. Not too early. Still enough time to do stuff Saturday night. Minority suggestion to do it at 6:00 pm.

Parking and Child Care

Group One Results - SDA:

Parking:

Adequate on street, in dirt lot across street or church lot.

Child Care:

Kids are bored. Not enough activities. Inconsistent coverage. Nothing to do for kids over age 8 to 13. Some people will not attend because of inadequate child care/programming.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Parking:

Adequate on street, in dirt lot across street or church lot.

Child Care:

No issue, no children needing care by group members.

Greeters, Seating, Temperature, and Lighting

Group One Results - SDA:

Greeters: Inadequate coverage, need to provide bulletins, need to be identified, need to be able to direct and answer questions, warm greetings - no pressure.

Seating: Comfortable - no problems.

Temperature: Too cold for some - they learn to bring sweaters or long sleeves. Cold is better than falling asleep.

Lighting: Good, helps to create anticipation of change, breaks segments, creates the right "mood".

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Greeters: A non-event, function - no warmth, socializing - not focused on greeting, didn't know we had them - no name tags. Greeters should look more professional and available. Programs are sometimes available - very important and helpful to follow the service. Programs need to be attractive, provide more info, mission and response to program.

Greeters, Seating, Temperature, and Lighting cont'd

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Seating: Comfortable - no problems. Would like the opportunity to stand up more and participate - it gives us a chance to move a bit.

Temperature: Generally cold, people bring sweaters and are fine.

Lighting: Used very effectively, sets the tone of the program, creates breaks in program. Need to be turned up and left on so people are encouraged to socialize at the end of the program. When lights are turned down or off at the end of DC, people feel they should leave, not enough time for them to make new relationships.

Music

Group One Results - SDA:

General Comments: Some music not Christian, doesn't invite the Holy Spirit, not good for vespers. Jazzing up old hymns OK, shouldn't play rock music ie Beatles, etc. Music should meet the audience. (youngest group members would like livelier, more upbeat music.)

Pre-Program: Like to hear the last practice before the program or recorded music that set the tone for DC.

Special music: Usually ties well to program, can't always understand lyrics clearly, lots of variety, most songs are not repeated, songs sung at the end should be sensitive to the program message to determine style, type etc. such as mellow vs. upbeat. Lots of variety in style is great.

Congregational music: Audience participation is important, good songs, mix of fast and slow, some songs are repeated over and over - need more variety for congregational singing. Group would like more congregational singing - two or three more songs.

Post-Program: Like to hear musicians play more or recorded music after the program to encourage people to stay to socialize, carry the mood or blessing into the evening. Like it more upbeat.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

General Comments: Mostly agree music is excellent whether live or recorded. Look forward to the music every week. Musician talent is impressive, music played is not what we expect in church - a great change. Like the upbeat music. Could use more. Music content and style usually works well with the program. Younger musicians bring the right mood to the music.

Upbeat means good percussion, acoustic guitar, electric guitars, electric bass, strong rhythm, beat, makes you want to move especially the jazz, lyrics that fit the topic and are meaningful.

Pre-Program: Like to listen to music before DC. Sets mood.

Special music: Good

Congregational music: Would like to sing more - maybe at the end as well instead of special music. Some songs sung too much. Usually lots of variety.

Post-Program: Music played after the program - when musicians "cut loose" is sometimes better than what is in the program.

Welcome, Offering, Drama and Focus

Group One Results - SDA:

Welcome: An essential part of DC. Could be more varied but information shared is important.

Offering: Good to present as optional - no pressure.

Drama: Are very good. Perks you up and get your attention making you ready for what the preacher discusses later. Usually ties together well. Props are usually good and add to the program/drama.

Focus: Helps break up program - sometimes as valuable as the sermon to make you think about the topic being presented. Interesting.

Welcome, Offering, Drama and Focus cont'd

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Welcome: Essential to program flow. Information helpful, especially to new attendees.

Offering: Effective to suggest to people give if they want to give, leaves them with the choice to support. Might be more offering if taken at the end of DC. Some people leery of churches asking for money. No pressure the best approach. General concept - lots of value for your offering money.

Drama: Dramas are great and would prefer to have them every week. Drives home the speakers message. Keeps the program in focus. Lots of value. Regularly adds laughter to worship - really important. Hardly ever remember a repeat drama. Really helps make it worth while.

Focus: Information on what is coming next - what to expect. Breaks up program in a positive way - creates variety. Hate them when they are too church like. Would like to have more announcements of coming series, other things to do at the church.

Sermons

Group One Results - SDA:

More gospel presented.

Want substance more than entertainment.

Topic selection good, would like more on prayer.

Sometimes put you to sleep, good topic but lousy presentation.

Presentation style has lots of variety.

Some speakers are not suitable for DC.

Sometimes hard to hear or understand. More volume might help.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Content generally good but don't like "fire and brimstone" sermons that use guilt and fear to motivate - the reason why some don't go to church.

Content sometimes concerns - when God or Christ aren't mentioned in some presentations.

Some presentations - didn't have a clue what the preacher was talking about - no point from beginning to end.

Variety of style is helpful and enjoyable.

Get rid of suits and ties - feels like presenter is better than us and is speaking from a pedestal.

Presenters passion for what they speak on and their willingness to share life experience makes what they say more meaningful.

Some presenters are not suitable for DC based on style, content or personality. Others not speaking are missed.

More new presenters either SDA or non-SDA could be invited to speak.

More women speakers would be helpful.

Closing Prayer

Group One Results - SDA:

People appreciate prayer at beginning and end of the programs.

Some people are struggling with personal prayer - need others to pray for them.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Not a major issue.

Prayer should be included in the DC program.

Ending/Socializing

Group One Results - SDA:

Conversation/Fellowship:

Some people had come for months - no one talked to them except greeters "hello". New people coming are shy - intimidated by "strangers" and don't feel they can approach others.

No follow-up place after DC. No place or good way to find out who people are. Seems to be a lack of interest or involvement with people attending.

Have tried to "break in" but feel left out of groups or "cliques".

DC is packaged as a program - but no options after the program. End of DC is very empty, a let down after the program.

Some people came for SDA fellowship and left other churches where fellowship was very strong. Wanted to return to SDA church, yet found no fellowship in the SDA church.
 Socializing is difficult for single people in a "couples-oriented" group environment.
 Would like options created to get to know people - informally like going out .

Group One Results - SDA:

Options for Socializing/Fellowship:

Make announcements/ invitations of informal groups going places such as:

- Bombay or Steak and Shake etc.
- Movies.
- Bowling.
- Someone's home for movies or table games.

Insure that singles are recognized and invited - but not pressured. Preserving choice without pressure is very important.

Sit next to people who are new or single and be friendly.

Recognize DC doesn't have to be responsible for your whole evening.

Engage people in conversation at the end of DC - let them know they are welcome.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Conversation/Fellowship:

Lots of cliques - no where to linger to get to know people.

No socializing - don't know many people. We want to talk but no one seems interested in including new people.

"Where is the fellowship?" People come and go and no one seems to notice.

Some people who do talk come on too strong - have an agenda, are threatening to people who are new.

No environment or place to talk to other/new people. Expected to meet people and become involved but hasn't after attending two years. Has lowered her expectations that people will talk and help include other new people.

If the speaker has brought up something important and people want to discuss it - no place/time to have an informal discussion to answer questions or discuss what was said.

No other way to communicate interest in learning more about the SDA church and being a member - no one has asked and there is an interest.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Options for Socializing/Fellowship:

Have sodas/juice in hallway in back to welcome people to linger if they want. Some thought juice/soda in hallway is too impersonal.

Have greeters at the end - "I haven't seen you here, are you new to DC?"

Have a place where the message/speaking can be discussed - especially with the speaker. Have a general, informal, open discussion with the speaker to ask questions, comment - possibly up front on the platform steps or on one side in a front corner - opposite the musicians.

A way or place to ask questions about DC, church, SDA's.

Keep contacts inside the church - once you leave, the mood/experience goes away/shifts - even in the hallway.

Continue playing live or recorded music - invites people to stay and talk.

Have people willing to informally lead a group activity - going out to pizza, movies, bookstores, etc. Opportunity to create fun - learn life is more than beer and partying. Make invitation from front of church at the end. Meet inside back of church - the room creates the environment of shared fellowship.

Create a DC that isn't just for one hour a week. DC needs to be a place or people who have opportunity to meet or socialize during the week as well. "Right now DC is not a community - just a one hour a week meeting. Community takes more than that to create."

Have a form to fill out asking for contact, someone to talk to, expressing interests or comments about DC.

Don't pressure anyone to accept or do anything - Preserving individual choice is most important - Pressure is a big negative. Let people choose what they want to do or be.

Life Impact

Group One Results - SDA:

Initial Contact:

Learned of DC through church bulletin.
Involved with program.
Had friend helping who invited me.
Heard from other people.

Why Attending DC Today?

This is my hour for me to rest and reflect - spiritual renewal without distractions.
Good way to end Sabbath - vespers.
More upbeat than church - more appealing and get more out of it.
Entertaining, spiritual and comfortable.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Initial Contact:

Learned of DC through church bulletin.
Involved with program.
Had friend who invited me.
Heard from other people at church or work.

Why Attending DC Today?

Its addicting - spiritual message without the "feel" of church.
Good entertainment.
Don't have to get up early.
Don't have to get dressed up.
Learning from more real life applications/experiences.
Peaceful, something spiritual for themselves instead of other people.

Group One Results - SDA:

What Difference Does DC Make in Your Life?

A place to experience God or worship without being "churchy".
Some people aren't ready for church or have "outgrown" it. This is my place of worship.
Love the music - doesn't sound like church. The different music is great - can relate to it.
"Didn't attend for one month - got discouraged. Such an emptiness and loss I had to come back."
Never went to church in my life - cynical about God - come a long way in a very short time and I'm not easily convinced to change my mind.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

We weren't raised SDA or even Christian - this is a safe place to explore what it means to believe in God, understand who Jesus is and to understand and get to know SDA's. It is non-threatening, safe, and no pressure. "My friends see the change in me and want to come." "People with family and friends dying or sick or in need are looking for a place to belong."
Brought my family together.

If You Ran DC, What Would You Change?

Group One Results - SDA:

Have DC exist more than one day a week.

More targeting of who you are trying to reach. (Focus on target groups.) Not focused now.

Add more drama.

Add more music - number of songs, style and variety.

Shorter sermon - 10 to 20 minutes. Thirty is too long.

Would advertise.

Shouldn't be church specific. Get other SDA churches involved in programming and attendance.

Panel discussion after drama to explore meaning and impact.

Get more SDA's to attend - SDA's are too closed, some don't have any unchurched friends and can't relate. Get them involved as well.

Be more ready to follow up with people - make them welcome and a part of DC.

Make it more personal and up-to date. Fills needs church can't fill.

Follow up - What will bring new people attending back to DC again?

Have a way for people to write down their needs or questions and turn them in.

Socializing/fellowship is very important. Sometimes I don't come because I don't want to go home by myself. Would love to spend time with other people from DC.

Notice us.

Communicate and care.

"We're amazed that you would ask us to participate and share - thank you for this opportunity."

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

More drama

Upbeat music

Shorter sermons - consistent content

Make sure there is follow up with people to make them welcome and create a chance to belong to DC.

Would create opportunities to work together as DC - doing things in the community as DC. Create a place where we can work for a common goal.

Preserve acceptance, non-threatening, no pressure style.

Write mission statement on program so people understand "this is what we're about."

Should DC's Name Be Changed? Does it Mean Anything?

Group One Results - SDA:

Group One did not address this question.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Name not understood and didn't make sense when first attending.

Understand somewhat after attending for a while.

Name needs to reflect the mission to show meaning. Name doesn't explain the mission - not clear.

Name needs to clarify the mission of DC.

What is DC's Mission?

Group One Results - SDA:

Group One did not address this question

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Bring someone non-SDA to a place to understand who we are.

Reaching people for Christ and God in a personal way.

To provide spiritual enrichment.

Reach out to people who are seeking information about God and SDA's.

To deal with real contemporary problems in a Christian way.
 To have people have joined the SDA church because of DC? Is it to convert people to being SDA's?

How Should DC be Advertised or Marketed?

Group One Results - SDA:

Christian radio advertising.
 Bulletins of SDA and other churches.
 Invite other youth groups to participate in drama and music.
 Advertise on the Internet.
 Place a separate advertisement in the Sentinel for DC to create identity as a different place/service to attend.

Group Two Results - Non-SDA:

Advertise to other churches to participate - this is what Christ would want you to do.
 Christian radio.
 Bulletins of other SDA and non-SDA churches.
 " Invite other church groups to participate in music and drama.
 " Advertise that this is for people who don't go to church but might like to explore about God and Christ.
 " Separate DC ad in Sentinel - needs to describe what it is apart from FH SDA Church.

Recommendations for DC

Train greeters.
 Expand and improve music variety, style, quality and content.
 Add more drama.
 Shorten the sermon to 20 minutes. Improve sermon quality.
 Add opportunities for group interaction and audience participation during the program.
 Have greeters at the end of DC.
 Create an environment that allows people to stay a while after DC.
 Create a open, informal discussion about the sermon or any questions at the end of DC in the sanctuary.
 Create informal fellowship and relationship building opportunities after DC.
 Explore including DC in church outreach opportunities such as Habitat for Humanity, March of Dimes walks etc.

Recommendations for DC Programming:

Preserve low key, non threatening approach - allow people choice.
 Define culture and mission of DC.
 Educate FH SDA Church, DC staff, and other key constituents regarding DC.
 Regenerate passion and energy for DC among key constituents.
 Change the name to tie into church programming for young adults (target market).
 Do not stop having DC before the new program is created - disruption to continuity is a great risk.
 Create bridges into relationships that show we care about the people who attend DC.
DO NOT ADVERTISE OR MARKET BROADLY UNTIL CULTURE, QUALITY AND PROGRAMMING IS WHAT IT NEEDS TO BE.

APPENDIX D

TABLE 2

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Four-year Averages as Percentage of Membership (1993-1997)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Professions of Faith data

Hypothesis: There is *no* difference between the Church's Profession of Faith growth means.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between the Church's Profession of Faith growth means.

Decision

If the test value of 3.14 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, the hypothesis of no difference is accepted.

If the test value of 3.14 is larger than the 3.06 limit we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistical difference.

Since the test value of 3.14 is greater than the 3.06 limit, we declare that there is a significant difference among these groups.

ANOVA – SINGLE FACTOR

SUMMARY

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Florida Hospital	4	2.27	0.5675	0.010558
Forest Lake	4	0.83	0.2075	0.025625
Kress Memorial	4	0.5	0.125	0.010433
Markham Wood	4	1.29	0.3225	0.020292
Orlando Central	4	0.72	0.18	0.1296

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	0.49497	4	0.123743	3.148531	0.045738	3.055568
Within Groups	0.589525	15	0.039302			
Total	1.084495	19				

CHURCH

	<i>FH</i>	<i>FL</i>	<i>KM</i>	<i>MW</i>	<i>OC</i>
Year 1993-1994	0.43	0.16	0.12	0.45	0
Year 1994-1995	0.55	0.05	0	0.28	0.72
Year 1995-1996	0.66	0.43	0.25	0.42	0
Year 1996-1997	0.63	0.19	0.13	0.14	0

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Four-year Averages as Percentage of Membership (1993-1997)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Baptisms data

Hypothesis: There is *no* difference between the Church's Baptism growth means.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between the Church's Baptism growth means.

Decision

If the test value of 0.95 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, the hypothesis of no difference is accepted.

If the test value of 0.95 is larger than the 3.06 limit we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistical difference.

Since the test value of 0.95 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, we declare that there is not a significant difference among these groups.

ANOVA – SINGLE FACTOR

SUMMARY

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Florida Hospital	4	6.2	1.55	0.323333
Forest Lake	4	7.9	1.975	0.429167
Kress Memorial	4	7.7	1.925	0.069167
Markham Wood	4	5.4	1.35	0.55
Orlando Central	4	9.77	2.4425	2.351225

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	2.84918	4	0.712295	0.956642	0.459261	3.055568
Within Groups	11.16868	15	0.744578			
Total	14.01786	19				

CHURCH

	<i>FH</i>	<i>FL</i>	<i>KM</i>	<i>MW</i>	<i>OC</i>
Year 1993-1994	2.2	2.8	2.3	1.3	3.5
Year 1994-1995	1.8	1.5	1.8	2.4	2.2
Year 1995-1996	0.9	2.2	1.9	0.7	3.7
Year 1996-1997	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.0	0.37

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Four-year Averages as Percentage of Membership (1993-1997)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Transfer-In data

Hypothesis: There is *no* difference between the Church's Transfer-In growth means.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between the Church's Transfer-In growth means.

Decision

If the test value of 5.15 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, the hypothesis of no difference is accepted.

If the test value of 5.15 is larger than the 3.06 limit we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistical difference.

Since the test value of 5.15 is greater than the 3.06 limit, we declare that there is a significant difference among these groups.

ANOVA: SINGLE FACTOR

SUMMARY

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Florida Hospital	4	37.9	9.475	4.169167
Forest Lake	4	24.4	6.1	4.06
Kress Memorial	4	13.66	3.415	4.7769
Markham Wood	4	24.6	6.15	10.77667
Orlando Central	4	13.6	3.4	0.586667

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	100.4961	4	25.12403	5.154831	0.008142	3.055568
Within Groups	73.1082	15	4.87388			
Total	173.6043	19				

CHURCH

	<i>FH</i>	<i>FL</i>	<i>KM</i>	<i>MW</i>	<i>OC</i>
Year 1993-1994	12.0	7.1	4.2	7.4	3.2
Year 1994-1995	9.4	7.4	0.36	10.2	4.0
Year 1995-1996	7.0	6.8	5.5	3.9	4.0
Year 1996-1997	9.5	3.1	3.6	3.1	2.4

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Four-year Averages as Percentage of Membership (1993-1997)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Apostasy data

Hypothesis: There is *no* difference between the Church's Apostasy growth means.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between the Church's Apostasy growth means.

Decision

If the test value of 2.439 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, the hypothesis of no difference is accepted.

If the test value of 2.439 is larger than the 3.06 limit we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistical difference.

Since the test value of 2.439 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, we declare that there is not a significant difference among these groups.

ANOVA: SINGLE FACTOR

SUMMARY

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Florida Hospital	4	3.43	0.8575	0.687892
Forest Lake	4	0.38	0.095	0.0107
Kress Memorial	4	0.24	0.06	0.0144
Markham Wood	4	0.28	0.07	0.0196
Orlando Central	4	2.67	0.6675	0.468225

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	2.34355	4	0.585888	2.439538	0.09227	3.055568
Within Groups	3.60245	15	0.240163			
Total	5.946	19				

CHURCH

	<i>FH</i>	<i>FL</i>	<i>KM</i>	<i>MW</i>	<i>OC</i>
Year 1993-1994	0.43	0.05	0.24	0.00	0.70
Year 1994-1995	1.90	0.00	0.00	0.28	1.60
Year 1995-1996	0.00	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00
Year 1996-1997	1.10	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.37

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Four-year Averages as Percentage of Membership (1993-1997)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Missing data

Hypothesis: There is *no* difference between the Church's Missing growth means.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between the Church's Missing growth means.

Decision

If the test value of 9.51 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, the hypothesis of no difference is accepted.

If the test value of 9.51 is larger than the 3.06 limit we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistical difference.

Since the test value of 9.51 is greater than the 3.06 limit, we declare that there is a significant difference among these groups.

ANOVA: SINGLE FACTOR

SUMMARY

<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Florida Hospital	4	3.2	0.8	0.853333
Forest Lake	4	0.52	0.13	0.0396
Kress Memorial	4	0	0	0
Markham Wood	4	0	0	0
Orlando Central	4	8.1	2.025	0.689167

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	12.04448	4	3.01112	9.516213	0.000489	3.055568
Within Groups	4.7463	15	0.31642			
Total	16.79078	19				

CHURCH

	<i>FH</i>	<i>FL</i>	<i>KM</i>	<i>MW</i>	<i>OC</i>
Year 1993-1994	0	0.42	0	0	2.1
Year 1994-1995	0	0	0	0	2.9
Year 1995-1996	1.6	0.1	0	0	2.2
Year 1996-1997	1.6	0	0	0	0.9

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Four-year Averages as Percentage of Membership (1993-1997)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Transfer-Out data

Hypothesis: There is *no* difference between the Church's Transfer-Out growth means.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between the Church's Transfer-Out growth means.

Decision

If the test value of 4.93 is smaller than the 3.06 limit, the hypothesis of no difference is accepted.

If the test value of 4.93 is larger than the 3.06 limit we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistical difference.

Since the test value of 4.93 is greater than the 3.06 limit, we declare that there is a significant difference among these groups.

ANOVA: SINGLE FACTOR

SUMMARY

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Florida Hospital	4	16.9	4.225	1.529167
Forest Lake	4	13.3	3.325	0.349167
Kress Memorial	4	21.6	5.4	3.146667
Markham Wood	4	23	5.75	2.23
Orlando Central	4	9.2	2.3	1.073333

ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	32.875	4	8.21875	4.934211	0.00968	3.055568
Within Groups	24.985	15	1.665667			
Total	57.86	19				

CHURCH

	FH	FL	KM	MW	OC
Year 1993-1994	5.3	3.8	6.0	6.0	2.5
Year 1994-1995	2.5	3.3	2.8	7.7	3.4
Year 1995-1996	4.9	3.7	6.8	4.2	2.4
Year 1996-1997	4.2	2.5	6.0	5.1	0.9

APPENDIX E

CHURCH OPINION SURVEY

CHURCH OPINION SURVEY

1. Rank in order of importance the activities most beneficial to you at Florida Hospital Church.
(Place a 1 by the most beneficial activity and a 2 by the second most beneficial activity, etc.)

☐ Sabbath School Class ☐ Preaching at Sabbath Services ☐ First Service Worship ☐ Second Service Worship	☐ Downtown Community ☐ Fellowship with other worshippers ☐ Other (Please specify) _____ _____
--	---

2. If asked to participate in Christian sharing and witnessing activities, check the first five activities you would feel most comfortable doing. (Place a 1 by the activity most comfortable and a 2 by your second choice, etc.)

☐ a. Inviting a friend to a special event or program ☐ b. Inviting a friend to a Sabbath preaching service ☐ c. Inviting a friend to your Sabbath School Class ☐ d. Inviting a friend to Downtown Community	☐ e. Giving a friend Bible studies ☐ f. Providing help to the needy ☐ g. None of the above ☐ h. Other (Please specify) _____
--	---

3. How frequently do you attend Downtown Community

☐ a. Almost every Sabbath ☐ b. About once a month ☐ c. About once a quarter	☐ d. Less than once a quarter ☐ e. Never have attended
--	---

4. List the strengths of Downtown Community (Place a 1 by the greatest strength a 2 by the second greatest strength, etc.)

☐ a. Drama/skit ☐ b. Sermon ☐ c. Informal atmosphere ☐ d. Fellowship with others	☐ e. Time of the program ☐ f. Music ☐ g. Other (Please specify) _____
---	--

5. How influential was Downtown Community in your choosing Florida Hospital Church as your home church?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Absolutely no influence					Absolutely high influence	

Gender:	☐ female ☐ male	Age:	☐ 18 or younger ☐ 31-45 ☐ 56-65	☐ 19-30 ☐ 46-55 ☐ 66 or greater
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Florida Hospital Church Attendance:	☐ 1 year or less ☐ 4-5 years	☐ 2-3 years ☐ longer than 5 years
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Church affiliation:	☐ Florida Hospital Church Member ☐ Other (Please specify) _____
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STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Florida Hospital Church Survey – Question 1

Spearman Rank Order Analysis

The Statistic:

The Critical Value for testing 5% significance of r_{rho} is .829, $n = 6$.

FH Church Survey – Question 1

	A	B	A-B	D ²
	1-3+	4+		
1 SS	1	1	0	0
2 Pre	3	2	+1	1
3 1 Sev	2	4	-2	4
4 2 Sev	5	6	-1	1
5 DC	6	5	+1	1
6 Fel	4	3	+1	1
	Sum		0	8

For $n = 6$, the 5% significant value is .829

The computed r_{rho} of .7714 is less than the 5% limit of .829 and we therefore conclude that there is not a significant correlation of Group A (1-3 Years) to Group B (4+ Years).

Spearman Rank Order Analysis: 1-3 Years - Question 1

#	SS	Pre	1Ser	2Ser	DC	Fel
21	3	2	1	6	5	4
26	5	4	2	3	6	1
33	2	5	1	6	3	4
46	4	5	1	6	3	2
47	1	4	1	6	2	3
49	2	1	4	6	5	3
76	3	2	1	4	5	6
79	2	1	3	3	5	4
94	1	7	6	4	3	5
123	3	4	2	1	5	6
134	3	2	4	1	5	6
137	1	2	5	6	4	3
145	1	4	6	3	2	5
3	5	2	3	4	6	1
4	5	2	3	4	6	1
36	4	1	6	5	2	3
40	1	2	3	6	5	4
41	1	4	2	5	6	3
42	1	3	4	5	6	2
43	1	4	2	6	5	3
56	2	3	1	6	4	5
66	1	5	4	2	6	3
87	2	1	5	1	4	3
120	2	5	1	6	3	4
135	1	3	6	4	5	2
136	3	6	1	2	4	5
139	1	4	6	5	2	3
141	1	5	6	2	3	4
143	3	2	5	1	6	4
158	4	6	5	1	2	3
159	1	4	3	2	5	6
	2.26	3.39	3.32	3.94	4.29	3.58

Rank 1 3 2 5 6 4

Spearman Rank Order Analysis: 4+ Years - Question 1

#	SS	Pre	1Ser	2Ser	DC	Fel
7	1	6	3	5	4	2
8	3	4	1	6	5	2
35	2	3	5	6	4	1
45	2	4	3	6	1	5
51	5	2	1	6	3	4
53	2	3	1	6	4	5
54	2	3	1	4	5	6
59	2	1	4	3	6	5
74	1	6	7	2	5	4
93	2	4	5	6	4	1
97	4	2	1	3	6	5
103	4	2	1	6	3	5
140	3	1	6	2	5	4
1	2	1	3	5	5	4
11	2	7	3	5	1	4
27	2	1	4	3	6	5
30	3	1	4	6	5	2
31	2	3	4	5	6	1
38	5	4	2	6	1	3
50	1	1	1	2	1	2
61	1	2	4	3	6	5
81	3	1	6	4	5	2
90	1	3	5	4	6	2
91	4	3	5	1	6	2
92	2	6	3	5	1	4
106	1	6	2	5	4	3
112	3	1	2	6	5	4
113	1	5	3	4	6	2
116	2	1	6	5	4	3
142	3	1	5	2	6	4
157	4	5	7	3	6	1
164	5	1	3	4	2	6
	2.5	2.94	3.47	4.34	4.28	3.38

Rank 1 2 4 6 5 3

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Florida Hospital Church Survey - Question 5

t – Test – Question 5, Group A (1-3 Years)

Statistical Analysis – t-Test**Hypothesis:** The mean response for DC influence is 4.0, Group A (1-3 Years)**Alternative Hypothesis:** The mean response for DC influence is less than 4.0**Mean:**

$$n = 61, df = 60, \bar{X} = 2.4754, s = 1.78, \alpha = 0.01$$

Limit:

$$\text{Lower } t_{\alpha} = t_{0.01} = -2.390$$

Test Statistic:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu_{H_0}}{s/\sqrt{n}} = \frac{2.4754 - 4}{1.78 / \sqrt{61}} = -6.690$$

Decision:

Since the Test Statistic of -6.690 is less than the limit of -2.390, we accept the Alternative Hypothesis.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Florida Hospital Church - Question 5

t – Test – Question 5, Group B (4+ Years)

Statistical Analysis – t-Test**Hypothesis:** The mean response for DC influence is 4.0, Group B (4+ Years)**Alternative Hypothesis:** The mean response for DC influence is less than 4.0**Mean:**

$$n = 71, df = 70, \bar{X} = 2.1126, s = 1.78, \alpha = 0.01$$

Limit:

$$\text{Lower } t_{\alpha} = t_{0.01} = -2.390$$

Test Statistic:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X} - \mu_{theo}}{s/\sqrt{n}} = \frac{2.1126 - 4}{1.78 / \sqrt{71}} = -8.935$$

Decision:

Since the Test Statistic of -8.935 is less than the limit of -2.390, we accept the Alternative Hypothesis.

APPENDIX F
MESSAGE LISTING

Downtown Community Topics

July 1993

July 10	"In the Pursuit of Happiness"
July 17	"A Hunger for More"
July 24	"The Status Snare"
July 31	"Have It Your Way"

August 1993

August 7	"Exploring the Chracter of God"
August 14	"Something Bigger than Ourselves"
August 21	"Personally Interested"
August 28	"Finding Hope in God's Eyes"

September 1993

September 4	"A Table for One"
September 11	"The Lust Factor"
September 18	"Simply Irresistible"
September 25	"Back to the Basics: Something to Believe In"

October 1993

October 2	"The Origin of Sin"
October 9	"Lost & Found"
October 16	"Under Construction"
October 23	"Is Jesus a Man of His Word"
October 30	"Worry & Stress"

November 1993

November 6	
November 13	"Facing Your Fears"
November 20	"Thanksgiving"
November 27	"You Are Invited"

December 1993

December 4	"Managing the Mayhem"
December 11	"Winners, Losers, or Choosers"
December 18	"The Perfect Gift"
December 25	"The Christmas Story"

January 1994

January 1	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Choose Your God"
January 8	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Give God His Due"
January 15	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: The 3 rd Commandment"
January 22	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Rest Assured"
January 29	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Live Long & Love Them"

February 1994

February 5	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Destroy the Killer in You"
February 12	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: The 7 th Commandment"
February 19	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Don't Take Somebody Else's Stuff"
February 26	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Tell the Truth"

March 1994

March 5	"The Law of Perfect Freedom: Crave Contentment"
March 12	"Disappointment With God: Where is God When It Hurts?"
March 19	"Disappointment With God: God, I Can't Hear You"
March 26	"Disappointment With God: Confusing the Church With God"

April 1994

April 2	"Disappointment With God: The God of Your Imagination"
April 9	"God is Like . . ."
April 16	"More to This Life"
April 23	"More Than a Hero"
April 30	"Getting More is Letting Go"

May 1994

May 7	"God & the Johnnies Come Lately"
May 14	"God of the Impossible: I'll Do It Myself"
May 21	"When Your Genes Let You Down"
May 28	"God of the Impossible: Learning Loyalty"

June 1994

June 4	"God of the Impossible: Of Saints and Sinners"
June 11	"God of the Impossible: Depending on the Circumstances"
June 18	"Hidden Treasure"
June 25	"When Harry Met Jesus: At the End of Your Rope"

July 1994

July 2	"When Harry Met Jesus: Blessed Are They That Morn"
July 9	"When Harry Met Jesus: From Ordinary to Extraordinary"
July 16	"When Harry Met Jesus: I Really Want to Do the Right Thing"
July 23	"When Harry Met Jesus: An Absence of Apathy"
July 30	"Blessed are the Peace Makers"

August 1994

August 6	"When Harry Met Jesus: Inside Out"
August 13	"When Harry Met Jesus: Doing the Right Thing No Matter What"
August 20	"Forgiveness"
August 27	"The Parable of the Sower"

September 1994

September 3	"I'm a Mess, Honest" Part 1
September 10	"I'm a Mess, Honest" Part 2
September 17	"Why Pray?"
September 24	"How to Pray"

October 1994

October 1	"The Origin of Evil"
October 8	"Breathing Mud Pies"
October 15	"The Big Lie"
October 22	"Ghosts & the Spirit World"
October 29	"Meet You in Hell"

November 1994

November 5	"Going to the Wedding . . . Naked?"
November 12	"God's Sovereignty & Ownership"
November 19	"Work & Leisure"
November 26	"God Gives Through People"

December 1994

December 3	"Dealing with Debt"
December 10	"Joseph"
December 17	"Mary"
December 24	Christmas Eve Program
December 31	"You Matter to God: How to Build Self-Worth"

January 1995

January 7	"You Matter to God: How Do I Lose Self-Worth?"
January 14	"You Matter to God: Self Worth . . . How to Rebuild It"
January 21	"You Matter to God: Building Self-Worth in Others"
January 28	"What Makes a Man, a Man?"

February 1995

February 4	"What Makes a Woman, a Woman?"
February 11	"Wait 'Till Halftime"
February 28	"Lies We Believe: Life Should Be Easy"

March 1995

March 4	"Lies We Believe: Everything Bad is Somebody Else's Fault"
March 11	"Lies We Believe: It's Better to Avoid Problems Than to Face Them"
March 18	"Lies We Believe: That Molehill is a Mountain"
March 25	"Lies We Believe: I Must Have Everyone's Love and Approval"

April 1995

April 1	"The Fugitive: Running From God"
April 8	"The Fugitive: Ways We Run"
April 15	"The Fugitive: Ways to Stop Running"
April 22	"What Makes a Family?"
April 29	"How to be a Kid"

May 1995

May 6	"All in the Family: Your Mother and Mine"
May 13	"All in the Family: Your Dad and Mine"
May 20	"Just for the Health of It"
May 27	CAMPMEETING

June 1995

June 3	CAMPMEETING
June 10	"OH MY gODS: The Old New Age"
June 17	"OH MY gODS: The Humanist's Dream"
June 24	"OH MY gODS: The Relativist's Dilemma"

July 1995

July 1	"OH MY gODS: Me, Myself & I"
July 8	"OH MY gODS: The Pragmatist's Wager"
July 15	"OH MY gODS: The Christian's Certainty"
July 22	"Irregular People: Who Are They?"
July 29	"Irregular People: How Do We Live With Them?"

August 1995

August 5	"The Bible: Authenticity of the Bible"
August 12	"The Bible: Interpretation of the Bible"
August 19	"7 Habits of Effective Christians: Prayer"
August 26	"7 Habits of Effective Christians: Study"

September 1995

September 2	"7 Habits of Effective Christians: Simplicity"
September 9	"7 Habits of Effective Christians: Solitude"
September 16	"7 Habits of Effective Christians: Submission & Service"
September 23	"7 Habits of Effective Christians: Confession"
September 30	"7 Habits of Effective Christians: Worship & Celebration"

October 1995

October 7	"Relationships: Barbie, Ken & G.I. Joe"
October 14	"Relationships: Another Saturday Night"
October 21	"Relationships: Struggles on the Edge"
October 28	"Relationships: From Battleship to Relationship"

November 1995

November 4	"What is Jesus Really Like? Surprising Jesus"
November 11	"What is Jesus Really Like? Angry Jesus"
November 18	"What is Jesus Really Like? Humorous Jesus"
November 25	"What is Jesus Really Like? Loving Jesus"

December 1995

December 2	"A Shepherd's Son"
December 9	"Anna & Simeon"
December 16	"Herod & Joseph"
December 23	"John on the Isle of Patmos"
December 30	"New Beginnings: Promises & Other Ropes of Sand"

January 1996

January 6	"New Beginnings: Haunted by Our History"
January 13	"New Beginnings: Frozen by the Future"
January 20	"New Beginnings: Enjoy the Journey"
January 27	"Amazing Grace: Just Deserts"

February 1996

February 3	"Amazing Grace: To Hell With the Law"
February 10	"Amazing Grace: Grace is God's Other Name"
February 17	"Making Love Last a Lifetime: Talk"
February 24	"Making Love Last a Lifetime: Fight Fair"

March 1996

March 2	"Making Love Last a Lifetime: Love"
March 9	
March 16	
March 23	
March 30	

April 1996

April 6	"Survive or Thrive: I'm So Mad I Could . . . "
April 13	"Survive or Thrive: What God Thinks About Divorce"
April 20	"Survive or Thrive: Say What You Mean, Mean What You Say"
April 27	"Survive or Thrive: All the Right Things for All the Wrong Reasons"

May 1996

May 4	"Survive or Thrive: The Difference Between Being Religious & Being Spiritual"
May 11	"Survive or Thrive: Are You a Worry Wort?"
May 18	"Survive or Thrive: What Goes Around Comes Around"
May 25	"Living on the Competitive Edge: King of the Mole Hill"

June 1996

June 1	"Living on the Competitive Edge: Shoots, Ladders & Other Forms Of Transportation"
June 8	"Living on the Competitive Edge: Owning Boardwalk & Park Place"
June 15	"4 Questions Inquiring Minds Want to Know: Does Yes to Faith Mean No to My Brain?"
June 22	"Living on the Competitive Edge: Can I Know God Really Exists?"
June 29	"Living on the Competitive Edge: Can the Bible Be Trusted?"

July 1996

July 6	"Living on the Competitive Edge: Who Was Jesus, Really?"
July 13	"Character Under Construction: Courage"
July 20	"Character Under Construction: Discipline"
July 27	"Character Under Construction: Vision"

August 1996

August 3	"Character Under Construction: Endurance"
August 10	"Where Would You Like to Live: Combating Loneliness"
August 17	"Where Would You Like to Live: Acceptance, A Community of Encouragement"
August 24	"Where Would You Like to Live: Model of Community - What God Meant Church to Be"
August 31	"Where Would You Like to Live: How to Join the Community"

September 1996

September 7	"How to Deal with Life: Run & Hide"
September 14	"How to Deal with Life: Scratch & Claw"
September 21	"How to Deal with Life: Poor Me"
September 28	"How to Deal with Life: Playing Possum"

October 1996

October 5	"How to Deal with Life: Psychics & Finding Direction for Your Life"
October 12	"What Jesus Might Say Before November 5: The Character to Lead"
October 19	"What Jesus Might Say Before November 5: Defining the Family"
October 26	"What Jesus Might Say Before November 5: Is the Right Right?"

November 1996

November 2	"What Jesus Might Say Before November 5: Dual Citizenship"
November 9	"Human Free Choice & the Will of God: Does God Have a Plan For Your Life?"
November 16	"Human Free Choice & the Will of God: How to Know God's Will in Your Life"
November 23	"If Jesus Has Come: We've Heard from God"
November 30	"If Jesus Has Come: My Life Has Meaning"

December 1996

December 7	"If Jesus Has Come: Death is Dead"
December 14	"If Jesus Has Come: What's His is Mine"
December 21	(Drama Only)
December 28	"The Heart of the Father"

January 1997

January 4	"Finish the Race"
January 11	"Tabloid Tales - Trash or Truth: Buns of Steel, Abs of Iron"
January 18	"Tabloid Tales - Trash or Truth: Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous"
January 25	"Tabloid Tales - Trash or Truth: UFO's Extraterrestrials, Aliens Visiting Earth"

February 1997

February 1	"Tabloid Tales - Trash or Truth: Calling Eleanor Roosevelt!"
February 8	"Tabloid Tales - Trash or Truth: Peerless Predictions"
February 15	"Tabloid Tales - Trash or Truth: McWorship - Fast Food for the Spirit"
February 22	"Star Wars is for Real: It's Not Just a Force"

March 1997

March 1	"Star Wars is for Real: Cosmic Battles"
March 8	Paul & Nicole Johnson Drama Presentation
March 15	"Star Wars is for Real: Behind the Scenes"
March 22	"Another Look at Jesus: Deja Vu All Over Again"
March 29	"Another Look at Jesus: Prophet, Teacher, Guru, Priest . . . Conman, Madman, Prince of Peace?"

April 1997

April 5	"Another Look at Jesus: It's a Life and Death Issue"
April 12	"Another Look at Jesus: God's Right-Hand Man"
April 19	"Another Look at Jesus: If Nobody's Driving this Car . . ."
April 26	"Why Churches Fight: What a Difference a Day Makes"

May 1997

May 3	"Why Churches Fight: 1,000 Years When?"
May 10	"Why Churches Fight: Dunk, Sprinkle, or Pour?"
May 17	"Why Churches Fight: How to Get to Heaven"
May 24	"Why Churches Fight: The Chosen"
May 31	

June 1997

June 7	"That Was Then, This is Now: The Good Old Days"
June 14	"That Was Then, This is Now: When a Man's Handshake was Good Enough"
June 21	"That Was Then, This is Now: When Did Church Get Boring?"
June 28	"That Was Then, This is Now: Me Tarzan, You Jane or Father Knows Best"

July 1997

July 5	"That Was Then, This is Now: The Land Before Time Warner"
July 12	Anniversary Weekend
July 19	"A Heart for God: A Real Role Model"
July 26	"A Heart for God: Fighting Giants in Character Development"

August 1997

August 2	"A Heart for God: Developing Relationships in our Quest for Character"
August 9	"A Heart for God: When the Bottom Falls Out"
August 16	"A Heart for God: Conflict Resolution"
August 23	"A Heart for God: A Major Cover-Up and God's Response"
August 30	

September 1997

September 6	"The Family Matters: The Blue Print"
September 13	"The Family Matters: The Grace-Filled Spouse"
September 20	"The Family Matters: Parenting By the Book"
September 27	"The Family Matters: Family Atmosphere"

October 1997

October 4	
October 11	"Only the Smart Go to Heaven: The Wisdom of Fools"
October 18	"Only the Smart Go to Heaven: The Shelf Life of Smarts"
October 25	"The X Files: The Bible and UFO's"

November 1997

November 1	"The X Files: The Bible and Ghosts"
November 8	"The X Files: The Bible and Angels"
November 15	"How to Get Through the Holidays: Plugging In"
November 22	"How to Get Through the Holidays: Unplugged"
November 29	

December 1997

December 6
 December 13
 December 20
 December 27

January 1998

January 3	"We're All Going to Die; How Should We Live?"
January 10	"sex, lies, & video tape: Sex"
January 17	"sex, lies, & video tape: Lies"
January 24	"sex, lies, & video tape: Video Tape"
January 31	"How To Get To Know God: Why Would You Want To?"

February 1998

February 7	"How To Get To Know God: I'm Not OK, You're Not OK, God's OK"
February 14	"How To Get To Know God: 3 Stops on the Road to God"
February 21	"How To Get To Know God: The Leap of Faith"

APPENDIX G
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

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VITA

Raymond Andrew McDonald

April 1998

Born July 22, 1955, to caring parents, Andy McDonald attended elementary school in Atlanta, and finished high school at Georgia-Cumberland Academy in Calhoun, Georgia. He graduated with a B.A. degree in theology from Southern Missionary College in 1977 and from Andrews University with a Master of Divinity degree in 1980. He married Vicki Johnson in August of 1978 and has two children.

Upon concluding seminary, Andy began full-time ministry in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He served as a ministerial intern in Calhoun, Georgia, from January to June 1980. From 1980 to 1982 he served as pastor of the Brunswick district prior to moving to the Chattanooga, Tennessee, area where he pastored the Cohutta/Center Grove and the reconfigured Cohutta/Birchwood districts. He was ordained to the gospel ministry by that conference in 1984.

Since 1984 Andy has served the Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church. His first nine months were as Youth Pastor and since then as Senior Pastor. The church is located in Orlando, Florida, adjacent to Florida Hospital and Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences and seeks to serve those constituencies as well as the community at large.