Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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

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Date completed: June 2005

Since 1979, when the membership 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 possible solutions.

The study begins by establishing 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) pastors, (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 demographics 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 following groups will increase growth: youth growing up in Adventist homes, guests visiting local churches, people with felt needs, immigrants, postmoderns, youth wanting a different format or emphasis, new members, and former members. Spiritual renewal, relevance of preaching, discipling, spiritual gifts, and wide involvement 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 Norway. 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.

Andrews University, School of Education

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

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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.