

## Dissertation Abstracts

Andrews University, Seventh-day  
Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A Contextual Analysis  
of the Seventh-Day Adventist  
Church in Norway, with Sugges-  
tions for Renewal and Growth

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Date completed: June 2005

Since 1979, when the mem-  
bership of the Seventh-day  
Adventist Church in Norway  
peaked, the membership has  
declined. There are underlying,  
complex reasons. This project  
seeks the underlying causes for  
the decline, and suggests pos-  
sible solutions.

The study begins by estab-  
lishing a theological basis for  
ministry. Norwegian society is  
then analyzed demographically  
followed by an analysis of the  
Adventist Church in Norway,  
that includes a historical and  
organizational analysis, a review  
of the database material for the  
Adventist Church in Norway, and  
by four questionnaires designed  
for (1) active members, (2) pas-  
tors, (3) former members, and  
(4) young non-Adventists with  
an Adventist background. The  
process of strategic planning is  
then spelled out.

Church growth is not just  
something technical, functional,  
or numerical. It is a project of the  
heart. Outer growth starts with  
inner growth. Based on demo-  
graphics of the Norwegian society,  
it can be concluded that there is a  
need for home-based, relational  
and felt-need activities.

The church needs to be more  
sensitive towards the needs and  
ways of postmoderns and youth.  
More variety and tolerance is  
called for. Attention to the follow-  
ing groups will increase growth:  
youth growing up in Advent-  
tist homes, guests visiting local  
churches, people with felt needs,  
immigrants, postmoderns, youth  
wanting a different format or em-  
phasis, new members, and former  
members. Spiritual renewal, rel-  
evance of preaching, discipling,  
spiritual gifts, and wide involve-  
ment need more attention.

The role of the pastor needs  
to change to encourage more  
training and equipping. Focus on  
spiritual renewal and awareness  
is needed. Adventist distinctives  
need to be presented in a less  
theoretical way, showing the  
benefits in everyday life. The  
Church needs to be better at  
analyzing, involving, planning,  
following up, and evaluating.

There is hope for turning the  
negative trend to positive growth  
in the Adventist Church in Nor-  
way. A new way of thinking, a  
changed emphasis, adjusted  
methods, more variety and tol-

erance, and targeting groups with the greatest potential, can result in new growth. With more attention to the process of planning and evaluating, projects may succeed, and losses can be reduced.

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Andrews University, School of Education

Title: The Student Missionary Experience and Its Impact on Young Adults

Name of researcher: Troy Fitzgerald

Adviser: Shirley Freed, Ph.D.

Date completed: January, 2005

While reputed to be valuable, the Student Missionary (SM) experience has not been examined to discover how service shapes the student's faith experience. Most of what is known of the experience is anecdotal and begs for systematic analysis of critical components needed to revitalize the objectives of Adventist education.

This was a qualitative case study where former SMs were interviewed. The Christian Spiritual Participation Profile (CSPP) was administered to SMs as an additional source of data. The CSPP shows the participants dominant modes of spiritual development and their participation in the spiritual disciplines. The results from the CSPP were compared to Seventh-day Adventist college students who were not student missionaries.

The subjects were selected from four Adventist colleges (Andrews University, Pacific Union College, Southern Adventist University, and Walla Walla College). A total of 113 participants were interviewed and 201 (50%) former SMs returned the CSPP. The results from the CSPP showed SMs scored significantly higher in all four modes on Kolb's learning cycle and significantly higher than non SMs in all the spiritual disciplines.

The results from the qualitative data showed that the SM experience deepened their relationship with God, pushed them to depend on God, expanded their worldview, enhanced their commitment to service, and prompted them to mature as leaders. The SM experience was a holistic learning experience where SMs perceived personal and spiritual growth occurred.

The findings also showed that four aspects of the SM experience made the experience transformational. High expectations, enduring through adversity, collaborating with others, and participating in the spiritual disciplines were transformational parts of the SM experience.

In conclusion, a year of service transformed young adults personally and spiritually. Experiential learning should become an embedded part of every church curriculum. Further study is recommended in other service opportunities as well as the role of spiritual disciplines in the lives of college students. Finally, further research might include a study on the factors that motivate young people to serve others.