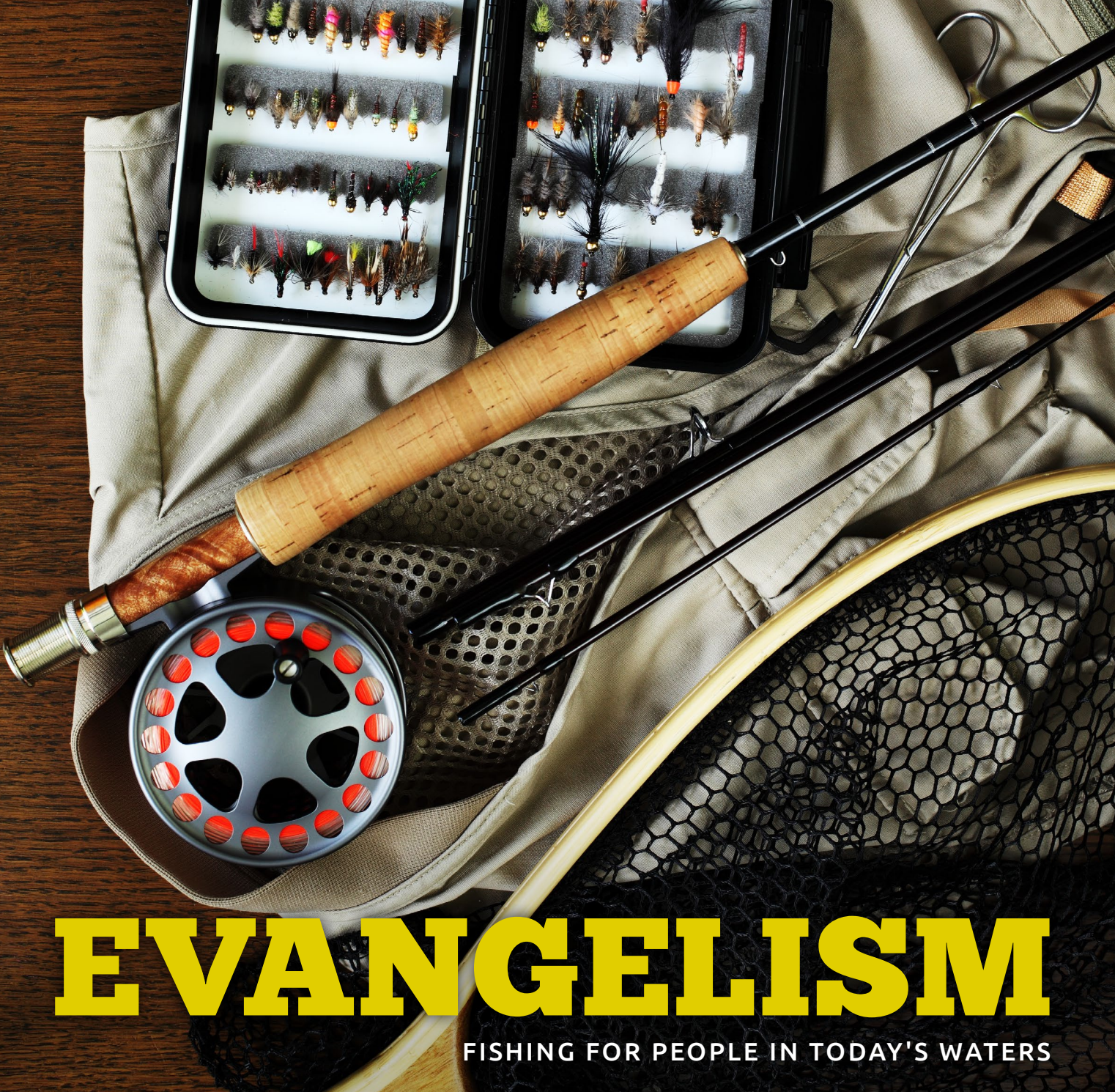


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**SESSION SCHEDULE**

**SESSION 1**  
 FRIDAY, SEPT. 22  
 7:00 P.M.  
 THE WORLDLY OR MORE FEAR? (PART 1)

**SESSION 2**  
 SATURDAY, SEPT. 23  
 6:00 P.M.  
 URAJIN GOD LOWS IT, BUT IS IT PART OF HIS KINGDOM? (PART 1)

**SESSION 3**  
 MONDAY, SEPT. 25  
 8:00 P.M.  
 ELEANOR STAK!

**SESSION 4**  
 TUESDAY, SEPT. 26  
 7:00 P.M.  
 ANTI-CHRIST AND REVELATION'S DEATH RIDERS! (PART 1)

**SESSION 5**  
 WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 27  
 7:00 P.M.  
 THE REAL AND FALL OF THE LITTLE HORN! (PART 1)

**SESSION 6**  
 THURSDAY, SEPT. 28  
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 THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LITTLE HORN! (PART 2)

**SESSION 7**  
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 WORSHIP - THE BIG TIME - END TIME BATTLE BELIEVE IT OR NOT - YOU WILL BE PART OF IT!

**SESSION 8 DOUBLE SESSION**  
 SATURDAY, OCT. 3  
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 THE BEAST FROM THE EAST (PART 1)

**SESSION 9 DOUBLE SESSION**  
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 THE BEAST FROM THE EAST (PART 2)

**SESSION 10**  
 SATURDAY, OCT. 7  
 7:00 P.M.  
 THE JEWISH CONNECTION!

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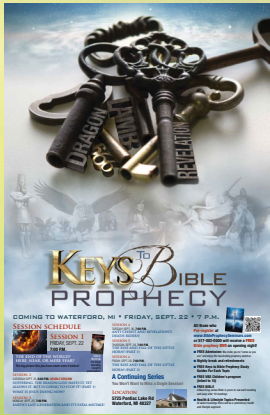
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## Unity and mutuality

Regarding “United in Message, Mission, and Organization” (April 2017), I am sure that all of us, as loyal Seventh-day Adventists, want unity in the message and mission for our church. It has been shown, however, that for this to happen, we sometimes need diversity in organization; fortunately, this is currently true in many matters and parts of the world church. So I am not sure just why Mark Finley seems to think we now need the current Unity Document.

In his article, he uses the selection of a replacement for Judas as an example of unity. He notes that this could have divided the church but they all agreed to accept the outcome. What he does not mention is that Matthias was selected by casting lots—not by discussion or vote. The result had nothing to do with personal conscience or opinion, or perhaps even perceived theology.

Then he uses the selection of the seven deacons as another example of unity—Finley calls it a “mutually agreed upon solution.” It is true that they were united in the decision, but Finley should have noted that those selected were all apparently Hellenistic Jews or Greeks who would identify immediately with the offended Greek widows. There was no controversy indicated with the selections. This decision was to meet mission, but was certainly outside the usual Jewish leadership.

In Acts 15, Finley says they mutually agreed to refer a matter of controversy to the Jerusalem Council. True. The question was in regard to circumcision. Interestingly, the agreed upon decision doesn’t even mention circumcision. Furthermore, if you wanted to circumcise, it was allowed. If you thought it not necessary, it was not required. In other words, rather than requiring the exact same things done organizationally, freedom of conscience and mission prevailed. Finley notes that “they focused on what was the most important thing on God’s heart—saving lost people.” I have to wonder why he doesn’t think

that should be allowed now in regard to women’s ordination.

Finley uses the word *mutual* or *mutually* at least four times. But anyone who was in San Antonio would have to agree that the vote not allowing divisions to decide for themselves for mission in regard to ordaining women was not decided mutually in any meaning of the word.

I hope we really will allow for unity of theology, and at the same time allow for conscience and diversification of organization as needed for mission, especially in this 500th year of celebrating the Protestant Reformation.

—Ardis Stenbakken, email

## Unity and authority

I’m deeply disappointed in Mark Finley’s article, “United in Message, Mission, and Organization” (April 2017). That Finley uses the experiences recorded in the book of Acts to suggest that the council in Acts 15 was some kind of legislative body is misguided. Indeed, the entire article seems to suggest that the first impulse of the church in Acts was to establish its authority. In fact, Acts 15 records an attempt to solve a problem, not to establish an organizational structure that issued hard-and-fast mandates.

Some have rightly observed that the title of the New Testament book, Acts of the Apostles, should more accurately be known as Acts of the Holy Spirit. Finley seems to emphasize the Holy Spirit’s role as simply to create a hierarchy. I suggest that the Holy Spirit’s purpose was to empower believers to take the gospel to the world in ways that an authoritarian structure could neither approve nor monitor.

The institution that says, “Do it because I say so,” inspires no more confidence in its members than parents who use that same logic with their teenagers. More important, and more effective, are leaders who guide their members in hearing the Spirit’s voice for themselves.

—Stephen Chavez, pastor, Silver Spring, Maryland

## Unity and diversity

Mark Finley in his article in the April 2017 issue reads into the book of Acts too much information about church organization. Serious scholars have not found so much. With his emphasis on unity by “mutual agreement” he downplays the “differences of opinion” by never mentioning the term *diversity*. Are policies enunciated because of “mutual agreement” or by majority vote? If the minority consists of “honest people,” why should their disagreement be considered as “paining the heart of God” when their commitment to the truth and mission of the church is in harmony with the majority? By summarizing his theses in “four aspects of unity” I could as well leave out the addition of the fourth: “when the mutual agreements or policies of the church serve as the foundation for a system of church governance and authority.” Three aspects of unity completely comply with the notion of a triune God who creates unity in diversity.

—Erwin Meier, retired pastor in Westphalia, Germany

## A response to questions regarding the article “United in Message, Mission, and Organization” (April 2017)

Mark Finley

Although I have received numerous positive responses to my articles on the essence of church unity based on the book of Acts, there have been a few who have raised questions. I deeply appreciate those who see things from a different point of view. It’s healthy for a church to discuss critically important issues in a spirit of Christlike love and genuine respect. Honest questions deserve an honest response.

My original article was one piece that, because of its length, necessitated its division into two parts. In the first article, “Unity: Then and Now: A

Continued on page 25

Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD, is associate editor, *Ministry*.



# Turn the page

When one says they are “turning the page,” they mean they are doing things differently, and expecting different results. We realized that we had to do things differently in Bermuda. Our church growth was flat; so was the way we were perceived by the community. The media would ask, “What is the Seventh-day Adventist position on gambling, homosexuality, and selling alcohol on Sundays?” The more we shared the church’s official positions, the more people wrote letters to the newspaper.

They wondered why Christians couldn’t mind their own business. They asked, “Why are the Adventists meddling in other people’s lives?” I realized we seemed to be always negative, always disapproving, always saying no. We were then shown a Barna study about how young people view today’s church.<sup>1</sup> As president, I knew we had to change our approach.

Quoting the study (see chart below), I sent a letter of apology to the news reporter for being insensitive. From now on, I said, I wanted us to be positive: to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Through our churches, schools, and wonderful young people, we wanted to focus on the health and well-being of our community.<sup>2</sup> The reporter wrote back:

“Thank you, Dr. Brown. I’m not personally religious in the church sense, but I recall the Adventists giving out free gasoline to people a couple of years ago. I heard a lot about that simple act of compassion, which no doubt cost your membership a pretty penny. That act meant a lot to people, as you prayed with them while filling their tanks. Your church and others make sure that a lot of people out there who don’t have food, get something to eat, and a little community while they eat it. Your church handed out school-bags and supplies just a couple months ago when the school year started. I’m not speaking as a reporter here, just as one person to another. I appreciate the response you’ve sent, by the way. You certainly don’t rank as insensitive in my book, for what it’s worth.”

The *Royal Gazette*’s blogosphere had a new tone. One person responded that this “focused on the real purpose of the church in the community instead of the small stuff.” But the real heart-warmer was when my young adult nephew, Tory, called. He had stopped going to church. He said, “When people don’t like things in the conference, they don’t hesitate to call. But you wrote something in the *Royal Gazette* that I liked, and I knew I had to call. What you wrote about the church now striving to be more compassionate in the community was so heartening to me. That’s the kind of church I want to belong to.” He

came back to church and got rebaptized. He and his wife, Lu, are now lay leaders in their church.

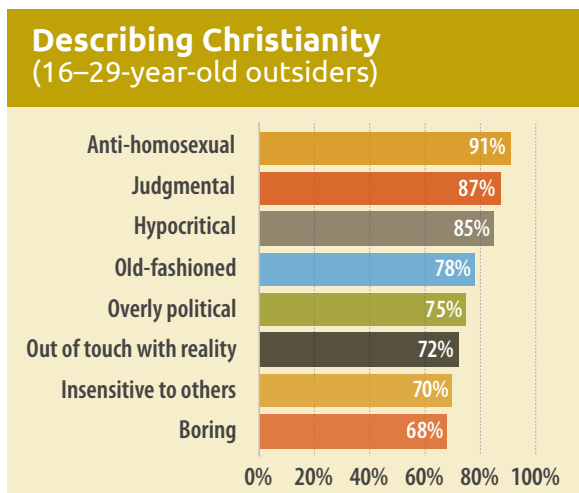
Can our churches capitalize on such goodwill? We tried to do so. We invited Greater New York Conference executive secretary, Dr. Alanzo Smith, to bring his Family Enrichment Series to Bermuda. To the glory of God, 145 souls were

baptized. After the series, we received a letter:

“Dear Sirs, I want to express the sincere gratitude and appreciation felt by hundreds of persons for the excellent and timely Family Enrichment Series that your organization hosted. You blessed Bermuda. In a day when many focus on the problems, but spend little time providing solutions, it was great that your organization decided to do something about it. My 14-year-old daughter attended, and she was motivated and blessed. My co-worker came into the office and talked about it. It created a heavenly buzz around Bermuda. I very well believe that the Master was proud and pleased. While I am not a member of your assembly, I am a born-again Christian and a member of the local AME [African Methodist Episcopalian] church. I promoted the series and encouraged others to attend. I pray that the good Lord will grant you eternal dividends on the investment you made in this country and His kingdom by hosting the Family Enrichment Series. We were enriched.”

The purpose of salt is not to fill the saltshaker, but to flavor the food. Findley Edge said, “It is to the world to which we are called. We are not sent to serve the church but to the world as an instrument of redemption. Thus, we are not called to attend meetings in the institutional church merely to keep certain organizations alive and growing. It is the world we are seeking to save, not the institution. The church is to lose its life and as it does so, it will find that it has fulfilled its calling.”<sup>3</sup>

I just believe that evangelism ought to leave our communities better, not bitter. Let’s turn the page. 📖



1 *unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity... and Why It Matters*, <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/unchristian-david-kinnaman/1103067232#productInfoTabs>.  
 2 Jonathan Bell, “Church Leaders React to Alcohol Retail Sales on Sundays,” *The Royal Gazette*, November 13, 2013, <http://www.royalgazette.com/article/20131113/NEWS/131119932>.  
 3 In Michael R. Tucker, *The Church That Dared to Change* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1975), 29.

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**Alan Parker, DTh**, is professor in the School of Religion at Southern Adventist University, where he is also director of the Pierson Institute of Evangelism and World Missions and director of the SALT Program, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States.



# Does evangelism still work?

The heart of Seventh-day Adventist mission is evangelism. The church “was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.”<sup>1</sup> But we often do not understand what works and what does not. For an organization that spends tens of millions of dollars on evangelism every year, we know surprisingly little about what might be effective. As a result, we tend to rely on anecdotal stories and gut feelings rather than hard data. Fortunately, new research is helping us find answers.

In this article, I will share one of the largest studies on Adventist personal and public evangelism. We were able to analyze using a software program called *Disciples*.<sup>2</sup> This program was used by 231 churches and 14 organizations in the United States to track over 60,000 people who were either receiving Bible studies or attending public events.<sup>3</sup> The data is very recent, covering a seven-year period from 2009 through 2016.

Although most of the churches in the study were traditional, English-speaking churches, we gained valuable insights into the evangelistic process. While some of our assumptions about evangelism were confirmed, there were also results that both surprised and challenged us.

## Are prophecy seminars still effective?

The first thing we discovered was that public evangelism still thrives in North America! There were 354 prophecy events recorded, drawing 25,314 guests. Nearly half of these events had more than 100 registrations. Church

members made up only 40 percent of registrations, perhaps suggesting a declining interest inside the church. Twelve larger multichurch meetings drew an additional 6,000 guests, letting us know there is obviously still a public interest in prophecy.

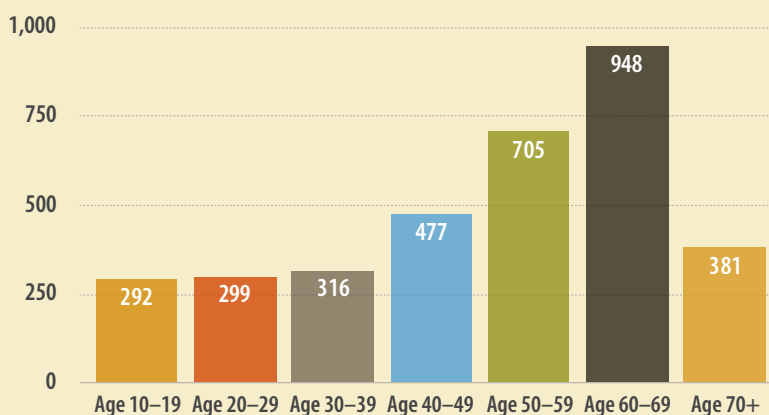
While the news about public evangelism is generally positive, there are a number of worrying signs. One is the age of the average attendee. We discovered a remarkable demographic shift over the last three decades. For instance, in 1991 the Southern Union conducted research into the previous seven years of evangelistic meetings and found that 54 percent of non-Adventist attendees were under the age of 40. In 1995 and 1996, the NET global satellite evangelistic meetings had an average age of 43. By 2000, it had grown slightly to 44.<sup>4</sup> Our results suggest that age has continued to trend upward.

The recent meetings show that only 34 percent of attendees were under the age of 40 (see figure 1). The longer the meetings ran, the older the crowd became, with approximately 60 percent of the average audience over the age of 50 by night 16.

Clearly, we can no longer rely on traditional meetings to effectively reach the 18–50 age group. An older audience also presents its own challenges. When people are older, they find it more difficult to change denominations or to make lifestyle changes. This means that it is taking longer for people to make decisions and join the church. In fact, our research suggests that most baptisms occur a year or more after the meetings are concluded.<sup>5</sup>

While meeting attendance remains good, immediate baptisms are fairly small. Most sites reported fewer than eight new-member baptisms at the

**Figure 1: Profile of opening night attendance**



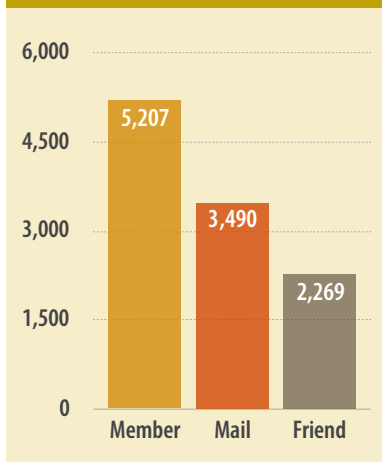
conclusion of the meetings, with three new-member baptisms being average for a local church meeting. However, effective follow-up can make all the difference. In one church that I worked with, there was only one immediate baptism. Over the course of a year, twelve more made a decision to join the church. Understandably, few people are ready to join the church after just four weeks of exposure to Adventism, particularly if they are older.

I have also found that evangelistic meetings serve a useful purpose in discipling new believers. Our research found that recent converts are some of the most consistent attendees. There seems to be good reason to run a second prophecy meeting within a year of the first one, in order to both disciple new believers and reap fruit from the first meeting. Indeed, we are counseled, “After the first efforts have been made in a place by giving a course of lectures, there is really greater necessity for a second course than for the first. The truth is new and startling, and the people need to have the same presented the second time, to get the points distinct and the ideas fixed in the mind.”<sup>6</sup>

There has also been a shift over the past couple of decades away from a dependence on media advertising. Although we had limited data on advertising, we did have some information from event registration surveys. Figure 2 shows that members were the most important recruiting method (43 percent), followed by direct mail (29 percent), and friends (19 percent). This suggests that the personal invitation is growing in importance and that handbills continue to be a primary means of attracting a crowd to evangelistic events. The role of television, radio, and newspaper was greatly diminished (less than 2 percent). Since Facebook has only recently been used as an advertising tool, we did not have sufficient data on this strategy to draw a conclusion on its effectiveness.

In terms of retention, people were far more likely to continue attending an evangelistic series if they had been invited by a friend or a member. For

**Figure 2: Advertising effectiveness by opening night attendance**



instance, there was a 38–45 percent drop-off in attendance if they had been brought by a Bible worker or friend, compared to a 60 percent drop-off if they came in through a handbill.

However, people who came in through handbills were surprisingly receptive to making decisions for Christ or the Sabbath, yet they were far less likely than other groups to make baptism decisions or to join the church. This raises the question of whether we are trying to take people too rapidly through the doctrines if they have been recruited purely through a handbill. We may need a slower approach to this group, particularly when they are older.

### One-week reaping meetings

In contrast to the traditional prophecy series were the one-week reaping meetings led by Roger Hernandez of the Southern Union. He utilized a shorter series that was not dependent on prophecy. In our database we had several multichurch meetings held for either English-speaking (6 events) or Spanish-speaking districts (7 events). Unlike the prophecy meetings, they did not use mailed flyers. The meetings were promoted to members for

a year in advance, and Bible workers were brought in two to three months before the event began. Most of the guests therefore came through members or Bible workers. The results were encouraging because the 13 events managed to draw crowds of about 1,500 English-speaking guests and nearly 5,000 Spanish-speaking guests.

Unlike the prophecy meetings, there were more members than guests (about 60 percent members in attendance), a younger age-group was present (although we did not have conclusive data for this), and there seemed to be a strong interest in the meetings from the members. Baptism results were impressive and significantly higher than in the prophecy meetings. Doctrines were introduced in terms of how they related to practical Christianity, and a baptism appeal was made every night.

It seems that the more relational approach, the down-to-earth preaching, and the consistent appeals made it easier for people to make decisions for baptism. Unfortunately, we do not yet have access to retention rates. However, this approach indicates that there is more than one way to engage in public evangelism.

### Health events

We had 88 health events in the database with an average of 60 registrations per event. Health events, therefore, appear to be smaller than prophecy meetings but will likely reach a different audience. One example of this is the low transfer rate between health events and evangelistic meetings. However, those churches that had consistent health events (such as monthly dinner clubs) were more likely to see transfers and eventual baptisms.

Health events require patience to see results. Our preliminary data indicates that it takes two to five years before people become Adventists as a result of our health outreach programs. A number of supper clubs (or Dinner With the Doctor events) have seen 12 baptisms or more over a five-year period—but only when evangelistic

meetings were also held in the same time period. Thus, the synergistic approach to holding multiple bridge and reaping events, with significant relationship building in between, appears to be effective.

We did not have enough data here to draw a solid conclusion on age, but it appeared that the majority of participants were older than 50. We believe that young adults and families have an interest in health, but the interest is likely not compelling enough to have them come out to a health meeting. My hypothesis is that members of this age group find their health information online.

There was a remarkable gender gap when it comes to health. Sixty-nine percent of the attendees were female compared to only 31 percent male attendance. For cooking schools, the number of females attending rose to 78 percent. Men appear to be less concerned with health education,<sup>7</sup> unless they are having a health crisis. From a broader perspective, the gender difference was consistent for nearly all of our events (with the exception of children's meetings), suggesting that churches are struggling to find a way to reach men.

## Bible studies

Women appeared more interested in Bible studies than men. Sixty-one percent of women signed up for Bible studies compared to 39 percent men. By the seventh Bible study visit, men accounted for only 31 percent of studies. However, we found that men were more likely to agree to an in-home Bible study, whereas women seemed to prefer a drop-off study. We suspect that this is because women are cautious of strangers entering their home.

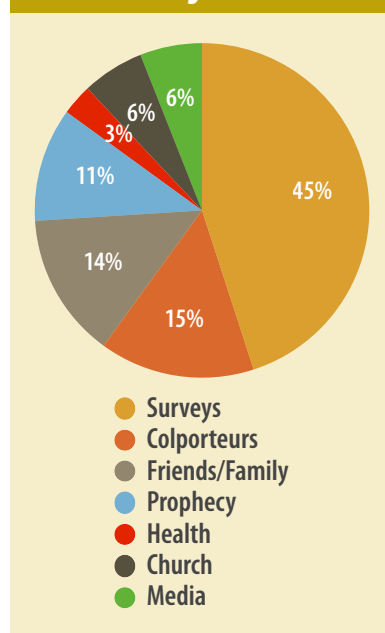
One factor that may have influenced this gender gap is that a significant number of our 12,000 Bible study interests were generated by evangelism training schools. Since these schools do a lot of door-to-door work, and since more women than men are at home, this may have skewed the results. Our database showed a

significant number of Bible studies were the result of door surveys.

The results of this door-to-door outreach were encouraging. In the database, more than 60 percent of all the Bible study interests were generated through surveys and literature evangelists (see figure 3). It may not be easy to encourage our members to knock on doors, but the study shows that we can still generate new spiritual interests that way.

Further good news is that about two-thirds of those who express an interest in Bible studies as the result of a survey can be converted into a Bible study on a follow-up visit.

**Figure 3: Source of Bible study interests**



However, there is also a downside to this approach. If we rely too much on “stranger evangelism,” as many organizations and churches in this study did,<sup>8</sup> we also reduce our effectiveness. Survey interests tend to fall away fairly quickly and are more likely to want studies dropped off at their doors.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, studies generated by a friend or family member were much more likely to agree to in-home Bible studies. These relationally generated studies

had a retention rate nearly double that of survey interests. Additionally, if the study came through a friend or family member, the person was also much more likely to decide to keep the Sabbath and be baptized.<sup>10</sup>

Another example of stranger evangelism was blanketing a ZIP code with cards inviting people to receive Bible lessons. There was generally a response rate of 5 to 8 returns per thousand cards mailed. A Bible worker or church member would then follow up on the interest card. However, it seems that people were surprised to have someone knock on their door, rather than receive something in the mail. As a result, we noticed that these interests were three times more likely to accept a drop-off study than an in-home study. Perhaps our follow-up needs to focus more on dropping off studies or mailing them in and converting them to in-home studies later on. The good news is that once you are able to get into the home, these interests have an excellent retention rate.

Churches also follow up on names from media ministries. Although the transfer to Bible studies was lower than we would like (30 percent), the positive side is that a media interest is more likely to accept an in-home Bible study, not just a dropped-off one.

The bottom line is that we need to encourage more relational or network evangelism in our churches, as these strategies are ultimately more effective. However, we need to do this without neglecting stranger evangelism, which still has some success in generating Bible studies.

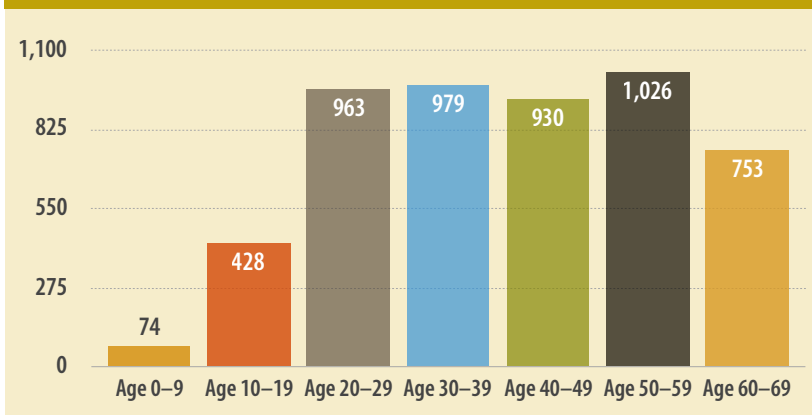
We were curious to see the age of those agreeing to Bible studies. We suspected that there would be an older group interested in Bible studies. In figure 4, we see the overall age range<sup>11</sup> of the Bible study interests. Surprisingly, it is fairly evenly spread across the age groups. However, in figure 5, we can see how this demographic shifts as you continue Bible studies. By the seventh visit the millennial age group has largely dropped away. We are not sure of the reasons



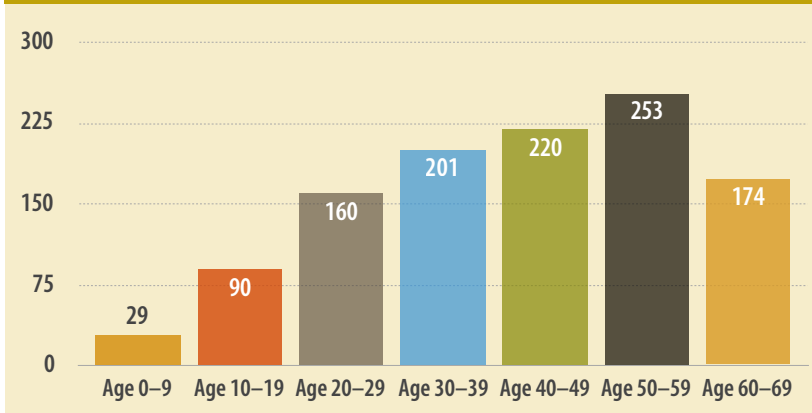
for the lack of consistency in this age group.

several media organizations, and three evangelism training schools has given

**Figure 4: All Bible study interests by age range**



**Figure 5: Bible study interests by seventh visit**



When our team analyzed the data from these 12,000 Bible study interests, we concluded that there were a number of factors that led to retention and decisions for baptism: (a) the Bible study interest was generated through family or friends; (b) the Bible study was converted into an in-home Bible study; (c) the person receiving the study was female; and (d) older than 40. Although less effective for retention, door-to-door surveys, mail-in cards, and media interests were a significant source of Bible study interests and should not be neglected.

## Conclusion

Our research into seven years worth of data from hundreds of churches,

us valuable insights into evangelism. We have found that public evangelism is still successful, even in the United States. However, we also realized that we need to introduce new strategies if we are to reach younger age groups, while taking a longer-term approach to older attendees. We saw that women showed a much greater interest in health and spirituality, but we obviously need to find ways to reach a broader demographic.

We discovered that the process by which people become Seventh-day Adventists takes much longer than we originally anticipated, especially for health interests. However, the most important finding was the need to build relationships with evangelistic

interests. We saw that while door-to-door work and “stranger evangelism” is effective in generating Bible study interests, friendship evangelism is far more effective in gaining decisions and retaining them. Where we can meaningfully invest in the process, build relationships, and call for decisions, we are much more likely to see success. Perhaps this is why Ellen White so poignantly wrote, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people.”<sup>12</sup>

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 9.
- 2 *Disciples* is an Adventist evangelism tracking program available for free at <http://www.getdisciples.com>.
- 3 We restricted our dataset to the United States and Canada. At least 44 states and provinces were represented, but the highest number of event registrations were in Michigan (22 percent), California (12 percent), Georgia (10 percent), and Florida (9 percent).
- 4 See Monte Sahlín’s presentation to the North American Division in 2008. “Adventist Church Growth and Evangelism Research: Briefing for Presidents Council of the Pacific Union Conference” (live presentation, Westlake Village, CA, 2008).
- 5 Using a sample size, we tracked baptisms from the meetings over four years and found that only 27 percent of all baptisms occurred at the end of the meetings. The majority of those who got baptized did so within six months to two years following the meeting.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 334.
- 7 A Pew Research study published on December 10, 2015, corroborates this gender difference. Pew Research Center, “Women Especially Interested in Health and Medicine; More Men Interested in Science and Technology,” [http://www.pewinternet.org/2015-12-11/public-interest-in-science-and-health-linked-to-gender-age-and-personality/pi\\_2015-12-11\\_science-and-health\\_1-04/](http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/12/11/public-interest-in-science-and-health-linked-to-gender-age-and-personality/pi_2015-12-11_science-and-health_1-04/).
- 8 Only 8 percent of Bible study interests were generated by friends, family, or church members. If one takes only the known list of lead sources, this rises to 20 percent, suggesting that stranger evangelism accounts the vast majority of all Bible studies generated in the database.
- 9 Only 24 percent of survey interests wanted an in-home Bible study, compared to 43 percent who would accept a drop-off study.
- 10 Survey interests are, however, fairly likely to make a decision to accept Christ.
- 11 Only about half of the Bible study interest ages were recorded.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), 143.

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# Fishing for people

It is a sad and disturbing truth that most professed Christians have never led one person to Christ. This reality is a clear dereliction of duty and directly contributes to the precipitous decline of the church. In Jesus' nocturnal conversation with His disciples, just prior to His sacrifice on Calvary, He told them, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit." (John 15:5, NIV). One aspect of fruit bearing is directly related to successfully engaging in personal evangelism.

## The failure to fish

Several years ago, I met a fisherman who fished using an aircraft. He did what is called "spot fishing." He located the fish from his aircraft, then directed the captain of the fishing trawler to that location. He was as much a fisherman as those in the fishing trawler.

There are many reasons why most Christians refuse to or fail to fish for people; here are a few. *False premise:* fishing has been left to, or at times been seen as, the exclusive domain of pastors, Bible workers, and other "professional fishermen." *Faulty technique:* the church has made the task of soul winning too complicated and nonbiblical. The church seems to be more interested in making members than making disciples. *Failed responsibility:* many of us as pastors have neglected our responsibility, highlighted in Ephesians 4, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (v. 12).<sup>1</sup> The primary role of the pastor is to teach, train, and assign disciples for service. If

we return to the biblical models Jesus gave us for doing evangelism, we would be much more successful at fulfilling the Great Commission.

In declaring that He would make those who follow Him fishers of people, Jesus was uplifting fishing as a major metaphor for understanding and undertaking evangelism. In his Gospel, Luke recorded an incident that occurred on Lake Gennesaret (Luke 5:1–11). This incident is pregnant with insights for disciples into how to catch people. In order to realize the goal of transforming church members into disciples who will fish for people, there are three tracks that ought to be pursued by individual disciples and the local church.

## Fishing 101

First, in addition to consciously and consistently building relationships with secular people, *each disciple of Christ must be ready to share his or her personal testimony.* God never asked all of us to give Bible studies; He has, however, asked us to share our personal testimony. Note John's statement in 1 John 1:1–3. No one can argue with you about your personal testimony.

This is what Daniel and Norma did. Both were lifelong members who had never led someone to the Lord. Daniel invited his friend Sam, who also attended our monthly meet and greet for guests, where Sam was befriended by other young adults. After developing a sense of belonging, he joined my Bible class and was baptized. Today he is an active member of the

congregation. He traces his commitment to Daniel, the other young adults, and ultimately to the work of the Holy Spirit on his heart.

Norma reached out to one of our Sabbath guests, Sharon, and they initially communicated via text messages. Norma also invited Sharon to Sabbath dinner, prayed with her, and shared her personal testimony as well. This friendship led to Sharon's desire to become a disciple of Christ, and today she's a baptized member of the body of Christ. Neither Daniel or Norma gave Bible studies, but both were instrumental in facilitating Sam and Sharon's surrendering to the Lordship of Christ.

Every born-again believer will have a testimony of their life before Christ, how they found Christ, and the difference He makes in their lives. In today's environment, your testimony can be initially more effective than merely quoting Scripture.

Jesus declared in Luke 10 that the problem with evangelism is not that no one wants to receive Christ and the gift of salvation. On the contrary, "the harvest is plentiful." But, He says, "the laborers are few" (v. 2). In that same verse, He makes it clear that the answer to the problem begins with prayer. Therefore, the first task in changing the evangelism dynamic in the church is prayer. Pray for opportunities—and courage—to share your testimony. God will send more laborers into His vineyard in response to the earnest prayers of believers who are passionate about realizing the fulfillment of the gospel commission.

## Go where the fish are

Second, *the local church must get to know the community in which it exists.* Eleven years ago my family and I moved into a new community. I suggested to the neighbors that we plan a block party and include those whose homes were still being built. This event occurred on a Sabbath afternoon in the summer. My family and I attended the party, met our neighbors, and friendships were formed. I eventually served as president of the home owners association and was able to minister to my community. A few months ago a resident indicated

modern disciples to consciously and systematically develop friendships with non-Christians. Get to know the people in the neighborhood in which you live; get to know your coworkers on the job; join the civic association; volunteer in your community; and most certainly get to know the people in the community in which your congregation exists.<sup>2</sup> Get to know them by name, and they should know you by name. Frequent the same places of business and get to know your local bank teller, gas station attendant, dry cleaner, and so on. All of these friendships can develop into

that God's kingdom will be made up of people from every nation, tribe, language, and people, this will mean two things: (1) we must expand our fishing techniques in order to enhance our ability to catch a variety of fish; and (2) our aquarium (church) must be able to accommodate and be willing to tolerate this variety of fish. Let us briefly explore these two points.

Regarding the first point, I remember living in South America and catching fish in shallow water—by hand. It reminded me of the time that Jesus, on the occasion of securing the

*Pastors and church leaders must consistently challenge and encourage modern disciples to consciously and systematically develop friendships with non-Christians.*

that she would love for me to become her pastor. Gloria attributed her desire to the relationship we had developed and her observation of my lifestyle and character, as well as my service to the community.

Jesus' instructions to Peter make it clear that in order to become successful fishers, we must go where the fish are. For too long it has become common practice for Christians to abandon their non-Christian friends. This philosophy is espoused out of the fear of "contamination." Many Adventists, for example, would prefer to live in an "Adventist ghetto," so as to remain uncontaminated from the world. This is dangerous and counterproductive. Having only Christian friends essentially destroys one's ability to experience Jesus' promise to make him or her a fisher of people. The fish in the aquarium are already caught.

Pastors and church leaders must consistently challenge and encourage

opportunities for fishing. Friends listen to friends. If you want to catch fish, you have to go where the fish are.

Assign members to specific blocks so that neighbors can get to know individuals and build relationships. Appoint someone as your church's community liaison and (a) have a yearly block party, (b) partner with other churches to do ministry, (c) open your church for community events such as police-community dialogue and relations, and (d) partner with community organizations that serve youth and seniors. Discover the needs in your community and use this needs-based ministry to build relationships.

## An environment of grace

Thirdly, in addition to what individual disciples do, *the local church must do everything possible to create a united, loving, and grace-filled congregation.* If we sincerely believe

money to pay the temple tax, instructed Peter to "go to the sea and cast a hook" (Matt. 17:27). On another occasion, however, upon getting into deep water, Jesus instructed Peter to let down his nets for a catch. It appears that some fish are best caught using a net; while others may require a hook, line, and bait. The principle being taught here has been ignored to our peril: *the fish you are aiming to catch determine the technique you are attempting to utilize.*

All fish cannot be caught using the same methodology. Every successful fisher knows the same tactic cannot be used to catch marlins, whales, bass, trout, or salmon. So why are we attempting to use one primary method to do evangelism? Fishers use nets, bait, tackle, and other techniques based upon the fish they are trying to catch. The type of fish will also determine the size of the fishing rod and the technique to be used. Unless we

are prepared to expand our fishing techniques, we will fish all day and all night and have nothing to show for it.

Regarding the second point, we must be prepared not only to catch but to embrace a variety of fish. Jesus called us to be fishers of people, not cleaners of fish. Nevertheless, many Christians—especially those who are not engaged in personal evangelism—seem eager and ready to embrace a task not given to them, namely, cleaning the fish. In this role of fish cleaning, they make every effort to bring the new believer into alignment with all the teachings of the church (as they see them) as soon as possible. The role of judge and corrector of heretics is assumed, and new believers are required, in the shortest possible time, to act like members of long standing.

The idea that people mature at their own rate is totally foreign to these fish cleaners. They assume that they are doing the church and God a service by ensuring that new believers conform to the church's standards immediately. People need answers to hard questions. They also need cultural relevance, so we must be culturally relevant. People also need time, so we cannot expect that, after a two-week meeting, everyone will be ready to make a full commitment.

People want to experience community, a commodity that God's church was uniquely designed to facilitate. Therefore, eliminate all cliques in the body of Christ and avoid clichés in your communication. Put an end to any hint of nationalism or cultural biases. Develop a relevant guest-relation program that may include a monthly meet and greet for guests and leaders. Teach parishioners to make individual contact with guests beyond the official welcome. Invite guests for fellowship lunch and be particularly mindful of repeat visitors, turning them into friends. Invite and allow guests to participate (test-drive the faith) before they commit. Have a strong team of Bible instructors and a strong discipleship program.

As you get to know the fish in your section of the sea, you will discover what can be utilized to attract them and to prepare them to receive the gospel of Christ. This type of fishing would also require that we allow people the opportunity to test-drive the faith long before they request membership. Historically, we have demanded that a person behave a certain way before they belong. Consider all the things we ask baptismal candidates to do before we consider them eligible for baptism. However, we may need to allow people to experience a sense of belonging before we expect them to behave as we want. Churches will need to have conversations about what they are comfortable allowing nonmembers to participate in. The failure to initiate such a dialogue can be catastrophic.

It is not by accident that Scripture calls new believers "infants." Just as we allow and make extensive preparations when we expect a newborn in our homes, the same must be true in our churches. Too many newborn Christians have been driven from the church because unkind and insensitive members were expecting and demanding too much too soon. Transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit, and it is a lifelong process. Our responsibility is to provide a loving, grace-filled environment that includes accountability so that sinners can progressively be transformed, under the auspices of the Holy Spirit, from sinners into saints. We know this process as "sanctification." Those who engage in fishing for people will allow the Holy Spirit to clean the fish.

### A new approach

Jesus said, "Come with me. I'll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I'll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass" (Matt. 4:19, *The Message*). If we want to win the world for Christ, we must change. We need to change because God cares about lost people; they matter to Him, and so they must matter to us.

Notice what happened when Peter followed Jesus' counterintuitive instructions: "And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking" (Luke 5:6). Yes, Jesus, the Master Carpenter, knows how to be a great fisherman. Therefore, if we are ever tempted to doubt His directions and instructions regarding evangelism, we need to keep in mind the results that His methods achieved.

Upon calling the very first disciples, Jesus not only issued a call to follow Him, but He also made a promise: "Jesus said to them, 'Come with me, and I will teach you to catch people'" (Matt. 4:19, GNT). The call to discipleship also comes with a responsibility. Jesus is the original Promise Keeper, and all of His promises are true. Therefore, if you are following Christ, you will be fishing. The inverse must also be true: if you are not fishing, it may well be that your assertion of discipleship can be called into question.

Evangelism cannot be an event; it must become a lifestyle. Peter thought that successful fishing could occur only as a nocturnal activity. Similarly, we are tempted to think that fishing for people is counterproductive in light of the post-Christian world in which we now live. We must, however, be willing to do counterintuitive fishing when all signs suggest otherwise.

When all is implemented, evangelism will no longer be event-based, but lifestyle-oriented. Imagine what could happen if each year each disciple of Christ leads one person to Christ. If we do not change our approach, churches will continue in the death spiral that many are already in. ❖

1 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

2 "Wherever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in a missionary work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood and know their spiritual condition. If professed Christians had engaged in this work from the time when their names were first placed on the church books, there would not now be such widespread unbelief, such depths of iniquity, such unparalleled wickedness, as is seen in the world at the present time." Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), 71, 72.

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# Christ in the Arts

We met Krissy<sup>1</sup> at a coffee shop across from the Boston University campus in Boston, Massachusetts. She was a petite, almost fragile-looking brunette, attractive, around 20 years of age. Deep into our conversation, she removed three pencil drawings from an inside pocket of her notebook. Though they were created with an ordinary ink pen during a recent cross-country flight, and were for her simply a way to pass the time, we instantly recognized that we were with a young artist of extraordinary talent. Krissy was in the second year of her art degree at the university and preparing for a career in art education. We asked why she was envisioning an academic career rather than devoting herself full time to drawing and painting. With a laugh she explained: “So I won’t starve!” Drawing and painting were her true first loves.

Largely because she connected with Boston’s Park Street Church<sup>2</sup> congregation, Krissy is unique among her secular-minded contemporaries. Her belief in Christ and desire to contribute to Christian mission, largely through her art, form the central purpose of her life. Those ideas kept surfacing in our conversation. We were delighted to encounter a millennial so passionately committed to Christian discipleship—and a progressive-thinking artist at that, even in the midst of a secular city!

## Park street and the arts

The fostering of creative expression through various forms of art has been an

avenue for forming Christian relationships in the life of Park Street Church for over a decade. Park Street Arts is a community that began about the year 2000 as a hosted group of people from the church who collaborated in artistic endeavors. A small group of members prayed for nearly a year over the vision to initiate some sort of ministry presence for people engaged in the arts before Park Street Arts was launched. They believed that students and other young adults trying to make it in some area of art vocation represented people who were often uncomfortable or even rejected in the usual life of a congregation. The small group launched with about 15 accomplished or aspiring artists meeting in a residential apartment in the heart of the city near the church.

Growth led to a need for decentralizing the original group leadership, and the pastoral staff became involved in a process of mentoring new people to lead multiple and diverse artist groups. The church listened, and continues to frequently gather artists together, asking what they envision as ways to serve the community and advance their vocation and artistic interests while sharing the gospel.

Park Street Arts has matured and aspires to provide a center for quality expression of the arts that enriches the community and the church. They affirm the beauty and purpose of art forms that include design, visual arts, music, drama, media, photography, and writing. Some art forms have several groups. Some participants in these groups are professionals, others

students, others amateurs, and others people who simply want to develop knowledge of and appreciation for a particular artistic discipline. Many engage with the city in plays, concerts, or other events, while finding support in groups from the church.

Persons having interest or experience in the technical side of audio/video operation, stage management, production, marketing and publicity, hospitality, or general project management have gotten involved. That has opened a door for the church to plan and offer concerts, exhibitions, performances, lectures, and symposiums for the city. The notoriety the church has gotten for its engagement in the Boston area cultural activities and artistic workshops has further advanced its witness.

Thus it was perfect for Krissy, who had chosen to leave her home in California to enroll at Boston University because of its reputation in art education. She had been nurtured as a child and adolescent in a Christian home, but she entered into this new phase of her life wanting to form her own beliefs. Her parents accompanied her as she made the move to Boston. While getting her settled, they walked the Freedom Trail in the heart of the city together on a Sunday morning. After an hour or so they stood outside of the Park Street Church. It was about the time the morning worship was to begin, so they decided to stay for the service, largely just to find a respite from the walking.

Krissy immediately noticed the church was predominately twentysomethings, mixed with other generations.

The sermon focused on the artistic crafts that had contributed to the building of the ark of the covenant. That spoke to Krissy, and she made a mental note that in coming weeks she would check out the church further. This would be a way to examine her faith, she reasoned. She felt the church would welcome her and she would be in the company of other young artists, while being mentored in the church by more experienced Christians as well. She noticed there were many small groups where people in the arts could share their work.

And yet, in the midst of all this, Krissy decided, after attending for some time, that she needed to form her own

personal faith. So she made the decision to enroll in the new-believers' class, requiring one evening each week for seven weeks. When I met her, Krissy had been at Boston College for two years and had become a regular attendee at Park Street. She described many connections at the church and loved her volunteer work at the art gallery provided in the church space. She knew the church as a caring place, a place that affirmed her gifts and helped her with her questions about faith, vocation, and life.

And she is not alone either. Scott and his wife recently moved from Boston to one of the largest state universities in the Midwest, where Scott

holds a leadership position on the university's administrative team.

Raised a Catholic, Scott had abandoned his faith in God at the age of 18. He completed college on an athletic scholarship and began a career in academics at a secular college in Boston. A proclaimed agnostic, Scott described himself as opposed to organized religion in the decade that followed. He considered churches terrible institutions that misled people and did not contribute to society in any meaningful way.

At the age of 28 his life changed. Living and working in the Boston area, he missed the camaraderie of the team that athletics had provided. So he

## A unique church


Situated next to Boston Common and the Granary Burying Ground on Boston's Freedom Trail, the Park Street Church has shaped evangelicalism in America for over 200 years. The congregation can trace its beginnings to a small group of devout Christians, most members of the Old South Meeting House, who in 1804 were concerned that biblical foundations in their faith might be diminished with the rising of Unitarianism. They wanted to strengthen, or augment, the emerging worldview they observed in their own Boston congregation, and indeed across New England, with biblical teachings. Seeking a foundational biblical expression of faith merged with a compassionate worldview, they launched a weekly Bible study small group. The small group formed into a distinct church of its own, officially formed in 1809. The members were clearly aligned with the Congregational denomination, giving expression to the pairing of conservative biblical positions alongside a vigorous social conscience. They erected the current church sanctuary and began its use in 1810.

Several key moments in America's story are linked to Park Street. The church was the place where William Lloyd Garrison delivered his antislavery

speech in 1829. Issues such as women's suffrage and the temperance movement of the early twentieth century found voice through the congregation. The church initiated the oldest continuous running Christian radio station in the country. In 1944, a ministry launched at Park Street to help churches rebuild in Europe following World War II evolved into World Relief, a dynamic organization that today has approximately 2,500 staff and 60,000 volunteers worldwide fostering economic, social, and spiritual relief efforts for the world's most vulnerable populations. And the NAACP\* for the Northeastern United States was launched from the church.

Observing its position in American history, a casual observer might think the church has focused on social issues to the neglect of interest in conservative biblical scholarship. That would not be accurate, for this congregation became a thriving congregation in the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, the most conservative expression of the Congregational denomination in America. About 1,500 members attend Sunday worship services. Presently there are 9 full-time and 5 part-time pastors, with a total of 35 on the church staff. The vibrancy of biblical study and inquiry into Christian beliefs is evident in their congregational life.

The church does focus on people, dedicating about 40 percent of its budget to mission. It provides English as a second language classes, sponsors and provides ministries for the homeless, serves women in crisis, and aids immigrants, among other ministries. Park Street has more small groups active in service within the city than the pastoral staff can keep up with, with over 80 in their estimation functioning at any given time.

For members at Park Street, small groups are an incarnational presence of Christ in the city. Opportunities to encourage worship participation are frequent but not seen as the primary way to interpret the purpose of group life. A culture of investigating worship and faith by dropping in to the worship service can be seen as a reasonable outcome of the relationships built within groups. At its worship services, the church intentionally promotes ways for people to transition from casual to regular attendance and to grow in discipleship. An extended curriculum exploring biblical inspiration and Christian discipleship comes open to any who wish to investigate Christian faith. Krissy had gone through one such curriculum for a period of seven weeks and this helped link her to the church. 

\* NAACP stands for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

responded to an invitation from a casual acquaintance to try out his acting skills with a newly formed small group of artists from Park Street. It seemed like the right match for him, a way to connect and pursue a developing interest in the theater. The small group had envisioned live production but soon began to work on producing short films. Scott found the collegiality he had looked for, and he liked the atmosphere of intellectual curiosity fostered in the group. They freely discussed the idea of God, as Scott describes the conversations, and exchanged differing worldviews. When the group challenged him to read Timothy Keller's *A Reason for God*, he did. He continued to ask questions and deepen his relationships with other young adults from the church. He began to attend worship, was further inspired to pursue questions of faith, and eventually joined the new-member class. In the process he met a young

Christian woman who is now his wife! They are both active disciples of Christ and deeply involved in a local church. Park Street Arts, an arts ministry to be exact, contributed significantly to the life they have now formed.

Scott describes the culture of intellectual curiosity of members from Park Street as the primary factor that God used to lead him to genuine faith. He acknowledges that it started with his interest in the arts. The small group included people who knew how to produce and direct. Acting in the films, and connecting with like-minded artists, became the path for finding faith in God.

### A great model

There are many lessons to be learned from the experience of Krissy. She is a talented millennial and a Christian. In a secular city, with the pressures post-Christian culture presents to faith in Christ, she chose to follow Jesus.

She continues as an intelligent young adult, a university student in an urban secular environment, a millennial, and a Christian.

We can learn from the story of Scott too. How many like him are out there, seeking answers to questions that we believe we have? But, unless we have something to draw people like him to us, we do people, like Scott, no good.

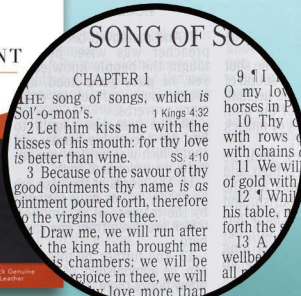
We can reflect on the contribution of this specific church, the Park Street Church, to ministry and connection in small groups, on creating a culture of openness, of acceptance, and on the appreciation of the arts. We can learn from the contribution the arts made to developing the creative energy God has placed within us. 🙌

- 1 The narratives in this article are accounts of actual personal experiences, but details have been altered to protect individual identities.
- 2 See "A unique church" on page 14 for some rich history of this church.

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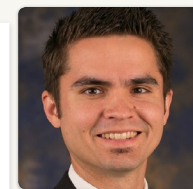
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# Simple tool, great results!

## Publishing's prophetic calling

Pastor Tali, from the local Samoan Christian church, was hungry. Because it was cold in Anchorage, Alaska, that day, he decided to get a spicy dish at one of his favorite Mexican restaurants in town. As Tali stepped out of his car at the restaurant, he noticed something on the ground. It was a GLOW tract. Soon afterward, because of the tract, Pastor Tali, his associate, and his entire church were taking Bible studies from the local Seventh-day Adventist pastor.

Ellen White says, "We know not what may be the results of giving away a leaflet containing present truth."<sup>1</sup> Though many pastors have been blessed by Ellen White's counsel to incorporate literature evangelism into their own ministry preparation,<sup>2</sup> this is a blessing too good to keep for pastors alone. Ellen White is clear on three things: (1) every person is not called to canvassing defined as book sales;<sup>3</sup> (2) no person should prescribe the ministry for someone else;<sup>4</sup> and (3) every person is called to work for God.<sup>5</sup>

As we await the soon return of Christ, the prophetic ministry of evangelism in general and literature evangelism in particular are to find larger and more exact fulfillment. The work of reaching the billions of this world is to be aided by the publishing ministry. Ellen White states, "In a large degree through our publishing houses is to be accomplished the work of that other angel who comes down from heaven with great power

and who lightens the earth with his glory."<sup>6</sup> Considering the present state of publishing in many parts of the world church, one might understandably wonder how this can take place.

I propose that, in order for this ministry to reach its prophetic fulfillment, there needs to be a radically new emphasis on literature distribution throughout the world. We may want the focus to be less about money and more about ministry.<sup>7</sup> There are perhaps five benefits of literature distribution (as opposed to sales) that lend themselves to this purpose.

### 1. Member activation

First, and perhaps foremost, the ministry of literature distribution—whether of books, tracts, or magazines—has the potential to activate the over 95 percent of church members who are not literature evangelists as we have commonly understood it, by shifting the focus from selling to distributing. In one case, an elderly woman with only one functioning arm gave away tracts by slipping them into napkins as her church sold vegetarian burgers at a fair. She said, "This is something even I can do!" When publishing departments at the conference, union, and division levels begin to provide local churches with training and promotion aimed at encouraging literature distribution, they will be grooming a new generation of literature evangelists.

Each of these members will be a literature evangelist in the fullest sense.

This may appear to be a new approach to some, but this would be only revisiting one of the founding purposes of the literature ministry. "In the past, a large work has been accomplished in the distribution of the printed page. This is a line of service in which every church member can have some part. All cannot go out as canvassers for our larger books; but there is a field of usefulness open before many of our brethren and sisters in the placing of truth-filled publications in the homes of their neighbors and friends."<sup>8</sup>

Literature distribution is definitely one of the few ministry options in which the counsel says that every member *can* and *should* participate. We calculate that if each year every church member across the globe gave away just one piece of literature per day, we would give out 7.3 billion pieces of literature each year—enough for approximately the entire world population annually.

If our sole or primary ministry agenda is to train our membership for book sales, we will have thrown away our opportunity to involve the vast majority of God's church in total member involvement.

### 2. Visibility

This next point seems simple: the more people engage in the publishing work, the more visible the ministry will be. Literature distribution gives more members an opportunity to join publishing and, as they participate and become active, the visibility of



the ministry of publishing naturally increases. This, in turn, feeds back into more member participation. This positive upward spiral begins with intentional efforts on the part of the leadership, from the local conference and the local union. These publishing departments may wish to suggest the establishment of a publishing ministries coordinator for each congregation—a new local church office. The task of these coordinators would be to promote, promote, promote literature work. One adage says, “Out of sight, out of mind.” Ellen White echoes this when she writes, “When church members realize the importance of the circulation of our literature, they will devote more time to this work.”<sup>9</sup> Church members do not devote themselves to literature distribution because they hear little about it. In the local church, publishing often has a very obscure public profile. In many churches, it is frequently represented only by a church rack in a corner containing outdated literature mixed with various in-reach publications. The establishment of a local church publishing ministries coordinator addresses this problem.

Jeanette owned and operated a hair salon. At various times, she had received two Adventist publications on the topic of the Sabbath. She had a feeling that God was trying to speak to her. She asked God, “If this is you speaking to me about Saturday observance, please let me know by giving me another piece of literature on this topic.” A few days later, Anil handed Jeanette a Sabbath tract in a shopping mall. Jeanette immediately connected herself with the church, took Bible studies, and finished her study courses in a week or two. Her baptism could not come soon enough. She then became the publishing ministries coordinator for her local church, even though she supplied the literature with her own funds.

Like Jeanette, such leaders in the local churches can form a network headed and nurtured by the local conference publishing department. Each pastor should energetically push to

select and train an active and passionate representative in every church. The publishing ministries department can provide periodic, continuing education meetings and lead out in occasional conference-wide or union-wide mass distribution events and rallies.

John Maxwell said, “The true measure of leadership is influence, nothing more nothing less.”<sup>10</sup> We miss the mark, however, if we consider leadership influence solely the prerogative of the paid professional. Ellen White said, “Every one of us exerts an influence on those with whom we come in contact. This influence we have from God, and we are responsible for the way it is used. . . . Guard well your influence; it is ‘your reasonable service’ to place it on the Lord’s side.”<sup>11</sup> A church without a publishing ministries coordinator should be considered a church detached from its influence.

### 3. Improved face

Integrally tied with the previous point would be the public face of publishing in the Adventist Church. Ministry visibility is good, but positive visibility is best.

An emphasis on literature distribution opens the doors of the publishing ministry more fully to pastors and even to children. Children find strong success giving away literature in the community and often enjoy it. Stories, pictures, and videos of children giving away literature gives the ministry of publishing favor with the church at large and gives it a fresh or upgraded public face.

Literature distribution also helps administrators better establish a connection between the publishing work and ministry. When the GLOW<sup>12</sup> tract program started in the Central California Conference, then-president Jerry Page and his wife, Janet, were active in giving out GLOW tracts themselves in their everyday lives. They would frequently promote literature distribution throughout the conference because they had just experienced a divine appointment by giving out literature. Jerry once told how he and

Janet stopped at the toll booth to give payment. Janet kept pestering Jerry to give a tract to the attendant at the toll booth and Jerry resisted, not wanting to risk rejection. He eventually gave in to Janet’s importunity, experienced a divine appointment with a grateful person in a toll booth, and had yet another testimony to share with his pastors and church members. Ellen White says, “When we view the rise and progress of the publishing work from the beginning to the present time, we thank God and take courage. Yet our responsibility toward the unwarned multitudes urges us on to still greater and more systematic efforts to set in operation many agencies for the circulation of our papers, tracts, and books.”<sup>13</sup> The Pages would never have been able to sell books on a regular basis with their busy schedule, but they could easily incorporate literature distribution into their everyday life. This enabled them to see and experience firsthand the prophetic role of publishing ministry in the gospel-to-all-the-world commission.

### 4. Income

While originating in the North American Division, many publishing departments use and promote the distribution of small GLOW tracts. Sometimes conferences generate enough money to hire a part-time assistant who promotes literature distribution throughout the conference, keeps the program fueled, and leads the local church publishing ministries coordinators.

Tracts and small books that are given out for free can also advertise the larger books sold by the colporteurs. Thus, every church member who becomes activated in literature distribution also becomes a lead developer for the conference and union’s colporteur program. Millions of advertising hits can be generated in this fashion. In fact, we are counseled, “Should there be on each copy of these small tracts an advertisement of our publications and the place where they can be obtained, it would extend the circulation of the larger publications.”<sup>14</sup>

## 5. Speed of outreach

Finally, and perhaps most important, literature distribution provides the cheapest and fastest tool that publishing can wield to reach the masses.

When Pope Francis visited the United States recently, one conference publishing department met with pastors and organized 35 church members to come together for what they called a mission trip. In one week they gave out one million tracts, just prior to the Pope's arrival and during the two days he was in Philadelphia.<sup>15</sup> Later, another small group followed their example and gave out another batch of one million tracts when the United States Super Bowl game came to Santa Clara, California.<sup>16</sup> These "mission trips" have spawned others that have mobilized church members to give out literature in large quantities at various locations across the globe.

Such large outreach endeavors are just one example of a variety of methods that can be used to disseminate hundreds of thousands of "silent messengers" in a short time with just a few committed church members. Imagine what speedy work can be done when hundreds of activated churches give out literature on a daily basis.

### Summary

In the past, literature distribution was so powerful that Ellen White was able to make the following statement: "Years ago our brethren in responsibility gave much study to ways and means for the carrying forward of this line of work with increasing efficiency. As the result of carefully laid plans, patient instruction, and helpful supervision, the circulation of the printed page has come to be a *mighty factor* in the dissemination of the truths of the third angel's message."<sup>17</sup>


Can we restore an emphasis on simple, free literature outreach throughout our church? Once when flying from Norway to Holland, I sat next to a woman who taught psychology at a European university. When our conversation turned to spiritual things, a window of opportunity opened for

me to give her a tract. The topic was eternal torment and the false teachings surrounding that subject. At the end of our time, she was appreciative and said, "You know, you are lucky in a way. You at least have something to believe in. Most of us are still looking for that." Truly, multitudes are in the valley of decision just looking for someone to give them direction.

We hold the work of pastoral ministry in highest esteem. But pastors will be burned out if the work of spreading the everlasting gospel is to be left to them alone. We have good news for our beloved pastors—help is on the way. Not casual, halfhearted, disorganized help; personal, professional, and prophetic ministry. "The canvassing work, properly conducted, is missionary work of the highest order, and it is as good and successful a method as can be employed for placing before the people the important truths for this time. The importance of the work of the ministry is unmistakable; but many who are hungry for the bread of life have not the privilege of hearing the word from God's delegated preachers. For this reason it is essential that our publications be widely circulated."<sup>18</sup>

Last year, busloads of pastors and church administrators from all over the world participated in an afternoon of door-to-door literature ministry distribution. "Angela, a resident of neighboring Caroline Street, . . . was among those who expressed gratitude to the Adventists for the literature she received, coming to the bus to say, 'Thanks for the books,' and requesting more to share with others. 'I'm making you a missionary right now,' [Michael] Ryan said as he handed some literature to her."<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the time has come for pastors to appoint a literature distribution coordinator for each of their churches. In these last days, if a non-Adventist (or pre-Adventist) can be a missionary to distribute our literature—then what about us? Now more than ever, the ministry of publishing has the opportunity to arise and shine—to enlighten the world through its silent messengers

sent out by the billions. Will we rise to the occasion? 

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1953), 5.
- 2 "All who desire an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God." White, *Colporteur Ministry*, 33.
- 3 "Some are better adapted than others for doing a certain work; therefore it is not correct to think that everyone can be a canvasser. Some have no special adaptability for this work; but they are not, because of this, to be regarded as faithless or unwilling. . . . The church is as a garden in which is a variety of flowers, each with its own peculiarities." Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Evangelist* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1920), 83.
- 4 "It is not the work of any man to prescribe the work of any other man contrary to his own convictions of duty. It is right to give counsel and suggest plans; but every man should be left free to seek direction from God, whose he is and whom he serves. . . . Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment" (*Colporteur Ministry*, 27, 28).
- 5 "To every man—and that means every woman, also—He has given His work, and this work each one is to perform according to his several ability" Ellen G. White, *Daughters of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998), 134.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *The Publishing Ministry* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), 50.
- 7 "Those selected as canvassers should be men and women who feel the burden of service, whose object is not to get gain, but to give light to the people." White, *Colporteur Ministry*, 26.
- 8 White, *The Publishing Ministry*, 370.
- 9 White, *Colporteur Ministry*, 7.
- 10 John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow them and people will follow you* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2007), 11.
- 11 Ellen G. White, "Your Reasonable Service," *The Signs of the Times*, January 21, 1897, par. 5.
- 12 GLOW stands for Giving Light to Our World.
- 13 Ellen G. White, "Distributing the Printed Page," *The Review and Herald*, November 5, 1914, par. 3.
- 14 White, *The Publishing Ministry*, 374.
- 15 See [glowmissiontrips.org](http://glowmissiontrips.org).
- 16 Andrew McChesney, "GLOW Volunteers to Distribute 1 Million Tracts at Super Bowl," *AdventistReview.org*, November 2, 2015, <http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story3411-glow-volunteers-to-distribute-1-million-tracts-at-superbowl>.
- 17 White, *The Publishing Ministry*, 370. (Emphasis supplied.)
- 18 White, *The Colporteur Evangelist*, 5.
- 19 Mark Kellner, "On Bus No. 2 With Michael Ryan," *AdventistReview.org*, October 14, 2016, <http://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story4467-world-church-leaders-share-jesus-door-to-door-in-maryland>.

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# Towards a Christ-transforming culture:

## A missiological model

Among the issues that appear to cause conflicts in certain churches are missiological issues related to culture and the worldview of indigenous church members. This article explores a missiological model that can be employed in ministry in order to minimize conflict with the prevailing culture and worldview of the local church members. Ultimately, I believe this model can lead to transformation in the lives of church members, with regard to worldviews and cultural practices, rather than causing disintegration and displacement.

### Culture: Its diversity and missiological perspective

Culture is an integrating system of beliefs, feelings, and values together with its associated symbols, patterns of behavior, and products shared by a group of people.<sup>1</sup> Anthropologists and sociologists agree with James Clifford's statement that culture "is a deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without."<sup>2</sup> Also, David Livermore asserted that defining culture is like defining air. People live in it and culture lives in people. It cannot be seen but it is there all the same.<sup>3</sup> Human beings are social creatures; thus culture covers the whole range of human civilization and

to be a cultural being is quite simply to be human.<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Kraft affirms that, "A culture may be likened to a river, with a surface level and a deep level. The surface is visible. Most of the river, however, lies beneath the surface and is largely invisible. . . . So it is with culture. . . . In the depths are the assumptions we call worldview, in terms of which the surface level behavior is governed."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, due to a diversity of cultural contexts, God's truth may be expressed differently from one culture to another.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps this is why Kelvin Onongha asserts that cultural and environmental factors have the ability to hinder spiritual development in the life of a convert.<sup>7</sup>

In John 1:1, 14 and Philippians 2:5–8, God entered into human history and culture to reveal Himself to humankind.<sup>8</sup> Theologians call this the humbling of God: taking on human form in order to transform humanity. As far as cultural adaptability is concerned, John Stott says, "God's self-disclosure in the Bible was given to the hearer's own culture."<sup>9</sup> Thus, even though human nature is the same, cultures are in many ways unique and distinctive.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, biblical interpretation must take into consideration the culture of the people if the gospel is to be

transformative in diversities of cultural groups. John Mbiti affirms that "the gospel was revealed to the world in the context and language of culture, and not in an empty vacuum. This revelation took place in a specific cultural place, Palestine, among a specific people, the Jews, at a specific movement, two thousand years ago. Since then the gospel has been proclaimed, propagated and accepted within the cultural milieu of the peoples of the world."<sup>11</sup>

God is revealed through the Scriptures, and the gospel message could not be shared outside a given culture.<sup>12</sup> While cultural considerations are necessary, the church's belief and practice must be guided by the Holy Spirit and defined by the Holy Scriptures.<sup>13</sup> Thus, careful exegetical literature, immersed in diverse cultural contexts, will assist pastors and church leaders in understanding the importance of missional hermeneutics.

### Why worldviews are important

Worldviews determine our values. They sort out what is essential and what is not, what is of highest value from what is less, and thus they shape how members conduct themselves in the world.<sup>14</sup> Hiebert further suggests that

“our own understandings of Scripture are deeply shaped by our own worldviews.”<sup>15</sup> Charles Kraft observes that our worldview helps us select assumptions that fit our culture and reject those that do not. Worldviews equally help us to interpret the assumptions we adopt so that they fit our overall cultural pattern.<sup>16</sup> That is why scriptural interpretation is distorted.

The apostle Peter was shocked to be told, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:52, KJV). It suggested, at the very least, that critical transformation,

Darrel Whiteman notes, “Contextualization is not something we pursue motivated by an agenda of pragmatic efficiency. Rather, it must be followed because of our faithfulness to God, who sent God’s son as a servant to die so that we all may live.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Whiteman takes the incarnational ministry of Jesus as the chief mandate for contextualization. However, the Scriptures make it clear in many places that God values cultural diversity, while calling the people and communities to be transformed into the moral and mental likeness of His Son.

will assist in developing a missiological transformation model that can assist leaders in handling issues of conflict and positively influence God’s people both in spirit and truth, in accordance with His universal mission.

To successfully contextualize theology within a given culture today, worldviews from the Word of God, as well as the contemporary culture, must be understood by the theologian.<sup>22</sup> Biblical authors wrote from within their own cultures, using local languages and thought patterns. Between Genesis and Revelation, a vast range of cultural variation is exhibited, true believers serving God faithfully in different cultural ways.<sup>23</sup> However, the danger to be avoided in trying to contextualize the culture or worldview for the sake of the gospel lies in compromising biblical truth. When this takes place, contextualization has become syncretism.<sup>24</sup>

### Conversion and worldview “transformation”

There is a close relationship between conversion and transformation in a Christian perspective, as they are synonymous.<sup>25</sup> The word *conversion* is derived from the Latin word *convertere*, meaning “‘to revolve, turn around’ or ‘head in a different direction.’”<sup>26</sup> Conversion is a “perceptible change in one’s religious identity, a conscious self-transformation, which is often discussed and proclaimed for all to see.”<sup>27</sup> In the New Testament the words used for “conversion” interchangeably are: *epistrophe*, *epistrepho*, *metanoeo* and *metamelomai*.<sup>28</sup> The word used for “conversion” in Hebrew is *shuv*; meaning “turning,” or “returning.” It was usually used for a group experience entailing returning to God and His covenants.<sup>29</sup> I respectfully suggest that *conversion* is insufficient for our purposes.

I believe the word *transformation* to be more comprehensive, inclusive, and altogether more wholistic than the word *conversion*. This wholistic understanding hails from the fact that, “God’s transformation of all things—the heavens and the earth, humans and

*In order to communicate the gospel in a diversity of cultures and worldviews, there is need of applying the missiological concept of contextualization.*

even for a believer, still lay ahead. This took on a cultural imperative when, as a result of a vision, Peter articulated and embraced a central tenet of Christianity: “‘God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean’” (Acts 10:28, NIV). Onongha maintains that only when elements of worldview are transformed, will a convert see his or her blind spots.<sup>17</sup>

### Contextualization

In order to communicate the gospel in a diversity of cultures and worldviews, there is need of applying the missiological concept of contextualization. Contextualization attempts to communicate the gospel in words and deeds that make sense to people within their local cultural context. The aim is to present Christianity in a way that meets people’s deepest needs and penetrates their worldview. This allows them to follow Christ, while remaining within their own culture.<sup>18</sup>

John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne add that contextualization comprises understanding the people well enough to communicate effectively with them the good news about Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup> Although the Bible as a whole does not endorse any particular culture, or even dictate a full set of customs (as Islam traditionally has), the biblical worldview does inculcate particular values, and Jesus offers the power of the Holy Spirit to actualize those values in the lives of His disciples.<sup>21</sup>

These biblical values should be taken into account by church members before they engage themselves in controversial disputes with the church leaders. These values should also be embraced by church leaders, displaying postures of humility and servanthood and avoiding dictatorial attitudes or disciplinary procedures that may only fuel the rise of offshoot groups. Therefore, contextualization

all creatures—is at the heart of biblical theology.<sup>29,30</sup> Since conversion must be seen as a lifetime, complex experience that should be striven for as was done by the apostle Paul, it must not be confused with salvation that can be traced to a date.<sup>31</sup> Onongha observes, “A person may profess to be Christian without necessarily demonstrating evidence of life-transformation. Evidence of this can be found all through Christian history, especially during the Crusades, when the vilest crimes were done in God’s name.”<sup>32</sup>

Hence, it is argued that conversion to a religion may demonstrate a more virtuous pattern of behavior, but it is also doubted whether true transformation is attained.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, missiologists prefer the term *worldview transformation* to the word *conversion*, since it refers to a deeper level of change required in the life of a believer. This is why Kraft cautions, “When we speak of the conversion of a worldview, we are not talking of a complete conversion. A complete exchange of one worldview for another is as far as we know totally impossible. We are, rather, looking at partial conversion in terms of the number of assumptions (subparadigms, paradigms, subthemes, etc.) that are changed, though speaking of significant conversions in terms of the importance of the changes and the significance of the people’s new commitment.”<sup>34</sup>

## Conclusion

Our worldview and culture context, then, strongly affect our interpretations of Scripture.<sup>35</sup> The Jews grappled with this challenge throughout the Scriptures; so do we.<sup>36</sup> It is evident that such a “worldview transformation” will not be accomplished in the flick of a moment; rather, it will be a complex, life-long experience, informed by what I have chosen to call the “Christ cultural transformation” model. This model involves changes at all levels of people’s cultures and worldviews. Such a transformation requires a purposeful alignment with a single, revealed worldview that biblical authors call “the truth.”

In this theocentric (God-centered) worldview, kingdom values prevail. We

now see through new lenses. Policies and practices are assessed by the degree to which they embrace diversity. Diversity is a prerequisite for unity; otherwise it becomes uniformity. This unity, required for mission, must be coupled with servanthood and humility and accompanied by mutual submission and equality. Only when this converting, transformational power is unleashed, will the call to strengthen the brethren, love the saints, and win the world for Christ be fulfilled. 🙌

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- 3 David A Livermore, *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 80.
- 4 Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Oasis International Ltd., 2011), 36.
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- 33 William Sims Bainbridge, “The Sociology of Conversion,” in *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1992), 188, 189.
- 34 Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 448 (emphasis supplied). For an extensive presentation of such a paradigm, see Onongha, “Towards a Missiological Model,” 60–108.
- 35 Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 422.
- 36 Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 332.



# Adventist evangelism: Alive and well

The pastor of the church in England could not believe what he was seeing. The miraculous events of that day defied every expectation his congregation had; not because they were not a faithful group but, rather, because what they had learned from the “experts” had been utterly disproved in just 21 days. Bewildered, the pastor turned to my ear and whispered, “We weren’t expecting a response like this. We thought, *England is just too secular and progressive!*”

Yet as family and friends—with songs and shouts of “Amen!”—encouraged their loved ones who had chosen to stand with Christ in baptism, I felt overjoyed, though not at all surprised. This church had put in the effort, utilized the tried-and-true methods of evangelism, witnessed the glorious miracle of changed lives in their community, and experienced a renewed vision for Jesus’ great commission.

Still, mingled with my joy was the sorrow that many in our church question whether public evangelism really works anymore in our progressive, postmodern culture. Some ask, “Do our prophecy seminars really contribute to the growth and strengthening of our church, or are they just powerless relics of a bygone era?” To answer this question, let’s first go back to the apostolic church.

## Take me back

That early, impassioned movement was driven by the unashamed public

preaching of the gospel. See it in action through the apostle Peter who, during the fiery Day of Pentecost, stood amidst a horde of skeptics, “lifted his voice, and said unto them, . . . hearken to my words” (Acts 2:14, KJV). The result of this public effort speaks for itself: “When they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said, . . . Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter beseeched them to repent and be baptized, “and three thousand souls were added to God’s kingdom” (see Acts 2:37–41).

I used the word *skeptics* for a reason. The apostles were preaching in a jaded world shaped by systematic Hellenization and Roman polytheism, to which their Jewish brethren were not immune. Yet despite this foreboding environment, the simplicity of their preaching resulted in an amazing number of souls being won. Yes, in a pagan, vice-ridden culture, public evangelism was astoundingly effective, breaking through every language and multicultural barrier. Jews, Arabs, and Gentiles from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Egypt, Libya, and Rome were all won.

It is vital for us not to miss that the message Peter and the other disciples proclaimed on Pentecost was not merely confined to repentance. Sanctification through the Word was an important part of their message. Thus, Peter’s message specifically included the reality that Jesus was at the right hand of God “exalted,” and His post-Resurrection

ministry confirms that He is more than just a Savior but also the Lord of our lives. More important, Christ not only intercedes on our behalf today but is engaged in the final activity of the investigative judgment. This work adds solemnity to the ethical demands of the gospel in the closing scenes of earth’s history. How much more firm should be our resolve to carry this very same message to all the world as the early apostles effectively did in their time?

Even in light of this thrilling testimony from the New Testament, many well-meaning ministers in the Adventist Church are choosing to cut away the full gospel message in order to better appeal, they think, to our postmodern audience.

## Jesus only?

“Jesus only.” My heart broke when this very suggestion was made at a recent church board discussion I attended about an upcoming seminar. The thinking was, “We should preach only Christ’s salvation for the sinner at our evangelistic meetings.” In short, they were seeking to divorce Christ from the unique message of Revelation 14. And this is happening everywhere, as fellow public evangelists tell me privately that they hear this same sentiment across North America and the rest of the Western world, from the mouths of prominent church leaders, in publications, promoted from pulpits, and practiced in churches.

Of course, the salvation of Jesus Christ should be central and primary to every message. We can never say enough about the love of God in giving His Son to save us. But the Bible is clear that our special prophetic message magnifies our need of Christ's salvation and enhances our response to it. Soteriology does not eliminate eschatology; they are two sides of the same coin—and presenting both at our public seminars is vital. The messages of Daniel and John the revelator to our generation are designed to enlighten us about soon-coming events and help us trust implicitly in our Savior. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” says John, is “to show us things that must shortly come to pass” (see Rev. 1:1–3).

The prophet Isaiah summarizes the cohesive nature of the principles of salvation and divine knowledge this way: “Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure” (Isa. 33:6, KJV). Both were important to the health and growth of the church then, and both are essential, perhaps more so (if that were possible), for the spiritual welfare of the church today.

### Lessons from the early Advent movement

It should be both telling and encouraging that the pioneers of our Advent movement dealt with similar sentiments in their day. Telling, because this is a constant challenge to the church; encouraging, because we know the explosiveness with which the church grew in their day by being faithful to our distinct message.

In response to growing murmurs in her time, Ellen White felt compelled to write: “The present truth, the special message given to our world, even the third angel's message, comprehends a vast field, containing heavenly treasures. No one can be excusable who says, ‘I will no longer have anything to do with these special messages; I will preach Christ.’ No one can preach Christ, and present the truth as it is in Jesus, unless he presents the truths that are to

come before the people at the present time, when such important developments are taking place.”<sup>1</sup>

So today, while other denominations and many in our own church are promoting a relationship with Christ without this prophetic foundation, we have been lovingly admonished that we cannot effectively win genuine converts without the proclamation of the three angels' messages. It is a sobering thought in a church environment where so many are, perhaps, embarrassed by the fullness of our distinct message—including the Sabbath truth—but we are assured it is the only way to move the masses toward making a decision. “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out.”<sup>2</sup> Notice that the work of lifting up Jesus Christ before the world does not dismiss the foundational truths of the third angel's message. Rather, they are to be united together to flood the world with the light of the everlasting gospel.

We know that many have not taken this balanced approach, proclaiming only “fire and brimstone” and portraying our Savior as a vindictive and arbitrary Judge. As a result, they have turned many away from the simple, liberating beauty of the gospel. This unbalanced, dizzying message was rightly condemned by Ellen White.

However, the mistake of taking Christ's love and grace out of the third angel's message does not give us liberty to ignore, soft sell, or in some cases undermine His righteousness and holiness contained within that same message.

### Current attitudes about traditional public evangelism

To be sure, let not my defense of our public proclamation of the three angels' messages be misunderstood. Of course,

we need to search out innovative ways of outreach to bring the gospel to those in need. Ellen White counseled, “While city missions must be established where colporteurs, Bible-workers, and practical medical missionaries may be trained to reach certain classes, we must also have, in our cities, consecrated evangelists through whom a message is to be borne so decidedly as to startle the hearers.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition, each church member has his and her particular gifts. “*In connection* with the proclamation of the message . . . , there are many kinds of work to be done by laborers with varied gifts. Some are to labor in one way, some in another.”<sup>4</sup> God has promised our success if we faithfully employ every gift He has given toward our solemn work. Yet, this does not invalidate a historically successful approach to soul winning over a mere shift in our culture. All new and varied methods are to be done “in connection” with the full proclamation of the gospel.

When I hear doubts—and sometimes even disdain—for methods God has called us to use to reach and nurture the masses, methods effectively used by the early church and early Advent movement, I refer persons to the book of Acts: “These who have turned the world upside down” made the world recognize the power of the gospel through their “foolishness of preaching” (Acts 17:6, NKJV; 1 Cor. 1:21, KJV).

Today, worldwide membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church exceeds 20 million. We can be certain that any future success we see in new members rooted in the faith will not be achieved by abandoning our early church's successful approach to evangelism. The prescriptive nature of preaching the full gospel to grow His kingdom during the final scenes of earth's history cannot be denied when viewing the opening scenes of the three angels' messages in Revelation 14:6–20, “I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth” (v. 6, KJV).

The common theme throughout Acts is that public proclamation often brought indifference and persecution. Acts chapter 4 declares of the people who listened to the disciples as they publicly taught and preached that “many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand” (v. 4, NKJV). The result? The persecutors “laid hands on them, and put them in [prison]” (v. 3, KJV). Scripture repeatedly shows how this method brought persecution, both inside and outside of the church.<sup>5</sup> We can know that even in the persecution to come upon our people for speaking these sacred truths, we must still proclaim them fully and boldly!

### The proving grounds

While today’s public evangelism does not result in such drastic persecution in most parts of the world, resistance can still be seen in different and subtler ways. A distaste for public evangelism and the proclamation of our distinctive message should not surprise anyone. It existed in the early church and, we are told, it will continue until Jesus comes again. Still, we are promised, “The message of light given to the assembled multitude on the mount was not alone for them, but was to be sounded in the ears of the church all along the line, through successive generations, resting with more solemn weight upon Christ’s ambassadors in the last days. Sinners are to be turned from the darkness of error to the light of truth, by the foolishness of preaching.”<sup>6</sup>

I have experienced this fruit time and again through my work as an evangelist. Recently, I received an email from a certain gentleman who attended one of my public evangelism seminars a few years ago. Despite being enslaved to alcohol, he attended nightly, and the gospel cut straight to his heart. I am blessed to report to you that he was baptized at the conclusion of the series. He writes,

Several years ago you baptized me and two of my friends. We are all still

in the church and actively seeking to hasten the glorious return of Jesus Christ our Righteousness. This was empowering and unbelievable, as I grew up living a wicked life from a very young age. To hear the preaching of the gospel brought joy. We went over some verses, and from that night I quit drinking, smoking, fornicating, manipulating, acting in violence, gambling, using pornography and drugs, and making selfishness, arrogance, and greed my goals. After the series, I married the woman whom I had been with for seven years—she also was baptized into the church. After being in the church for a year, my wife and I moved to Missouri and brought this same message to prostitutes, drug dealers, and gang members. I became a Bible worker and a literature evangelist. I’m currently going to college studying to be a nurse, hoping to use my education to further the medical work.

Considering his condition before his conversion, I might have concluded, “He’ll just lose interest and drift away if I preach the moral imperative of health reform in the Christian life.” The beauty of the gospel reveals that Jesus meets us where we are but also that He loves us too much to leave us in our current condition. This man’s transformation is a testimony to the power of the Word of God, to renew, transform, *and* sustain that transformation. The message that was received included far more than repentance and faith, it was the sanctifying power of the gospel that gave this man victory over his habitual sins. Had he not realized the promise of the power of God unto salvation, he could have been easily overwhelmed and discouraged by the power of his past life. The messages and testimonies presented in this public forum gave him hope that he could experience the same spiritual freedom that the gospel promises. The apostle Paul’s words to the church at Rome underscore how this would be

impossible for some to experience without the kind of preaching God desires in these last days: “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’” (Rom. 10:14, 15, NKJV).

### Revival and reformation

Another vital fruit of preaching this full gospel is often overlooked—that is, the revival and reformation among the members of the church, a result that brings congregations together in a spirit of unity and service. It is a natural desire to see a rush of souls joining the church at the conclusion of a series, and at times we are disappointed because our high expectations are not realized. But considering this precious inward benefit of public evangelism, counting baptismal numbers alone can lead to a false sense of failure or success.

Ironically, the church in England was only expecting a revival among its members with a hope that seeds might be sown to a scattered few in the community. The results were amazing. The message not only revived the church but visitors came out nightly—and at the end of the series, many took their stand for present truth by baptism.

The result only strengthened my conviction that our shared work is to proclaim the everlasting gospel through any and every avenue of ministry, including public evangelism. We can be sure that God will work for us in ways that will only be fully seen when we see the eternal results in His kingdom. 🙌

1 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 33, 1897.  
 2 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 156.  
 3 *Ibid.*, 354.  
 4 *Ibid.*, 345. (Italics supplied.)  
 5 See Acts 5:14, 17; 6:7, 12; 8:1, 4; 11:21, 24; 12:1.  
 6 Ellen G. White, “Christ’s Followers the Light of the World,” *Signs of the Times*, January 8, 1880.

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Divine Movement United in Mission and Message” (March 2017), I outline the issues in the book of Acts that united the early believers. In spite of their differences, they were united through the Holy Spirit in Christ, the fundamental truths of His Word, and the centrality of mission. Although diverse in many ways, their individual differences were secondary to their commitment to reaching people for Jesus.

The second article, “United in Message, Mission, and Organization” (April 2017), focuses on those instances in Acts that could easily become flash points of disunity. I was not so concerned, in the second article, with outcomes but, rather, that the New Testament church found ways to settle differences by means that preserved the unity of the church. My point in Acts 1 on the choosing of Matthias is not how Matthias was chosen. Casting lots is obviously not a method God uses today, but the fact remains that the church did not fracture over the choice. In Acts 6, the disciples once again found a way to solve a challenging situation. A representative group of men were chosen whose affinity to the Jewish widows, obviously with a similar ethnic background, solved the

problem. Throughout Acts, the Holy Spirit guided believers to discuss issues together and discover solutions to perplexing issues the church faced.

Acts 15 is the most instructive of all. Again, my emphasis was not on the solution but on the process. Acts 15:1 points out that there were those who made circumcision a matter of salvation. Verse 2 is clear that this issue brought “dissension and dispute” into the church. The local congregation could not solve the problem, so it sent representatives to Jerusalem to seek counsel (vs 2–5). Although there was general agreement with the council’s decision regarding Gentile believers, there were those who disagreed with the decision and sowed seeds of disunity.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit invested the elders and apostles at Jerusalem with the administrative authority to guide the church at a time of crisis. Ellen White’s comment is insightful: “The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The apostles and elders, men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches.”<sup>2</sup> In this same chapter, Ellen White talks about the “authority vested

in the body of believers united in Christian fellowship.”<sup>3</sup> My point in the second article is simply this: one of the factors that held the New Testament church together was church organization. This organizational structure that united believers had an administrative authority vested in it by the Holy Spirit. Certainly, there was a recognition and respect of diversity, but these decisions were made together, not unilaterally.

The Acts model is not a hierarchal, authoritarian system but a representative form of Christlike administrative leadership that guides the church in times of crisis and keeps it from fracturing. Without some form of organizational structure and administrative authority, the church would soon descend into chaos, and its mission would be severely hindered. The body of believers accepted the corporate decision of the Jerusalem Council and the church was preserved in a time of crisis. 

1 See Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 196.

2 *Ibid.*


3 *Ibid.*, 200.

## God opens doors for a literature evangelist

Thomas Florian was working as a literature evangelist around the villages on Koro Island in Fiji when village elders stopped him. In order for him to sell his literature, he must get an approval from their regional pastor. Thomas set off to visit Pastor Lagilagi and allow him to examine his books. To his surprise, the pastor decided to purchase *Bible Heroes* and *God’s Answers to Your Questions*, commenting that he planned to use these books for preparing sermons for his Methodist congregation. Thomas took the opportunity to give him another book: *The Great Hope*.

After prayer, Thomas asked if he could share his books with other villages in the area. The pastor encouraged him to go to every village and not to miss a single home. He then wrote a letter to take to the village elders, stating that “Thomas is doing a great work in building better families and healthier lifestyles. Please open every door to him.”

An Adventist pastor recently conducted a series of evangelistic meetings in this area that attracted a number of people from the villages. As a result of these efforts, twenty-two souls were baptized. Fifteen of these new believers

had purchased Thomas Florian’s books as he visited homes throughout the area. Today, area villagers are very supportive of the local Adventist pastor as he ministers in these villages. We praise the Lord for the influencing power of God’s Holy Spirit that is working in the lives of His people today! The harvest truly is ready, but the laborers are few. 

—This story was originally published in the June 2017 issue of the Trans Pacific Union Mission Newsletter.

# Revival & REFORMATION

## ► Youth missionary training results in new converts in Indonesia

**Indonesia**—Missionaries being trained in Indonesia held evangelistic meetings in two small towns. Most of the town residents are Muslims, and the rest belong to other Christian denominations.

### White-clad people walking

A pair of young missionary women visited an older couple that was well respected in their local Christian church. The husband accepted Bible studies with the visiting missionaries. He had been a Christian for decades, but many of the teachings of the missionaries were new to him. “I have been so wrong in so many areas,” he said. The missionaries could tell his heart was warming up to the message.

Unlike him, his wife was not responding much to the studies, even though she also eventually decided to study the Bible with the visiting missionaries.

Finally, the moment of decision came. The man decided to be baptized, but his wife said, once again, that she was not interested.



Photo credit: Northern Asia-Pacific Division News

On Friday morning, however, the day before the evangelistic meetings ended, the woman heard something astonishing from her neighbors at the marketplace.

“Yesterday at 4:00 A.M., we saw people in bright white clothes walking around,” the woman’s neighbors told her. “There were four of them, and we saw them in front of your house too.”

When the woman heard this, she was terrified that they might have been ghosts. When she returned home, she shared what she had heard with the young missionaries. The young women were so surprised when they heard this—it was the exact time they were

walking around, praying in front of each home! That morning, they had decided to make a special round of prayers before leaving the town. When the woman heard this, she felt God was leading these missionaries and decided to be baptized with her husband and a neighbor.

On Sabbath morning, a total of seven souls, including the couple, were baptized in this town, and five were baptized in the nearby town. “We praise the Lord for what He has done,” said group coordinators. “Now we are praying that the Lord will keep doing a mighty work in Indonesia.” [Nam Jinkoo | Northern Asia-Pacific Division and *Adventist Review*]

## ► World church leaders learn about evangelism and church growth in Inter-America

**Miami, Florida, United States**—Top Seventh-day Adventist leaders from around the world recently toured five major regions (Miami, Jamaica, Panama, Haiti, and Mexico) across the Inter-American Division (IAD) to witness evangelism initiatives in action, learn about church growth, and look in on the community impact taking place across the territory.

The tour was part of an initiative proposed by top world church leaders in an effort to foster more integration

among division leaders and to learn methods, initiatives, and activities that make the difference in each regional territory, explained Pastor **Israel Leito**, president of the church in Inter-America.

**Elie Henry**, executive secretary for the church in Inter-America, said the secretariat tour was a great opportunity for church administrators to witness the rich cultural diversity that makes Inter-America so special.

Leaders visited Jamaica, a country with the closest ratio of Seventh-day

Adventists per population—one of every 12 persons is a Seventh-day Adventist.

The leaders were deployed throughout churches in Kingston, the capital city, and St. Catherine to preach Sabbath, June 10, 2017. They were part of a symposium highlighting activities taking place across the union’s five conferences; two institutions, Andrews Memorial Hospital and Northern Caribbean University; and the Good Samaritan Inn, which serves the needs of street people in Kingston.

“What we see happening at NCU is a perfect example of what it means that Seventh-day Adventists should be the head and not the tail through its information technology department and in business model competitions,” said **G. T. Ng**, executive secretary of the Adventist world church. Ng also described the work at the Good Samaritan Inn as one that should be emulated by other regions of the world.

Leaders headed to Panama to learn about the membership and financial growth of the church since it was reorganized into a union mission less than two years ago.

The tour group visited Haiti’s Adventist university, hospital, and union office in Port-au-Prince.

The next stop included a visit to Mexico City, a cosmopolitan area with more than 21 million inhabitants, where the church faces one of its biggest evangelistic challenges.

The tour climaxed with a festival of small groups growing rapidly in Chiapas, Mexico. More than 13,000 members witnessed a festival on the growth of small groups and hundreds of baptisms and learned of the joint efforts of local pastors and church elders. The group joined church members in distributing literature during the Sabbath.

“We have been positively changed as a result of this experience,” stated John Thomas, associate secretary for the Adventist world church. “The itinerary, finances, union, and institutional



Photo credit: Centro de ProduccionIMCH



Photo credit: Centro de ProduccionIMCH

administrators have all overwhelmed us with love and appreciation as fellow brothers and sisters. All have taught us

what it means to be happy, loving, and generous Adventists.” [Libna Stevens | Inter-American Division]

## ► Youth Rush evangelism takes off in Japan

**Okinawa, Japan**—Thirteen high school and university students are bursting with stories about sharing their faith with a Buddhist monk, a Sunday church pastor, and others as Youth Rush literature evangelism takes off in Japan.

The students knocked on 18,938 doors and sold 2,032 books over three weeks on the Japanese island of Okinawa. Afterward, they excitedly

spoke of miracles and a closer relationship with God.

“Before I joined Youth Rush, I did not really have an experience with God,” said **Ikuya Chinami**, a second-year university student.

“During Youth Rush, every day was filled with divine appointments,” he said, speaking on a YouTube video produced by the Adventist Church’s Japan Union Conference. “God works

beyond our expectations. Sometimes people thanked us with tears for visiting them and praying with them.”

Youth Rush is a Seventh-day Adventist program that allows students to raise money for tuition while attempting to ground them in their faith. It originated in Southern California and has spread across the United States. A third-generation Japanese-American who participated in Youth Rush in



Photo credit: Japan Union Conference



California, **Daniel Fukuda**, brought the initiative to Japan last year.

“Ever since I experienced Youth Rush in California, I had this deep burden, desire, and vision that one day I wanted to start something like this in Japan,” Fukuda said.

The chance came when the Japan Union Conference president asked him to bring Youth Rush to Japan and to work as assistant to the director of the union’s youth and literature ministries departments.

Since July 2016, students have canvassed the country’s capital, Tokyo, two times and also gone door-to-door in Shizuoka, a southern city of 715,000 people.

At a Buddhist Temple **Mayumi Kojima**, a first-year university student, recalled struggling to sell books one day and the team leader telling her to go to a Buddhist temple. At the entrance of the temple stood a box labeled “The Great East Japan Earthquake Charity Offering.” Kojima immediately saw an opportunity. She was selling a book written by a Christian who had assisted in relief efforts after the 2011 earthquake off the Pacific coast of Tōhoku.

“I introduced the book to the chief monk, and he bought a copy,” Kojima said.

“God commands me to go everywhere, including Buddhist temples. I didn’t think that I would sell the book at the temple.”

First-year university student **Kurumi Ijiri** said she showed her books to a Sunday church pastor. The pastor was not interested in those titles and asked whether she had any others. Ijiri cautiously pulled out a book titled *No, Sabbath Is Saturday*.

“This is it!” the pastor exclaimed. “This is the book I want!”

He explained that he was having Bible studies with his church members, and one of them had asked why Seventh-day Adventists worship on Saturday. The pastor did not know and had begun to wonder about the correct day of worship. The pastor paid Ijiri for the book and for a copy of *The Great Controversy*.


“A Sunday-keeping church pastor buying this book, *No, Sabbath Is Saturday*, was truly a miracle!” Ijiri said.

Japanese church leaders hope that the experience of Youth Rush will encourage young Adventists to remain faithful. Teenagers account for 30 percent to 40 percent of baptisms every year, but 40 percent to 50 percent of them leave the church by their mid-20s, said **Yasuki Aoki**, director of the youth and literature ministries departments of the Japan Union.

“Once they experience solid discipleship training and the joy of evangelism, they will not leave the church,” he said.

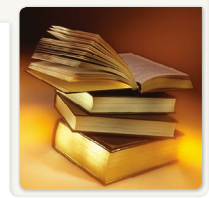
The Adventist Church has 15,270 members in Japan, a country of 127 million people, according to the Adventist Church’s Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.

Three more Youth Rush campaigns are planned for three other Japanese cities in 2017, and church leaders intend to schedule at least five campaigns every year.

Chinami said he is convinced that literature evangelism works. “Sometimes people are skeptical about literature evangelism work, but I know by experience that there are people waiting for our visits,” he said. “God is eager to work through us.” [Andrew McChesney | Adventist Mission] 



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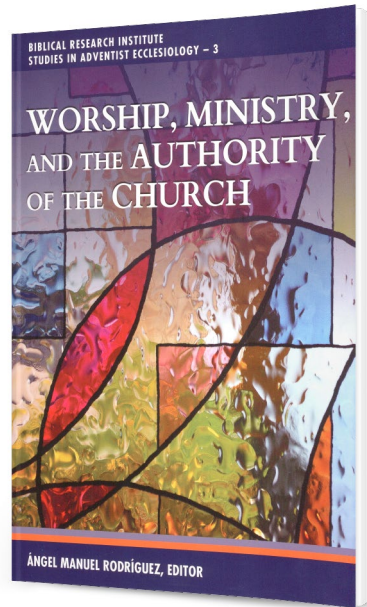
## Worship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church

edited by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology*, vol. 3, Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2016.

**W**orship, Ministry, and the Authority of the Church completes a theological trilogy published by the Biblical Research Institute and joins its predecessors (*Toward a Theology of the Remnant*; and *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*) in filling a longstanding need in Seventh-day Adventist theology, specifically, Adventist ecclesiology. The book's 17 chapters by 15 authors include 1 of multiple authorship (3 authors). There are also three appendices, Scripture and subject indices, and an introduction by Elias Brasil de Souza, current director of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Biblical Research Institute. Informed laypersons may expect to find its treatment of ideas both accessible and informative, whether they deal with just the basics of worship practice or the theological contention between Catholicism's trans-, Martin Luther's con-, and Ulrich Zwingli's "non"-substantiation. At the same time, the book's list of abbreviations for scholarly works consulted points to its preparation for rigorous academic use as well.

The international and theological breadth of Adventist scholarship is on full display in this book. Worship, one of its foci, has not always enjoyed the closest of attention from Adventist theologians. Law and prophecy have generated much more reflection and commentary. This book's work in the areas treated—worship, ministry, and authority in Adventist ecclesiology—bodes well for the growth and deepening of the church's understandings and practice in these vital areas.

Mention may perhaps be made of a few of the book's many significant contributions to the topics it treats. Sergio Becerra and Theodore Levterov show, respectively, how Adventist worship owes much to the simplicity of



Anabaptist faith and the spontaneity and Low Church character of America's mid-nineteenth-century Millerite movement that birthed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And Daniel Oscar Plenc's development of an Adventist worship theology—eight theological elements and seven liturgical principles—derives from his study of the whole Bible, being most firmly buttressed by his Old Testament study, particularly the Psalms. Plenc's eight theological elements are not to be confused with editor Rodríguez' eight elements, whose focus is the practice of certain Adventist worship behaviors (sitting, kneeling, or standing for prayer, etc.) rather than the theology that might validate certain worship concepts (divine grandeur and centrality, redemption, praise, proclamation, freedom, etc.).

Levterov's segue to "Principles of Liturgical Practice" (130–132) felt somewhat abrupt after his treatment and conclusion on the biblical material. Both he and Denis Fortin are aware of an earlier stage of Adventism that

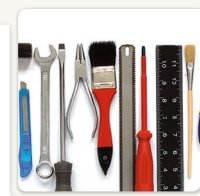
*The international and theological breadth of Adventist scholarship is on full display in this book.*

showed more heart religion and the emotions that entails, than Adventist worship now does. At the same time, postmodern religious eclecticism that satisfies the individual worshiper's tastes may well be but a contemporary variation on the theme of personal feelings that were more freely expressed in late nineteenth-century worship celebration. Sung Ik Kim advises of the effectiveness of stories and dialogue in communicating eternal truths to the relativistic mentality of the postmodern worshiper. And Teresa Reeve's writing on "Authority" (two chapters) shows how Jesus' teaching on authority "turns on its head everything that humans feel and think about power and authority" (282).

If we may forgive the mischief of the printer's devil who renders Frank Hasel's promised list of five issues as *a*, *b*, *c*, and *e* (214), we may also join in welcome for, and diligent study of, this new book that both traces and contributes to Adventism's increasing theological maturity. ❧

—Reviewed by Lael Caesar, PhD, associate editor of *Adventist Review and Adventist World* and research professor of Hebrew Bible, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

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# A letter to student pastors

## Dear student pastors,

I wish to reflect upon lessons that I hope you have gained in your churches, while matriculating at a seminary—from pastors, church members, and others. But there are many other lessons that only time and experience can teach you. The following comprise some of those lessons.

*Pastoral ministry has the capacity to bring great satisfaction and a true sense of your calling.* At its core, ministry is about people—relationships. Whether children, millennials, or seasoned citizens, all church members crave opportunities to bond. And the pastor functions as the fulcrum for such bonding.

The pastor has the unique pleasure of being present for so many life events: weddings, child dedications, baptisms, Communions, church socials, and funerals, just to name a few. And the common thread that runs through them is that they all bring opportunities to personally touch the lives of people in ways that many others cannot. You become the face of Christ that beautifully smiles and the arms of God that caringly embrace.

*Ministry is much more than preaching.* The temptation exists to elevate preaching to the exclusion of all other disciplines. While preaching is vital, it is not paramount. Other events that bring the saints together for worship (such as Sabbath School and the midweek prayer service) should receive the same amount of attention and care as most preachers dedicate to the divine worship experience and sermons. Each event provides an opportunity for God's people to experience a fresh encounter with the Divine.

*The greatest investments of pastoral time and energy are devoted to behind-the-scenes activities.* Unless you are a part of a pastoral staff, life will consist of just you, a small group of local elders, other church officers, and members. Even if you are an associate pastor on a staff,

your time will still be mostly spent in the tedium of detailed ministries. Pastoral ministry is not always glamorous. If you pastor the average-sized church of fewer than 100 members, you will discover that you will spend more time in addressing administrative matters than you expected. And sweeping those sometimes-problematic issues under the rug is not a viable option.

You will spend a lot of time mentoring some of your officers to attain to higher standards of excellence. You do not do this merely for the benefit of the church. You do this in order to help your church leaders be their best. In doing so, the pastors who follow you will find their load has been lightened because of your investment of time and energy. Ultimately, do this in order to edify and build up the body of Christ.

*Be a generalist.* While you do not have to attend to every part of church life (like repairing the roof, doing the secretarial work, operating the AV equipment), neither can you exclusively focus on one area of church life. While you must surround yourself with those who compensate for your deficiencies, you as pastor must still be aware of a plethora of things that transpire in the church. Furthermore, you must lend visible support to all areas of church life. Not showing visible support could be interpreted by some to mean that you do not care about that ministry.

*Be content where God has placed you and do not move until He moves you.* Many pastors seek to be well known by administrators and well loved by church members. Upward mobility becomes the order of the day. Christ's disciples adopted earthly definitions of success; but they never truly succeeded until they dedicated themselves fully to the mission He bequeathed to them. Always remember that God measures success by your fidelity to the call He has placed in

your life. This alone can bring you true joy and a sense of fulfillment in ministry.

*Love people, regardless of how they treat you.* Most church members will love and respect you. Eventually, however, you will encounter those members who “push your buttons.” It becomes easy to isolate them, relegating them to the sidelines. But in so doing, you say more about yourself than you do about them. Far from ostracizing them, you must love them more; because often their behavior is symptomatic of larger and deeper issues. Do not turn relationship dynamics into a power play; for in so doing, you stoop to their level. Others hold you to a higher standard, and you must live up to that standard. More than that, you must live up to God's standards and expectations for you and your ministry.

*Have a backbone.* It is human nature to want people to admire you. But the leader, at times, makes decisions that displease others. You do not intend to displease them, but it goes with the territory. Involve a broad circle of counselors in your decisions. Gain a consensus before proceeding. Not everyone will like what you recommend. But if you waffle while leading, your ability to lead in the future becomes compromised. Remember that some officers think only in terms of their areas of leadership. They understandably lead in the area of their specialty. But you, as pastor, must see the big picture. You must lead with the broad view in mind.

*Finally, know who you are, know Whose you are, and know Who called you.* And follow Him! Be sure that every decision you authorize has the best interest of the church in mind and that every decision has impartiality as its foundation.

My prayer for you is that you will always possess humility and that your souls will be committed to caring for the flock of the living God. May you walk in His way both now and forever. 🙏

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HEBREWS 4:14, NKJV

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