

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: THE ROLE OF SMALL GROUPS IN THE NURTURE AND RETENTION OF MEMBERS OF HOIMA CENTRAL AND HOIMA SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN WESTERN UGANDA FIELD

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Adviser: Nathaniel Walembe

Date completed: June 2017

The purpose of this study was an attempt to reduce membership loss in Hoima and Central SDA Churches, using small groups strategy. The researcher sought to observe the role of small groups in the nurture and retention of church members of Central and Hoima Churches.

The researcher also explored the biblical foundation of small groups, their importance or role in keeping God's people on His mission. It was observed that small groups were found in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and Jesus used them during His ministry. Even the early church continued with the same principle. Hence a model for the contemporary church.

The study observed that the youth and the middle aged make 97.9% of church membership of Hoima and Central Churches. But because of the lack for nurture and retention techniques the church is likely to lose most of them. However, because of

the role of small groups, the dropping from membership was minimized from 75% to 45% in one year.

The study that took nine months ended having observed that 99% of the respondents agreed that, indeed, small groups is an effective tool in the nurture and retention of the church members of Hoima and Central SDA Churches. This was because, in these groups, believers were cared for better than when they were in large congregations, and that believers were expressing themselves more than before.

However, there was weakness in visitation on a weekly basis among small group members which needed more attention in order to keep these groups on fire. Small groups concept should be embraced in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in order to reduce membership loss.

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A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by

Paul B. Masereka

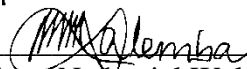
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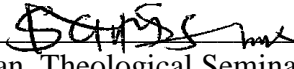
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This project is dedicated to my beloved wife, Teopista Masereka, who sometimes tirelessly endured loneliness throughout my education until the completion of this project. It is also dedicated to my children, Tusiime Eunice, Atuhairwe Bwambale Elisha and Nuwa'manya Masereka Ronald who have felt the impact of this project, and then to Western Uganda Field.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The church is supposed to win, nurture and retain souls. This can only be possible if the church gets in touch with every member on regular basis. It is the role of small groups to provide such an opportunity. One of the biggest challenges facing Central and Hoima churches and others that are growing is the inability of these local churches to know the members and to meet the needs of each one and care for them. Along with establishing new relationships, new church members need to be involved in the life of the church and be given responsibilities. Their participation in the ministry of the church nurtures their commitment to and identification with the church, and this can be easily done in small groups. Small groups in a church help in closing the back door, thus decreasing the loss of church members.

Statement of the Problem

Like many churches in western Uganda Field, Central and Hoima Seventh-Day Adventist churches lose more members than it brings in. For instance, “75% of new members baptized during city evangelism in the area in the year 2013, left the church in the period of less than a year.”¹ It is an observable fact that many members are leaving the church. In the annual report, the secretary of General Conference, GT Ng, states “Membership losses have grown over the past 15 years. In 2000, 43 of every 100 newly baptized members ended up leaving the church, he said, citing data from

¹ Hoima and Central Seventh- day Adventist Churches, Statistics, *Annual Statistical Reports*, (Hoima and Central: Western Uganda Field, 2013).

the world church's Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. The latest figures indicate that 49 of every 100 new members eventually leave."² This is a challenge to the local church pastors and it is this problem that this study will address.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to come up with a strategy of using small groups in nurturing and retaining members of Hoima and Hoima Central Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Western Uganda Field, with hope that, if the strategy succeeds in reducing membership loss, it can be imitated in the rest of the churches in the field and possibly in the entire Uganda Union.

Significance of the Study

It is an observable fact that many members are leaving the church as observed in the problem of the statement. This is a challenge to the local churches. This study is an attempt to address a problem which no one else in Western Uganda Field has addressed using the small groups strategy. The study is a significant contribution to membership retention for church growth in Uganda

Definition of Terms

There are various kinds of definitions on small groups. Weldon defines small group as "a face to face gathering of a few (three to twelve) person to be, to share and act for the betterment of one another and the wide good of others."³ Kurt defines a small group as "an intentional, face-to-face gathering of three to 12 people, meeting

²G. T. Ng, "Every Adventist urged to help stem membership losses," accessed 14 December 2016, <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2016-10-10/every-adventist-urged-to-help-stem-membership-losses/>.

³ Gareth Weldon, *Biblical Foundation of Small Group Ministry: An Integrative Approach* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity 1994), 14.

on regular schedule with the common purpose of developing relationships, meeting felt needs of group members, growing spiritually, and laying plans to lead others to accept Jesus as Lord and saviour of their lives”⁴ For the purpose of this study, the definition that is going to be used is that of Kurt W. Johnson.

Limitations

This study is limited to the role of small groups in nurturing and retaining church members in Hoima and Hoima Central Seventh –day Adventist Churches, Western Uganda Field. Due to weather condition during the time of the study, more so, the distance from which the study is carried and in case of an unexpected transfer of the researcher.

Methodology

The study begins with an introduction, followed by the definition of what a small group is. In the second section the researcher will discuss the theoretical, theological background of the study and Biblical foundations of small groups. Section three will describe Hoima and Hoima Central Seventh-day Adventist Churches. The section which will follow will deal with the design, implementation and evaluation. Finally, the study will end with a summary/conclusion and some recommendations.

⁴Kurt W. Johnson, *Successful Small Groups: From Theory to Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 35.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SMALL GROUPS

The church cannot increase its membership through people who come in by the front door and leave by the back door. Therefore, in order to stop the back door “exodus”, certain strategies should be put in place to curb the situation and decrease the rampant loss of church members. Bill states, “Groups provide a delivery system for truth, shepherding, and caregiving.”⁵ The Great commission to the church is to go out and baptize people and make them disciples of Jesus. These disciples should be taken care of by their fellow disciples to remain in the church. They cannot be disciples unless they stay in the church. The church should not allow any situation that will open the back door for the exit of her members. Instead it should come up with strategies of closing it so that church members are retained. The small groups are the way to go. As Thom puts it, “The point is that the expectation of person being in a small group is vital towards retention of those in the church. Once they build relationship in that small group, the likelihood of their departure drops significantly.”⁶ To close the back door, the church needs to nurture its members which it has failed to do in most cases.

⁵ Bill Donahue and Willow Greek, *Leading Life – Changing: Small Groups* (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2002), 16.

⁶ Thom S. Rainer and Sam S. Rainer 111, *Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts* (Nashville TN: B&H, 2008), 213.

The church has various methods of souls winning, but very few methods of nurturing and retaining her members. Robert suggests, “Retaining new members in the church begins with extending warm actions of hospitality. Retention efforts assist new comers with identifying friends in the congregation and small groups to which they belong and serve in ministry.”⁷ People are social beings therefore they need a community which cares, loves and accepts them. Randall affirms that, “The members of the group must take responsibility of one another. By doing so, the members keep growing because they must stay ahead of the person being mentored.”⁸ When they come to church they expect the same, and when their expectation is not met, they end up leaving it. The church should be designed in such a way that the new members find life in the church better than the one they had outside. Manskar affirms, “Members of a congregation need to know that other members care about them and pray for them, lending a helping hand—when someone is sick, ill. Or injured or when a baby is born or when a loved one dies—is another way to demonstrate care and love.”⁹ The church should be a community where people feel accepted, cared for, loved and treated as brothers and sisters. One way the church can do this is through small groups’ ministry. The environment of acceptance, love and care can be felt more meaningfully in small groups. “They live in peace and unity with other believers, making the church a magnet for those longing for a loving, caring community.”¹⁰ Church members can easily be nurtured by being properly cared for, loved and accepted as

⁷ Albert W. Dock, *Keeping Members in the Church: A model that Works* (Xulon: USA, 2008), 32.

⁸ Randall G. Neighbour, *The Naked Truth about Small Group Ministry* (Houston: Taxus, Touch Publications, 2009), 120.

⁹ Steven W. Manskar, *Guidelines for Leading Your Congregation 2013-2016 - Small Group Ministries* (Nashville TN: Cokesbury, 2012), 25.

¹⁰ *Where Are the Mature Believers?* Accessed February 04, 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2014/where-are-mature-believers.html>.

they are, and this can be done best in small groups. It is hard for the big church to meet the needs of every member. For a long time, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has held this view, “individual’s needs for spiritual growth and fellowship are met in small groups in a way that is often far more personal than that provided in the large gatherings of the church.”¹¹To meet individual’s needs, the church should embrace small groups’ ministry. Krista Petty states, “Small group ministry has become a vital part of church life—helping a congregation to grow in spiritual maturity and Christian friendship.”¹²

Small groups, if well managed can play a big role of nurturing and retaining church members who have been coming in and getting out more easily through the back door. Small groups like plants need to be dealt with uniquely. Linthicum, asserts, “To my mind, a good nurturing community is one which sustains and encourages each of its participants in his or her working relationship with God and self.”¹³They can provide a greatly needed personal touch from the church to the congregation if managed well. The church must remember what Peter said in 1 Peter 5:2-3, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.”

The Biblical View of Small Groups

The concept of small groups is not new; it is earlier seen in the Bible as a model of governing God’s people in the Old Testament. Instances of small groups in

¹¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Elders Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1994), 124.

¹² Krista Petty, “Externally Focused Small Groups: Leadership Network” accessed May 3, 2015, <http://www.leadnet.org> 2007, 2.

¹³ Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of Urban City* (Zondervan: Com, Zondervan, 2011), 287.

the Bible are numerous. Each small group played its role in each instance. The small groups concept can be traced throughout the Bible; from Genesis to the New Testament and the roles they played then. Though not commanded as procedure to run God's church, much was accomplished through them. Some instances of small groups in the Old Testament are traced and the roles they played then.

Old Testament View of Small Groups

In the beginning, God started with a small group of a family unit. Where God said, it was not good for a man to live alone (Genesis 2: 18). Alex Kirk asserts, "From the very beginning of time God had planned to create all humans to need both God and other humans. He created of all humankind to live in community. We see this small group community in creation consisting of God, Adam and Eve. The relationship among the three of them was a prototype of how God wanted to relate to His people and how he wanted them to relate to each other."¹⁴

This means that God knows that human beings need each other in order to live a better life with God in their community. Kurt affirms, "The family unit was instituted to fulfil basic human needs. Just as a new born baby needs the and the attention of a family for health development, so a new born child of God needs the nurture that only a small attentive group from the large church family can provide."¹⁵When God wanted to establish a God-fearing nation, He called Abraham, with his family as a small group by which God could teach what He wanted His people to know. What He did that time has implications for us today (Genesis 12:1-3). The family of Abraham was a kind of small group which God used to fulfil His

¹⁴Alex kirk et al., *Small Group Leader's Handbook* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, 1995), 24.

¹⁵ Kurt W. Johnson, *Successful Small Groups: From Theory to service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 25.

purpose then. Through the promise God made to Abraham, other nations were blessed. Even today the Christian faith is attributed to him. By this small group, God's nation was nurtured and retained through what was entrusted to it.

During the exodus, the Israelites camped and marched in groups of their clans or companies (Numbers 2:1-34; 10:11-16). The Lord addressed the matter of the arrangement of the camp for the anticipated years of the journey to Canaan. The nation was to have a set of procedures of encampments. And when marching out, they marched in orders to ensure efficiency of procedure. The arrangement was to consist of four groups of three tribes each, one group on each side of the tabernacle. The tribe of Levi was to be divided by its major clans and placed immediately around the tabernacle. This kind of arrangement helped the Israelites not to lose focus and was traced properly. It helped people to be taken care of easily, thus keeping contact with each other. In case of administering discipline, it was easy, such as the case of Achan (Joshua 7:16-18).

The advice Jethro gave Moses in Exodus 18:13-26 to have leaders of small groups for his efficient governance cannot be overlooked. This arrangement was an admirable one, and it was founded upon a division of the people which was adopted not only in civil but in military affairs. In both cases the people were divided into thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; and the chiefs of these numbers are in this passage, as well as in (Numbers 31:14) The movement of the Israelites was easy because of the small group arrangement. Likewise, believers can be ministered to, nurtured and retained through small groups that love and care for each other. Ministering to the church through small groups is an admissible fact for God's church to be nourished and grow spiritually. Mikel Neumann affirms, "When Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's wall, he divided the work into family groups, placing families

close to their own homes. Nehemiah decentralised the power and responsibility while keeping the groups network together”¹⁶

New Testament View on Small Groups

The New Testament is not silent about small groups. A lot of instances are observable in the subsection that follows. It is apparent that one cannot avoid small groups if one is to nurture God’s people and retain them in an atmosphere that fosters spiritual growth.

Small groups in the ministry of Jesus. During his ministry, Jesus chose to build into the lives of a few, solid foundations which would form the basis of his kingdom and withstand the storms which would attack them. With a whole world to save he spent most of his ministry, it would seem, in private with this little group. He set out to teach those men to love one another, caring for one another and to pass on the good news of God’s love to others. One cannot miss the significance of the twelve in searching for ways to vitalise the church of the day in nurture and retention.

It is instructive that Jesus, one of the Godhead continued with the same principle of small groups when He started His saving ministry. He did not lose focus of small groups. He chose to work with few individuals such as the twelve disciples whom he nurtured, trained and kept. With and by this small group, Jesus ministered to other people. By this, he demonstrated His love, teaching, lordship and even ministry. Arnold affirms, “Jesu Christ is our first and greatest model for how small groups can stimulate faith and growth in others.”¹⁷ His ministry is full of examples of serving people with and by small groups.

¹⁶ Mikel Neumann, *Home Groups for Urban Cultures: Biblical Small Group Ministry on Five Continents* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999), 24.

¹⁷ Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 18.

The relational level with which Jesus carried out His early ministry is the best model for small groups. He chose to keep His inner circle small. It is seen in Mark 3:14. “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” a wonderful description of a small group in its simplest form. Jesus spent a lot of time with these individuals nurturing them, loving and accepting them as they were. Kurt affirms, “Jesus also used the small-group setting with His disciples to train them for service”¹⁸ But at the heart of the group of twelve was a core group of three. Three appearances in the New Testament make us aware that Jesus was giving special attention to Peter, James and John. Only these three were present on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9) and were with Jesus and the parents when Jairus’s daughter was raised from the dead (Mark 5:37). Again, they alone were present in the garden when, in great agony of spirit, he surrendered to the Father’s will (Matthew 26:37). It seems these were key leaders in the making, taken into the inner retreat of Christ’s deeper thoughts and emotions and experiencing a greater revelation of Christ than any of the others.

It’s evident from the scripture that, When Jesus fed the five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, He commanded them to form small groups (Mark 6:39-44 and Luke 9: 14-17). The miracle happened when people were arranged into small groups, apparently, it could have been impossible if not arranged that way. This may mean that any effective service to believers can be obtained through small groups. And through small groups a lot of wonders and miracles are likely to happen in the church. Commanding people to sit in groups when serving them, He knew the impact *of small groups when serving large numbers of people.

¹⁸Kurt W. Johnson, *Successful Small Groups: From Theory to service* (Hagerstown MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 29.

Serving other people effectively needs commitment. Jesus was committed to people spiritually and physically. Warren suggests, “Jesus calls us to be committed to one another, and it is through small groups that we learn the skills of relationship. Small groups are laboratories of love, where we learn to obey the command of Jesus to love your neighbour as you love yourself.”¹⁹ Sitting in small groups, people learned to obey the command of Jesus of loving their neighbour as they ate together. And a miracle happened when they obeyed the command from Jesus to sit in small groups. Jesus did not only serve people in small groups but also used them to serve other people.

Small groups in the early church. Jesus left the church in its infancy in small groups. The early church was committed to work and to serve its members in small groups. Jesus created a small group as a primary method of nurture, transformation, multiplication and retention for His first twelve disciples. The Early Church continued with that model. It is likely that Jesus established a small group as the best method by which His disciples were supposed to establish the church on the same principle, as best method by which His message of redemption is to be carried to the nations. Small groups were essential to the early church structure. As one reads, one sees that this wasn't an isolated occurrence. Small groups were vital to the daily life and health of the early church.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common...every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of

¹⁹Rick Warren, “Seven Marks of a Healthy Small Group” accessed April 15, 2015 <http://pastors.com/seven-marks-of-a-healthy-small-group/>.

all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:44-47)

“Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and preaching the good news that Jesus is the Christ!” (Acts 5:42)

“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.” (Acts 20:20)

The book of Acts identifies itself with the small group ministry in nurturing and retaining the Christians of that time. After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples did not leave the small group method of their master, they remained united ministering in small groups, which led to the increase of new converts. They used to gather together in small groups in homes. They developed the spirit of sharing together what they had and no one lacked anything. (Acts 2:44-47). Many churches were established in homes by the Apostle Paul using the small groups strategy. Mallison asserts, “The early church followed the model the Lord gave to them. In its infancy, the church was a small group in which believers gathered to support each other in growing in Christ and in witnessing to their Lord.”²⁰ It is affirmed, “A study of church movements shows that every major revival has been influenced by a ready access to the Bible and the gathering of believers in small, intimate groups”²¹ Nurturing members through small groups, the church is likely to witness a reformation which it craves today. The early church witnessed the same when the members were in small groups that nurtured them. Arnold asserts, “But small groups also had a place in the life of the

²⁰John Mallison, *The Small Group Leader: A Manual to Develop Vital Small Groups* (Adelaide, Australia: Open Book, 1996), 5.

²¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Elders Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1994), 123.

church after Pentecost and an even more significant role in later years, as persecution drove the church underground.”²² Arnold here suggests that the church survived during persecution due to small groups. These groups should have nurtured their members in order to retain them during that catastrophic period. He further affirms, “The small group movement, whose roots are in both the early church and later church history, became a broad phenomenon in the late twentieth century. Highly mobile and disconnected people of all ages began to seek deeper fellowship and spiritual nurture in groups.”²³ People as social beings always need communities where they can feel accepted and taken of and the small groups play this role. Womack states that “The early church did not construct its first church building for three hundred years. In the beginning of that period, it used the temple for corporate worship, and after A.D. 300 it began to worship in the Roman basilicas, but its basic meeting places were believers' homes.”²⁴

The church has not lost track of small group ministry since its formation. Small groups have proven to be a successful tool to nurture believers of every generation in God’s church. Kirk affirms, “The second component of small groups in the early church was nurture. This new small community developed its reconciliation with God through devoting “themselves to the apostle teaching” (acts 2:42)”²⁵The contemporary church is built on the same teachings of the Apostles who used to nurture the believers in small groups. The church today cannot run away from the

²²Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 21.

²³Ibid., 21.

²⁴David A. Womack, “Five Small Group Myths,” accessed on 4th February 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2007/five-small-group-myths.html>.

²⁵kirk et al., *Small Group Leader’s Handbook*, 34.

formation of small groups, if it is to serve God's purpose in this world. Bowland observes, "The small group allows God's purpose for the church to be carried out in a very natural way"²⁶ Mature believers who are well nurtured can easily go out to bring others in and nurture them.

Small Groups in the Spirit of Prophecy

Ministering to the church through small groups should not be taken lightly. During the reformation of the church, God showed this arrangement to Ellen G. White. She says that one who showed her this arrangement is the one who cannot error. confirms, "The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers"²⁷ The only one who cannot err is God, thus ministry through small groups is of God and the church should not take it lightly. A lot of Ellen White's counsels have been used successfully by the church. On the same note the arrangement of dividing the church into small groups should not be taken lightly. The church, in order to serve its members efficiently and effectively has to follow this counsel. It is an observable fact that the church is losing its members very easily, and one of the reason is that it has failed to follow this counsel. Should this counsel be followed, the church will not fail to nurture and retain its members, and thus close the back door.

Why can express themselves more than in a large group; and participation of every individual is more likely and Christians tend to build their confidence in each

²⁶Terry A. Bowland, *Make Disciples! Reaching the Postmodern World for Christ* (Joplin MO: Collage Press, 1999), 291.

²⁷Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1946), 115.

other and can keep together in their group and in the church at large. After building their confidence in each other in small groups, Christians can now go out and bring others in. Ellen White advises, “In our churches let companies be formed for service. Let different ones unite in labor as fishers of men. Let them seek to gather souls from the corruption of the world into the saving purity of Christ's love”²⁸ Instead of the church dividing Christians in small groups first, and then send them to gather souls, Christians are sent first to gather the souls, and the result is that, those who are brought in are not staying in the church because no one is there to care for them. She further asserts, “Every member of the body of Christ must act his part in the cause of God, according to the ability that God has given him. We must press together against obstructions and difficulties, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart.”²⁹ This is hard to be achieved in a large church, but if the Christians are formed in small groups this can be achieved. According to this counsel, every member of the body of Christ is to actively participate in God’s work by the ability given to him. This is where one’s spiritual gifts are easily recognized and utilized rather than in large a congregation.

Some Other Christian Authors on Small Groups

The Concept of small groups has captured the attention of various authors. Though have written much about this concept some churches have not yet picked interest. Some churches have small groups. However, they give varying degrees of commitment to them but they are not considered the backbone of their life and ministry. In fact, only a few churches have adequate systems in place to monitor back door erosion. The church must balance its investments to provide adequate resources

²⁸Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1925), 73.

²⁹Ibid., 41.

for nurturing members. Except in the smallest of churches, a professional pastor can always provide better pastoral care than a church body can provide for itself through small groups and care ministries. Mallison asserts, “A Christian small group provides an ideal situation to discern, affirm, develop and use the variety of spiritual gifts of the members for mutual up building.”³⁰ It is in a small group that one’s spiritual gifts can be easily identified and used effectively. If the church embraces this idea of small groups in taking care of its members, many Christian will know their spiritual gifts and by knowing them, they will use them to help their fellow members, thus nurturing them. The church leaders should first embrace this idea in order to pick fire. When the leaders are convinced of the concept of small groups, then it will have a stand. On this concept, Dr Bill supports that “Church leaders remain convinced that people find *hope and strength for their journey when they gather regularly with a small community for mutual support and wisdom.”³¹ The Christian journey needs to care for each other as members continue up the last hour of it. This care can be felt among members who share the burdens of their fellow, who celebrate together the success of their members and who strengthen and support their group members. Allen comments, “Even though we each must take our own path, we need the support and strengthening of others to become a more deeply committed Christians. It is in small groups where persons receive encouragement and challenge to deepen their faith and to live out the calling of all believers to be disciples in the world.”³²

³⁰Mallison, *The Small Group Leader*, 113.

³¹Bill Donahue, *How to Pursue Spiritual Growth in Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 36.

³²Allen White, “Leading-Small-Groups-Purpose-Everything,” accessed May 12th 2015, <http://www.amazon.com/dp/0801013801>.

Kinds of Small Groups

There are various types or kinds of small groups which have been established in order to meet specific roles. Various authors have come up with various kinds of small groups. Small groups' types are established depending on the intention of their formation. Gane states the following as kinds of small groups in youth ministry; "fellowship group, cell group, growth group, support group, outreach groups, and social groups."³³ Arnold put them as follows: "cell groups/care groups or Home groups, Affinity groups and House Church."³⁴ He affirms that "Normally groups are formed either by a single leader or a group coming out of a class or group launching program. It is an ongoing group that meets (usually weekly) to discuss a Bible study, share prayer requests, and – for some – share a meal together". Small groups are not new in the church. He further states, "Churches have used home Bible studies, prayer groups, Sabbath school groups, fellowship groups, discipleship groups, task groups, recovery groups, missions' groups, worship groups, care groups, leadership development groups." Any person who has faithfully attended church in the past will have been a part of at least one of these types of groups. Small groups are not a new concept in the minds of many people; typically, the groups are open, meaning that anyone can join any group at any time. Group members should be encouraged to invite their Christian and non-Christian friends to the meetings. Churches should encourage those groups to discover ways they can serve the community or the church as individuals or as a group.

³³ Barry Gane, *Building Youth Ministry: A foundation Guide* (Riverside, CA: Hancock Center, 2005), 130,131.

³⁴ Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove: Intersity Press, 1998), 78-82.

In every area of activity where the church plans to carry out a certain task, it should determine the types or kinds of small groups it will engage. Mallison sets the small groups as follows: “task groups, friendship groups, interest groups, decision groups, Bible study groups, personal development groups, support groups, recovery groups, orientation groups, koinnonia groups, evangelism groups, prayer groups, mission groups, Christian education groups, single cells, multi-cell network, covenant groups, spontaneous groups.”³⁵ All formed small groups are created to carb a situation in the community or church. Groups should not be established for the sake of establishment, but for the purpose they will fulfil. James Emery White says “our small groups are knowns as Home Teams, and they meet at different times and places throughout the community and reflect any number of forms-from couples’ groups to men’ groups, recovery groups, and support groups to seeker groups.

The Bible gives additional kinds of small groups: Adam and Eve is a kind of home small group. From this kind, there is another type of small group that is a family which comprises a father, a mother, children and other relatives. There is another one, a clan which is a group of families of the same lineage. From clans, there are tribes or races and nations. Each kind of group played its role in nurturing and retaining their members in those groups.

Deciding what kind of group, it is or is going to be is vital to the longevity of the small group. Defining who you are and who you're going to target allows for a greater ability to become good at it.

³⁵ Mallison, *The Small Group Leader*, 16-19.

Contact Group

Mature Christians meet unbelievers at a point of their felt needs. It could be dealing with discipleship, mentoring, family or marriage issues. This group is specifically setup to pour directly into people where their greatest need is.

Limited Christian Group

It is designed to be very specific and sticks to one theme. Examples could include: Worship Group, Bible Study Group, Prayer Group, New Members Nurture Group, Sabbath School class, Fellowship Group and Support Group.

Other several groups that can be used in the nurture and retention of church members, these may include a single parent, Middle school Students Group, Young Married Fellowship Group, widow or widower groups and shut in ministry, the hungry, the needy, or other psychological needs based group. Malison states, “This group could also include some type of support group to single mothers. Parenting with a Purpose Group, or those who need a helping hand. This list usually pulls on the heart string of people and the focus is on serving more than being served”³⁶ Mature Christians minister to Christians and unbelievers at the point of special ministry needs.

The Importance of Small Groups

There is no simple solution to growing a healthy, balanced body of believers. However, a successful small group ministry may be one of the best ways to fulfil the biblical purposes of the church—and solve many of the issues of nurturing and retention of church members, evangelism and stewardship that can sometimes confuse pastors. Someone has said, “Some of the best and healthiest small groups will be

³⁶Mallison, *The Small Group Leader*, 21.

those that really see themselves as a small part of the larger church.” In other words, similar to the way that the church cares about worship, supporting one another and caring for each other’s needs, so too does a successful small group.

Being part of a small group is a New Testament design. Jesus mostly ministered to people in and with small groups. The early church also did the same as it ministered to the people. Therefore, a small group helps one to study the Bible and learn more about the Christian faith. A small group should be the best place to get to know people. It can be the best place to grow as a follower of Jesus. It can also be made a great place to find love and support when times get rough. Not only that, but a small group if well-organised can be a great place where to bring friends, relatives, and work associates so they too can find out what it means to be a follower of Christ and grow. Erick suggests, “A small group is a great place to develop one’s skills and gifts as he contributes in the group”³⁷. Small Groups are at the heart of Hoima and Central churches as a way to become part of the church family. They meet during the week in people's homes, welcoming the Sabbath together and meeting with God and just being together as friends. Small groups should be a place where Christians can build relationships, help and encourage one another, and learn what it means to have a loving God and be a loving people. Small Groups should be set in a way that a variety of things that help to develop deep relationship with God, with each other and the local church can be found therein. Most importantly a small group should be a place to belong, to be accepted and loved, and to be part of God's family. As Roger Walton affirms,

When asked to identify in what ways the group had helped them, 77% thought the group has made them more confident in their faith; 76% said that belonging to a group has made them more able to connect their faith and

³⁷Eric Geiger, “Successful Discipleship in Small Groups,” accessed February 4th 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2014/successful-discipleship-in-small-groups.html>.

everyday life; 72% said it had made them more accepting and forgiving of others; 79% said it had strengthened their prayer life; and 68% said it had given them more confidence in speaking about their faith to others. The strongest response was that the group had brought them closer to God. 87% of participants believed this, suggesting that the small group animates and empowers various aspects of what it means to be Christian and be in touch with God.³⁸

Walton indicates clearly that one cannot underestimate the role of small groups in nurture and retention of church members. Mallison agrees with Walton and indicates the role of small groups as follows; “We are called into a special relationship with each other with privileges and responsibilities (Galatians 6:16; 1 Corinthians 16:1; Colossians 3:12-17). Mutual dependence and influence upon, and respect for, each other are required of those in ‘the body of Christ’. And each small group is seen by Paul as being ‘the body of Christ.’”³⁹

In the closeness and confidentiality of small groups, members pray for each other as they share their hurts, reveal their feelings, confess their failures, disclose their doubts, admit their fears, acknowledge their weaknesses, and ask for help, which is not easy in the big church for such confidence. This kind of relationship and confidentiality nurtures members and keeps them in the church.

A small group is a more modern way to bring about interaction and friendship. This can be a study group, a prayer group, a sharing group, or an activity group of various kinds. The new converts should have some friends in the church if they are to be well assimilated. The fundamental goal of small groups should be to develop relationships and build trust with new converts or those who are becoming or have become inactive. Each kind of small group should have an element of nurturing and retention of its members in particular and the church at large.

³⁸Roger Walton, *Disciples Together: The Small Group as a Vehicle for Discipleship Formation* (Wentworth Court Brighouse: West Yorkshire Equinox 2012), 109.

³⁹Mallison, *The Small Group Leader*, 10.

Small Groups in the Nurture of Church Members

Considering the importance of small groups, the church cannot afford to overlook the role of small groups in its nurturing efforts. In them, new Christians are helped to take the first steps and are given some very basic ‘food’ and support. Relationships with their new-found Lord and other members of their new ‘family’ are carefully developed in an atmosphere of care and concern. Although the Bible plays a very important part in the group, the aim is not simply to do Bible study. The group will primarily try to care for and encourage new Christians, making them feel wanted and accepted. It will be a place for new Christians to get to know others, share experiences and ask questions. David Womack asserts that “the small group is a caring and sharing environment that provides excellent psychological and spiritual therapy in addition to fellowship and Bible knowledge. The people receive emotional support, Christian advice, and answers to prayer.”⁴⁰ A Christian who has been treated like that in a small group as Womack observes, cannot fail to mature spiritually. He further affirms that, “the small groups did not do everything we originally had in mind, but they have surprised us with unexpected success in the maturation and care of our congregations.”⁴¹ Spiritual maturity is a sign that someone has been nurtured to a mature church member. It is hard for such a person to leave the church. Krista Petty stresses how small groups nurture believers to maturity, “Small group ministry has become a vital part of church life—helping a congregation to grow in spiritual maturity and Christian friendship.”⁴² It is hard for the crowded church to nurture its

⁴⁰David A. Womack, “Five Small Group Myths,” accessed February 4, 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2007/five-small-group-myths.html>.

⁴¹Womack, “Five Small Group Myths.”

⁴²Krista Petty, “Externally Focussed Groups,” accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.leadnet.org>.

members to a level of spiritual maturity and Christian friendship of each individual. This can only happen in small groups. Harnish suggests, “The church’s role is to nurture, encourage, and challenge us as we strive to grow in our love for God and others. How does God do this through the church? The church provides opportunities to experience God through small groups, corporate worship and experiences that allow us to use our spiritual gifts in service.”⁴³

Rick observes, “It’s essential that we, the small-group community, focus on developing mature believers in our ministries who then develop other mature disciples. As large numbers of believers are discipled toward maturity, the church will flourish, experiencing both spiritual and numerical growth.”⁴⁴

When nurtured, church members are retained. By joining the church, people automatically become part of the membership circle. But that does not mean that they are also automatically part of the fellowship circle. In the fellowship circle people know each other well, and they have a strong sense of belonging. Most of the leaders come from the fellowship circle. They refer to the church using pronouns such as “we” and “us.” Unfortunately, there are too many members who do not see themselves as part of the fellowship circle, and in some cases even the membership circle. They still feel like outsiders even though they technically are members⁴⁵

Church members who still feel outsiders cannot stay in church for long. That is why the church is losing its members. Christians who are not nurtured cannot be

⁴³James A Harnish and Justin LaRosa, *A Disciple’s Path: Daily workbook: Deepening Your Relationship with Christ and the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 25.

⁴⁴ Rick Howerton, “Where Are the Mature Believers?” accessed, February 04, 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2014/where-are-mature-believers.html>.

⁴⁵Benjamin D. Schoun, “Finding Them—Keeping Them,” accessed February 10, 2015, <http://archives.adventistworld.org/issue.php?id=1367&action=print>.

easily retained in the church. Church members who are well nurtured feel and have a strong sense of belonging, therefore they find it hard to leave the church.

Small Groups in the Retention of Church Members

Retention of church members is critical to the general health of any congregation. A health congregation will work hard to retain its members using the best practices, which will include small group ministries. Jesus said, He came to find and save the lost (Luke 19:10). For Jesus, the principle governing all relationship was love. It should be the church's purpose to win souls and to keep them. But how can the church keep its members when it is losing most of them? There should be some strategies that are put in place. One of these strategies is the formation of small groups in the churches where love and care can be met. Large churches have no way of keeping and nurturing their members unless they use small groups. Benjamin Schoun observes:

'The transition from membership to fellowship often begins with a simple invitation to participate in smaller circles in which people are more directly involved with others in study, sharing, ministry tasks, or leadership roles. Schaller's research suggests that it is necessary to have six or seven groups or circles for each 100 members who are 13 or 14 years of age or older. This is an important way to assimilate new members into the church and to strengthen them and keep them.'⁴⁶

The church should know that it's no job done to win souls if they are not nurtured and retained in the fellowship. The church today should put its emphasis on nurturing and retaining members as soon as they have been converted. This can be easily achieved in small groups. Schoun affirms, "Small group fellowship is a more

⁴⁶Benjamin D. Schoun, "Finding Them—Keeping Them," accessed February 10, 2015, <http://archives.adventistworld.org/issue.php?id=1367&action=print>.

contemporary way to cultivate interaction and friendships. These can be study groups, sharing groups, or activity groups of various kinds. Every new convert needs at least seven friendships in the church if he or she is to be well assimilated in the church”⁴⁷

Friends can easily be got in small groups than in large congregations. From such groups believers can be cared for and their real needs known. Aubrey Malphurs states, “Small groups can meet the basic, general needs of the church that can’t be met in large-group setting. . . . For example, small group can serve as means for assimilating new members into the church. . . . other examples of needs are pastoral care, fellowship, support, community and accountability.”⁴⁸ In addition to fostering the growth and maturity of believers and contributing to the evangelism of nonbelievers, small groups also help Christians fulfil their God given mandate to serve as good stewards of themselves and others. Hans Finzel confirms, “Having a small group of friends to whom you are accountable will go a long way toward helping protect you from the world, flesh and the devil.”⁴⁹ The church is failing to retain its members because new members fail to get friends who will mentor them spiritually during the few months they are converted in the church. After these members have changed from their former faith where they had friends whom they were used to socialise with, if these friends are not replaced immediately, new members are likely to leave the church. Watson submits that, “The consistence conviction for Wesley was that holiness is social and most reliable formed through

⁴⁷Benjamin D. Schoun, “Finding Them—Keeping Them,” accessed February 10, 2015, <http://archives.adventistworld.org/issue.php?id=1367&action=print>.

⁴⁸Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 384.

⁴⁹Hans Finzel, *Empowering Leaders* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1998), 54.

small groups accountability structures.”⁵⁰ If this is true, the formation of small groups is inevitable. People as social beings need each other in daily life; this also applies to spiritual life. Nowhere else can one easily socialise than in a small group of people who will understand him or her and probably take care of his/her needs. Danny stresses, “In addition, no other ministry area is better equipped to meet the needs and retain people than in small group of a Sunday school class.”⁵¹ As Danny emphasizes it, if small groups of Sunday school can retain the members, what about other spiritually focused formed small groups? The intentional formed retention small groups can do much more. In such groups, close friendship is quickly attained. Friendship, as can be easily obtained in a small group, is essential in nurture and retention of church members. Smith asserts, “Friendship ties are powerful bonding forces. They attract new members and deter dropouts. . . . If the stronger of those bonds is with the present church, a member is likely to stay there.”⁵² The church should strive to maintain these strong bonds of friendship which necessitate the stay of their members in the church.

Finally, small groups should be formed intentionally for the purpose of nurturing and retaining church members. As Ellen G. White said in the book, *Evangelism*, “the one who showed her this arrangement is the one who cannot err.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Kevin M. Watson, *Pursuing Social Holiness: The Band Meeting in Wesley’s Thought and Popular Methodist Practice* (Madison Avenue, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 44.

⁵¹ Danny Von Kanel, *Built by the Owner’s Design: The Positive Approach to Building Your Church* (Lima, Ohio: CSS, 2002), 60.

⁵² Donald P. Smith, *How to Attract and Keep Active Church Members* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster, 1992), 35.

⁵³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1946), 115.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF SDA CHURCHES, HOIMA AND CENTRAL

Social and Cultural Background

The churches of Hoima and Hoima central are located in the area where majority of the people are Banyoro by tribe. And the name Banyoro means rulers or respected people of high dignity. These churches are established near the palace of the Omukama (the king) of Bunyoro. The Banyoro are hard to reach with the gospel. Such people need a lot of care when they are converted in order for them to feel accepted and loved by members they have found in the church. Because of their proximity to the palace, the people sometimes are influenced by the norms of the kingdom. Formerly, these people worshiped the sun god called Kazooba Nyamuhanga. This belief has led many people in the region to believe in the living God and other gods, like kazooba nyamuhanga.

Church Location

Seventh-day Adventist Church Hoima and Central are found in Hoima municipality, Hoima political district in Mid-Western Uganda. They belong to Western Uganda Field, which is comprised of two regions, Tooro and Bunyoro. Hoima and Central SDA Churches are in Bunyoro region. Hoima church is in Mparo division on Kikwite hill or cell along Kampala road half a kilometre from Hoima town while Central church is located in Bujumbura division, Lusaka cell almost in the middle of the town.

Historical Background of Hoima and Hoima Central Churches

Seventh-day Adventist Church Hoima started in 1963 after a public evangelism campaign which was conducted by Pastor Mpyisi Ezra who was head of department of Theology at Bugema college by then. The following year elder Bazarra Dennis conducted another evangelistic campaign in the same town of Hoima. From these two campaigns, fifty souls were reaped. At that time, the church was administered from Rwenzori Station at Mitandi and Robert Peiffer the station director then, requested for land for the church from Hoima Town Council and the church was granted five acres of land. After ten years in 1974 the current church building was constructed by Rwenzori station. From that time, the church membership has increased from fifty members to 9182 distributed in three church districts, companies and Sabbath school branches as it will be shown later.

Seventh-day Adventist Church Central started in February 26th 2000, with seven members who broke off from Hoima and started fellowshiping in Murubya Primary school offered to them freely by its director. They continued fellowshiping in this place and as membership increased, the church members searched for land for the church. Currently the church has its own plot of land and a permanent building has been erected. In 2013, the church was organized with 200 members, one company and two Sabbath school branches.

The Growth of SDA Church in the Area

Since the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the area in 1963, the church has witnessed both an increase and loss of membership. Though the church might seem to have grown, it has not reached the level of nurturing and retaining its members. If the church had closed the back door, the church would have grown more

steadily. Nevertheless, even though the church had some losses of members, it grew into an organized church and later on it became a church district called Hoima district. After some years, this same district has split into other two districts Karongo with 15 congregations and Kikube with 17 congregations and Hoima the mother district has 19 congregations with a combined membership of 1002⁵⁴. All these three church districts are in Hoima political district which by 2014 had 9182 Seventh Day Adventists out of 573903 which is 1.6% of the population of the political district.⁵⁵ Hoima church district has four organized churches totalling to membership of 1002 as per statistical report of third quarter of 2015.⁵⁶ The church has not reached its expected growth because of bringing in members who then leave the church by the back door which the church has failed to close.

The Potential of the SDA Church

The success of any ministry is built on the trust of its congregants, leaders and church members. The best way to gain that trust is to demonstrate ethics and integrity in church operations, not because of legal requirements, but because it is the right thing to do. The integrity of the ministry affects all church groups and every area of church operations. This is why weaving ethics and integrity into the core fabric of the ministry is so important. Churches that operate with integrity do so intentionally and make it part of their culture and everyday practices. As Mallison states “This culture of honesty and trust helps orient new believers to understand that operating with integrity is the way things are done in the church. Building integrity into the culture is the foundation for ethical practices. Churches that strive to do the right thing benefit

⁵⁴Hoima Church District Statistical Report 3rd Quarter, 2015.

⁵⁵Hoima District Local Government, Population Projections, 2014.

by establishing a reputation for high ethical standards. It starts at the top and flows throughout the entire organization.”⁵⁷ A true leader is marked by their ability to replace themselves through believing in others and helping others maximize their potential. Strong leadership affects an organization’s ability to meet goals and achieve its mission. Church leaders should set the standard for behaviour, and continually work toward preparing and developing others for greater responsibility.

The setup of the area where Hoima and Central churches are located has made the church members vulnerable to circumstances. Being town churches where members come from various cultural backgrounds and different countries, there is a challenge of togetherness. Yet these diversities can be an opportunity for growth and increase of membership. The believers should have demonstrated great love toward one another even when they are not relatives. This would extend to the point of helping one another with financial needs and spiritual care. Such love is in sharp relief to the selfish and materialistic bent of the culture with in the region. This contrast serves to draw attention to the Christian community in the area.

The Christian Youth Lifestyle

The Christian life of the youth begins with and is about relationships in which individuals are bonded together in fellowship with Christ and one another. The church demonstrates its warm fellowship through its love for and acceptance of young people. Through fellowship, personal and spiritual growth is nurtured. The seventh Day Christian church shows its understanding of the developmental needs of young people and how to facilitate that growth. This is displayed in their bold witness as well as in their loud and fervent singing in their worship services and other youth

⁵⁷Mallison, *The Small Group Leader*, 65.

clubs and singing groups. They also demonstrate great trust in one another and in new believers. Such trust is in plain contrast to the extreme distrust that is caused by the Cultural Revolution when the people learn to distrust everyone.

However, this ideal of the church is deteriorating among the youth and should be more emphasized among the youth of Hoima and Central churches in order the youths' life style to be an attraction to nonbelievers. It is helpful to remember that this broad age group includes a very diverse group of people with differing needs. It includes students at public colleges and universities, students on Adventist campuses, young people beginning their working careers, single people; young married couples, couples with children, and single parents. No one-size-fits-all ministry can possibly meet the needs of all the young adults in the church, but as one gets to know them and build relationships with them, one can help the young adults and the church as a whole develop programs and ministries that will use their talents and meet their needs. During these essential years, young adults are making their major life decisions-- which career to prepare for, whom to marry, where to live and work. "Among those life decisions, the choice to accept salvation in Jesus should be the most important. If this choice was made earlier in the teen years, a young adult may now need to reaffirm that commitment with the added maturity and understanding he or she now has."⁵⁸ Here he or she needs acceptance and a community where to belong.

Nowhere in the church other than in small groups can the challenges of the youth during such crucial years easily be addressed. As the youth comprises the biggest percentage of the church membership, it is during this period of life style that the church most loses these members. Therefore, the church members should interact

⁵⁸ "Where Are the Mature Believers?" accessed February 4, 2015, <http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2014/where-are-mature-believers.html>.

with the youth in a positive, friendly way, greeting them eagerly, praying for them, giving positive reinforcement when youth are involved in a program or church activity, and restraining the urge to judge and criticize. In small groups this one is very possible because of socialization with others, being cared for and feeling a sense of belonging.

Church Leadership

The character and effectiveness of any church is directly related to the quality of its leadership. That's why the Bible stresses the importance of qualified church leadership and defines specific standards for evaluating those who would serve in that sacred position. Failure to adhere to those standards has caused many of the problems that churches throughout the world currently face. The church has various leaders, who serve members through the word and through physical services. Speaking ministries include preaching, teaching, instructing, educational and admonishing. Physical ministries included food distribution and other internal needs of the church. Leaders also have a role in directing or managing the church, and they are to be obeyed and respected. All service, whether in speaking, serving or decision-making, should be done for the benefit of those being served. God puts people in the body as he wishes, all for the common good. He has given leadership roles to help the church function in fulfilment of its responsibilities.

A church is only as godly as its leaders. A pastor once said to this researcher, "I think I've discovered why my church is not as effective as I want it to be: half of the men on my elder board are unsaved!" That may seem like an extreme example, but many churches fail to uphold the biblical standard for spiritual leadership. Such failures always impact the quality and integrity of a church's ministry. Quite often a church that is failing to have an impact on the world or that is experiencing strife and

conflict within its membership will look to new programming or other marginal things for answers, when the real issue may be unqualified leaders. That's the first thing to check. Diligent qualified leaders are a precious commodity in any church. Paul said, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17, NASB). Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (NASB). Leaders have a difficult task for which they are personally accountable to the Lord. They should be honoured by supplying their needs and add joy to their ministry by submitting to their oversight. Be prayed for and be encouraged often.

Every leader of Hoima and Central churches has the power to influence others for good or evil through his example. That's why God requires elders or leaders to model a high standard of godliness. That's also why 1 Timothy 3 doesn't list qualifications typical of today's corporate leaders: diligence, foresight, conceptual vision, administrative skills, decisiveness, courage, humor, eloquence, friendliness, tact, diplomacy, and so on. Those human characteristics are helpful in secular situations, but the issue in spiritual leadership is modelling godly virtue. An elder or church leader is to evangelize unbelievers, edify believers, feed the flock, strengthen families, and help the church act as salt and light in the world. For this reason, the church must choose qualified elders. Lesser men wouldn't be adequate for such a high calling. Therefore, Hoima and Central churches should have witnessed the same which should have contributed to increase and loses of their membership.

Data Analysis

Two hundred questionnaires were distributed and 190 responded and returned them making a response rate of 95%. The following tables show how people responded to the questionnaires. The responses are grouped under age, gender, marital status, service, visitation, caring, nurturing, retention, happiness in groups, and encouragement into groups.

When the data is analysed reveals the following information:

Table 1. Age of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 35 years	118	62.1%
Between 36 and 60 years of age	68	35.8%
Over 61 years of age	4	2.1%
Total	190	100%

Analysis of the information in table 1, shows that the respondents of 62.1% were below 35 years. Those who are in middle-aged respondents followed in percentage of 35.8. and those of 2.1%, were above 60, this implies that the churches are full of young people whom can be organized into vibrant small groups as indicated in table shows. These energetic believers if organised well, can make vibrant small groups which can be an effective tool for the nurture and retention of church members of Hoima and Central churches. It in these small groups the youth learn well about the love of Jesus. As Ted Johnston affirms, “I find it helpful to give youths a chance to talk and pray together about what they are hearing and reading in Scripture. Small groups are ideal for such interaction”⁵⁹ If youth are truly going to be

⁵⁹Ted Johnston, “Building Young Believers through Nurture,” accessed February 14th 2015, <https://www.gci.org/church/youth/cans3>.

the leaders of today, then why not give them the training, trust, encouragement, and vision of nurturing friendships and reaching new youth themselves through small groups group ministry?

Table 2. Gender of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Male	66	34.7%
Female	124	65.3%
Total	190	100%

In table 2, 65.3% of respondents were female respondents while 34.7% were male. Meaning female sex participated highly. This mean that if women are organized into small groups can do a recommendable job of nurturing, as it is stated “The purpose of all programs must be the spiritual growth of women, both those in the church and those whom the church is wanting to reach by using mentoring, small groups, training, nurture, or personal growth and affirmation”⁶⁰. With such women’s programs can do well if organized in small groups.

⁶⁰ “Women’s Ministries Programs in the Local Church,” accessed March 1st 2016, http://www.adventistwomensministries.org/assets/files/miscfiles/Handbook_WM/Handbook%20Section%20V-%20Programs%20&%20Projects.doc.

Table 3. Marital Status of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Married	100	52.6%
Singles	80	42.1%
Divorce	10	5.3%
Widow/er	0	0%
Total	190	100%

Table 3, indicates that 100 of 190 of the respondents were married making 52.6%, the singles were 80, making 42.1%, and the divorced were 5.3%. Analysing the marital status, it indicates that the married couples scored more than a half of the percentage of the respondents. Meaning that more than a half of the church membership are married. Today's busy couples are looking to connect with other couples and families who share the same beliefs and values. They want a place to go that will build them up when the demands of life try to tear them down. They want a safe place to raise their family. Through small groups, the church can be that place. One of the most effective ways to make a good marriage great and a struggling marriage strong is by getting involved in marriage mentoring small groups. Here, Mentors and Mentees couples consistently spend time together as couples, sharing each other's life experiences and learning more about God and His design for marriage. This then will keep homes and marriage stable and increase the stability of the church.

The 42.1 % for the singles needs much attention. Singles here need to be helped to grow emotionally, relationally and spiritually and become the whole, mature single adult God wants them to be. They need to be equipped and to encourage single and single-again adults to become effective leaders and workers within the local church and community. Through small groups, this is possible.

Table 4. Service Level of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Leaders	86	45.2%
Non-leaders	104	54.8%
Total	190	100%

The level of service in table 4 shows the leaders were of 45.2% of the respondents. With this percentage of leaders that participated, if they embrace the concept of small groups, the church is likely to be vibrant in nurture and retention of its members.

Table 5. Group Member Visitation of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Regularly	24	12.6%
Occasionally	86	45.2%
Weekly	2	1.1%
Never	78	41.1%
Total	190	100%

In terms of visitation of table 5, 1.1% managed to visit the members on weekly basis. 12.6% visited their fellow on regular basis while those who visited on occasional basis were 45.2% and 41.1% never visited. Therefore, some members of the groups be encouraged to visit each other for proper nurture. This table indicates that visitation on weekly basis among group members was still a problem which need to be addressed. Because if this problem is not addressed will let the groups lose its meaning and purpose. And thus, open the back door.

Table 6. Group Member Nurture of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	132	69.4%
Some how	42	22.1%
No	16	8.5%
Total	190	100%

The nurture group respondents in table 6 reveals that, 69.4% of the respondents accepted that small groups can nurture church members. While 22.1% of them said that somehow, small groups can nurture believers. Nurturing, therefore, is not an individual endeavour but must become part of the structure of the Christian community. Christians are guided to know God and find their gifts and ministries within the context of intimate fellowship within the body of Christ—the church. Human beings also have some inherent spiritual needs that small groups can help fulfil. These needs are not "churchly" needs but spiritual ones, things that make humans who they are, independent of their particular religious' beliefs. Most of these human spiritual needs can be fulfilled in the small group ministry of any local congregation. People are thirst for a place where they can find the nurture and care that will help them not only understand themselves but also understand what is going on in their lives and in the world around them.

Table 7. Happiness Level of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	173	91%
No	17	9%
Total	190	100%

Table 7 reveals that 91% of the respondents they could express themselves. They had people to share with their joys and burdens better than they could do in large congregation. while 9% of them they could not express themselves even in small groups. The level of happiness scored almost utmost percentage in table7 of 91%. Meaning that sometimes people just need to be around other people and when they are alone or feel isolated their thoughts and feelings can become unclear. Talking about him/her feelings with friends and other people that one helps. Just talking about how one feels will help him/her to feel like he is letting his feelings out. Talking about his feelings also helps to bring clarity and put things into perspective helping him to better understand and express himself. Other People help their fellow to understand who they are, to put things into perspective and express themselves more constantly as they regularly engage with others in small groups.

Table 8. Caring Level of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	162	85.2%
No	28	14.8%
Total	190	100%

The caring level of the respondents in Table 8 indicates that 85.2% accepted that they were cared for in small groups than when they were large congregations. While those who felt that they were not cared for were 28 out of 190 making 14.8% of the respondents. With this high percentage that are care for, such members feel welcomed in the church and are likely to remain there.

Table 9. Group Retention Level of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	177	93.1%
No	13	6.9%
Total	190	100%

If small groups can retain people table 9, 93, 1% of the respondents strongly agreed that small groups can do that, while 6.9% of respondents denied that. This least percentage of respondents which denied may not have thoroughly understood the concept. But with this high percentage, reveals that small groups can be an effective tool in retention of church members. However, church membership is not the placement of a name on a roll; but the member to be retained in in the church and the clear expectation is that the member is to make a difference through the ministries of the church. Giving is not pushed as optional but expected among church members. And membership classes are often the place where these expectations are most clearly spoken.

Besides, retention of church members is ministry involvement and this can be easily be done in small groups. If a church member does not become meaningfully involved in some type of ministry in the church, his or her drop-out chances increase dramatically. But the church leadership cannot delay in moving new members to places of ministry. If more than six months lapses between the points of new membership to ministry involvement, the person will likely be already moving toward inactivity in the life of the church.

Probably, the most often known method in nurture and retention of church members is relationships. Before and after conversion these members need more friends so that they will feel having sense of belonging to a caring community. What

many church leaders do not realize is that the development of these relationships with new members, best takes place before the member joins. If the new member has no relationship with a church member when he or she joins the church, it is exceedingly difficult to create relationships. Such is the reason why it is critically important for church members to become highly intentional about developing relationships with unchurched persons before that person ever visits the church.

The church slowly is forgetting that another principle of keeping and nurturing church members in the church is small-group involvement. There are many venues for such involvement: discipleship groups, Sabbath classes groups, ministry teams, and choirs and youth groups, women groups, Bible study groups, to name a few. A person involved in these groups is five times more likely to be active in the church five years later, than a person who attends worship services alone.

Table 10. Small Groups Encouragement Level of the Respondents

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Those encouraging others to join groups	188	99%
Who say not joining groups	2	1%
Total	190	100%

Table 10 indicates 99% of the respondents encouraged other members to join small groups, while 1% of the respondents did not encourage other members to join small groups. According to this table, this highest percentage of 99% suggests that, the church through small groups has a unique opportunity to serve the needs not only of its members but also of the community. It can become a haven for those looking for a refuge, an identity, interpersonal relationships, or community and for those looking to fulfil their human spiritual needs through the Christian faith. The church

can also open the door for some of these people to become members of the church as they discover there a faithful community that cares and people they can trust. If the depths of relationships and commitment to one another are so important to God, then small groups must also be important as it is only in small groups that close relationships can develop.

God knows people are delicate creatures who need constant reminders of what they are supposed to do. A small group is a key tool to help with this. Regularly meeting with a committed group of believers allows strengthening the core of what Christians believe so they can live it out, learn more about God, and maintain the strength to serve others. Churches shouldn't have small groups to gather more people or follow the next big trend. They should have small groups when and if they are the best way to nurture and retain the Disciples of Christ.

SWOT Analysis on Small Groups

The researcher in this section presents the SWOT analysis of the data collected from the respondents of Hoima and Central churches on small groups and their role in nurture and retention of church members. He looks at the strength, weakness, opportunities and weakness in the data collected.

Strength and Opportunity

Small groups should be part of church mission statement of Hoima and Hoima Central. People would want to meet God, grow closer to him, and serve him. Small groups are the key ministry designed to help people grow closer to God. They provide the greatest setting for spiritual formation in a person's life: building community, building relationships, and growing spiritually through biblical studies. They're a major part of the nurture, retention and discipleship process.

The observation is that, when the data is well analysed, it indicates that majority of the church members of Hoima and Central are young people, this is the strength and the opportunity the churches have. And when these members are well organized into small groups, the church will be stabilised as Ellen G. White affirms, “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world”⁶¹ Small groups can be exciting, challenging, and spiritually transforming to the youth. But again, they are the starting point of ministry—not the end. Each group needs to have an intentional goal and vision of nurturing and retention that is embraced by every member. Should the church leadership of Hoima and Central churches embrace small groups ministry among the youth, they will utilize this strength and opportunity. The leadership of the churches is the strength and opportunity, because it comprises 45.2% of other believers, meaning that these leaders can make vibrant small groups which can be a tool in nurture and retention of the members. The other strength and opportunity is that 99% of the respondents said that, they encourage other people to join the small groups. Meaning that they have seen how small groups can transform and build someone spiritually. On part of retention 93.1% confirmed that small groups are effective to believers in the church. The caring level found in these churches; Hoima and Central with the 85.2% is real strength and opportunity observed as the data was analysed.

Threats and Weaknesses

The weaknesses and threats observed when the data is analysed is lack of visitation in the groups on the weekly basis. Those who were never visited by the

⁶¹Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writings [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate 1930), 194.3.

group members scored 78.4%. Every group member should be a candidate to be a part of a group visitation ministry, in fact, group members are vital to its success. A group that does not reach out to its members will only continue to fuel attitudes like; the group is not relevant to what is going on in my life, never have I been invited in this group, mistaken notion about the group is only after my money, the belief that the group or the church is insincere and so on. If a group is sincerely following the Lord they will have a desire to show individuals that Christ is relevant to what is going on in their lives, they will invite people to come to their group and church, and the end result will be that these people will come to realize that the group cares more about them than they do their money. An active group visitation program will accomplish all of these things.

Another noticeable weakness and threat is of singles which has 42.1% of the respondents. This percentage cannot be under estimated by the church to be plan for, for their stability in the church. Singleness is sometimes a struggle and people in that season are sometimes miserable or discouraged or weary — but it could be said the same thing about marriage, right? And miserable married people are don't offered divorces; they are taught how to grow and persevere in the midst of the difficulties. Single people are often disqualified from, or not even considered for, ministry positions because they're not married. For one, because everyone's worried that singles' sex drives are so out of control, they'll try to seduce everyone around them. And for two, because one of the qualifications Paul stated for elders is that they be "the husband of one wife." Single life living is hard, but singles are advised by Matt Moore when he suggests that, "We should accept the community that The Lord is providing for us and not be picky about how He provides it. It's likely He may provide us with people that we may would not have chosen for ourselves. Who cares?"

We need to put our selfishness aside and embrace them!”⁶² Such advice can only be implemented or achieved in small groups set up.

⁶²Matt Moore, “The Danger of Being a Bitter Single,” accessed March 2rd 2016, <http://www.moorematt.org/the-danger-of-being-a-bitter-single/>.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The preceding chapter dealt with the description of Hoima and Central churches in Western Uganda Field. This chapter will present a program that was designed, implemented, and evaluated the role of small groups in the nurture and retention of church members of Seventh Day Adventist Church of Hoima and Central.

Program Design

The small groups in order to be real tool in the nurture and retention of church members of SDA Church Hoima and Central, the researcher decided that the program be carried out for 10 months, from April 2015 up to January 2016.

Furthermore, the program to be successful, the researcher started by sharing the thought with some elders after, it was share with church board members of both churches of Hoima and Central, who even voted that the researcher should carry on his study. Then groups were formed with their group leaders. After that these leaders were trained on how to lead these small groups. At least every Sabbath were to meet in order to plan, study, assimilate, and know each other with their needs.

Table 11. Strategic Program Design

STUDY TARGET			
SMALL GROUPS IN THE NURTURE AND RETENTION OF CHURCH MEMBERS			
Goal 1. To have special time for discussion of small groups with some church elders.			
No	Date	Action plan	Responsible Person
1.	25 th April 2015	Share the thought with Some Elders	Researcher
2.	26 th April 2015	Voted	Church board
Goal No. 2: Self-preparation and materials used in presentations, sermons on small groups			
1.	April 27 th -9 th May 2015	Personal preparation and Personal study	Researcher
2.		Material preparations on Small groups	-do-
Goal No. 3: To have special Sabbath, create awareness among the church members about the role of small groups.			
1.	May 16 th 2015	Sermon during Divine service	Researcher
2.		Sabbath after noon Discussing on Small groups	-do-
Goal No. 4: To form or organize small groups and choose their leaders			
1.	23 th May 2015	Preparation of church	Researcher and members
2.	30 th May 2015	Hoima church small groups	Researcher and elders
3.	6 th June	Central church small groups	-do-

(table continues)

Table 11 (continued). Strategic Program Design

No	Date	Action plan	Responsible person
Goal No. 5: To train the small group leaders on how to handle and lead the group members as they nurture and retain each other.			
1.	30 th May 2015	Hoima church	Researcher
2.	6 th June	Central church	-do-
3.	13 th June-4 th July 2015	Continuation of empowering leaders with leadership skills	-do-
Goal No. 6: To deepen the concept of small groups in these organized groups as a means to nurture and retain church members			
1.	18 th July-26 th September	Group leaders meeting together, sharing ideas and groups planning for their groups.	Researcher and group leaders
2.	3 rd October-26 th December	Group members visiting each other. Planning for out reaches. Practicing to nurture new baptized church members.	Group leaders, group members, Researcher and church members
3.	2 rd January-30 th Jan. 2016	Evaluation of small groups and encouraged to keep on and forming more groups	Researcher and participation of group members

Implementation

The program was implemented by putting the designed program in practice. The program started in all churches of Hoima and Central. The program started when the church boards had passed a vote and church members had been given an awareness about these small groups ministry. The last week of April 2015 and the first two weeks of May were for preparation of the researcher. Preparing material for presentations and sermons on the role small groups in the nurture and retention of church members of Hoima and Central SDA Churches.

May 16th 2015, marked the first sermon during divine service on small groups in the ministry of Jesus Christ. The emphasis was that Jesus nurtured His disciples in small group of twelve (Mark 6:7). That even Jesus fed the five thousand people, He made them to be put into small groups and a miracle happened. Five loaves and two fish satisfied them and the leftover filled twelve baskets (Mark 6:39-40). And in the afternoon discussion about the role of small groups in this matter was explored in details.

The organisation of small groups was to be set up. On 30th May 2015, eight small groups were fully organised in Hoima church with their leaders. The following Sabbath on 6th June 2015, other eight groups were formed and their leaders were also chosen.

The training of group leaders followed after their election, to equip them with skills on small groups for their better performance. On 30th May, small groups leaders were trained Sabbath afternoon and pamphlets concerning small groups were distributed to them. The following Sabbath on 6th June, Central church small group leader were also trained and were given the same pamphlets concerning small groups. Trainings of empowering leaders continued from 13th June 2015 to 4th July 2015 to ensure that the concept of small groups and the role for the nurture and retention of church members is deepen in their hearts and minds.

Starting with 18th July to 26th 2015, there were meetings and planning among group leaders and their group members for their groups. There was the sharing of ideas in order to deepen the concept of small group among the group members themselves. In the period of three months from 3rd October to 26th December 2016 groups embarked in visitations, planning for out reaches. In December 6th to 26th December 2015, some groups of Central church organised an evangelistic campaign

in Muruyanja Hoima municipality where 35 souls were won for Jesus. These newly baptized members were formed into two groups and given leaders to help them. At the same time these new baptized members were asked to get spiritual guardians each. At the time of evaluation, the new members were still fellowshiping regularly and no one missing.

The researcher evaluated the small groups by giving the questionnaire to two hundred group members, one hundred questionnaires to Hoima and the other hundred to Hoima. Of the two hundred questionnaires, only one hundred and ninety questionnaires returned making 95%. The details of the outcome of this evaluation is in the section of evaluation below.

Formation of Small Groups

After the churches' vote in their church boards, awareness to the whole church congregations of Central and Hoima and all the discussions about small groups, eight small groups were formed in every church. This came after reflecting on the city evangelism that took place in the municipality of Hoima town in January 2014, and more than two hundred souls won for Jesus. But majority of those baptized members were nowhere to be traced. The reason was that no one minded then about them and where they were coming from. Those who had remained were because some had their relatives or friends in the church.

This necessitated the members to embrace the small groups as one of effective tools in the nurture and retention of the church members by this time. Then Central church chose to have eight small groups namely; Zion, Esther, Daniel, Exodus, Enoch, Elijah, Mugambizi and Ruth. Hoima did the same, for it chose to have eight small groups, as follows; Moses, Ruth, Daniel, Zion, Gideon, Esther, Canaan, and Enoch.

The groups possessed those names for identification purposes. In real sense, these groups were kind of groups such as, Bible study groups, support/care groups, nurture/care groups, youth support groups, married couples, school going youth groups and singles groups. For example, Gideon of Hoima is support or care group; this groups has decided to buy clothes to their group members who wed. Every Friday evening, they welcome the Sabbath in their members' homes.

Seminars and Presentations on Small Groups

The word was defined and small groups was discussed in details, people were allowed to ask question concerning small groups. People were answered by the researcher. The role of a group leader was discussed and how people treat each other in groups. The role of small groups was discussed with the group leaders and the members of the groups. The entire congregations were taught the purpose, importance and the role of having small groups ministries in the churches.

In both churches of Central and Hoima, small groups were formed with the purpose of nurturing each other. Each church formed eight small groups. For proper identification, some were named names of Bible characters, places or Bible books. Among the seminars conducted, materials concerning how to keep the existing groups to continue existing were supplied.

Program Evaluation

The study took little time to measure up whether small groups can play a role in the nurture and retention of the church members of SDA Hoima and Central churches. However, there is hope and indicators showing that these small group can effectively be used as a tool in the nurture and retention of church members.

For instance, the 99% of the respondents who said that they encourage others to join small groups, is a clear indicator of the success fullness of the role of small groups in the nurture and retention of the church members of Hoima and Central churches which they had felt. They could not have scored such highest percentage if the groups were not really helping in this matter. The 88.2% of the respondents who said that they were cared than compared when they still in the large congregation, give hope that small groups can play a good role in the nurture and retention of the church members. For example, the Gideon group of Hoima church have reach at the level of buying suits or wedding clothes to their group members who wed. This same group have taught their group members the saving culture. And every Friday evening, they welcome the Sabbath in home of their group member. Second to this were those that said they could express or feel happy in their small groups than being in large congregation and scored 91%. This tells how effective the small groups are because members feel accepted and cared for. They feel have the community where they belong and who know the better.

More so, when someone feels is spiritually helped in in these groups is another sign of the role of small groups. Those who said that they had grown up spiritually scored 69.4%. If someone has grown up spiritually, it is hard for him or her to leave the church, thus the sign of the role of the small groups in the nurture of the church members of Hoima and Central. Spiritually mature Christians cannot leave church, but work for other to stay in the church.

One Sabbath after the researcher had organised some members into small groups and after they had taken time to know each other in their groups, one member confessed that, it was his first time to have where he belongs after two years he had stayed in the church. This shows that, there are many members in the church who

have not yet known where they belong. Then the church is likely to lose them through the back door. Then, the only solution to such like believers is to be organised in small groups. Now this member the church was going to lose him if it was not the formation of small groups and him being involved in them.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This research purposed to study the role of small groups in the nurture and retention of church members of Central and Hoima SDA Churches. Chapter 1 introduced the problem, the purpose of the study and the methodology to be used. Chapter 2 dealt with the theoretical foundation of small groups derived from the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy, and other Christian authors. Additionally, The Chapter presented, the role of small groups in Old Testament and New Testaments, Early church and contemporary churches.

Chapter 3 described the local setting of Central and Hoima SDA Churches in Hoima municipality in Western Uganda Field where this study was carried out. The section presented the social background of the churches; Church location, historical background, the growth of and potential of the SDA Church in the area. The chapter also dealt with the youth lifestyle, church leadership, and the data analysis.

Chapter 4, dealt with design, implemented and evaluated.

The study was concluding with chapter 5, which deals with the summary, the conclusion and the recommendations.

Conclusion

The small groups' ministry concept is a very effective tool for nurture and retention in the modern churches of Central and Hoima. However, there are many barriers and hindrances to the success of small groups ministry, even though

according to literature non-SDA Churches have success with the concept. To have success with small groups' ministry, Seventh Day churches Hoima and Central must innovated to build a strategy of a small groups' ministry that fit these churches to decrease the loss of church members from 75% to 45% in one year. The findings of this study should be applied to a move SDA Churches Hoima and Central to a high standard. Further studies must be continued to develop a practical plan and strategy for small groups' ministry for the SDA Church.

The desire of this researcher is to see the new converts and the old church members become truly effective disciples for Christ. When the church embraces small groups' ministry it will help the church to close the back door even more tightly.

Recommendations

Having observed the importance of small groups for nurture and the retention of church members of Central and Hoima churches and on how it can be an effective tool in the SDA Church, the researcher recommends:

1. That the church leadership of Central and Hoima churches continue to encourage every church member to embrace the concept of small groups ministry and join a group.
2. That all SDA Churches in the district embrace the concept of small groups in their ministries as they learn from Central and Hoima churches.
3. That Western Uganda Field leadership embrace small groups concept and encourage other church districts to implement small groups as they learn from Central and Hoima churches.
4. That many workshops and seminars be conducted in the entire Field for awareness of the concept and the role small groups play in the growth of church.

5. That more research be done possibly using a different design in order to come up with a strategy to curb the rampant loss of church members through the back door.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE

Seventh Day Adventist Central Church Hoima

P.o box 169 Hoima

26/04/2015

Pr. Masereka B. Paul

P.o Box 169 Hoima

Dear Pastor


RE: APPROVAL FOR THE REASERCH PERMISSION:

We are greeting you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

This is to let you know that, having received the letter from Adventist University of Africa, the church board which sat on 26.4.2015 voted to accept you to carry out your research in our church.

We wish you success in your research and to benefit the church of God.

Yours in His-service


Stuart Wobusobozi
First Elder




Sarah Asiimwe
Church Clerk

II. Vote of Thanks from Central SDA Church

Seventh Day Adventist Central Church Hoima

P.o box 169 Hoima

23/01/2016

Pastor Masereka B. Paul

P.O Box 169, Hoima


Our dear Pastor,

RE: VOTE OF APPRECIATION.

As a church we thank you for having chosen to carry out your research in our church where we feel that *The Role of small groups in the nurture and retention of Hoima Central church*, will help the church to keep and retain its members.

Yours faithfully


Stuart Wobusobzi
First Elder



Sarah Asimwe
Church Clerk

APPENDIX B
SERMONS AND PRESENTATIONS

A Small Group Leader—Who, Me?

We are human; no one can perfectly meet all the standards of leadership. We are perfect only in Jesus Christ. When we look at the characteristics of a leader, no one measures up. So don't be discouraged. If your desire of your heart is to possess these leadership characteristics, and if you are committed to growing in the grace and power of Jesus Christ, then God can use you for Him.

The foundation of leadership ministry in small groups is the commitment to the following basic principles;

1. **An understanding of and commitment to spiritual principles.** A small-group leader's daily walk with God through Bible study and prayer is the foundation of their ministry. (1Tim. 3:6; 5:22)
2. **A growing relationship with Jesus.** If a leader is to model a spiritual growth and encourage others, a growing relationship with Jesus must first be a reality in their own life. (2Pet. 3:18)
3. **A commitment to care for people.** A leader is dedicated to reaching out to the members of the group and demonstrating loving concern for their personal sorrows, joys, and needs. The leader also models what they are teaching by being a living example—an authentic.
4. **A passion for leading people to Jesus.** The number one reason for the existence of the church is to connect people to Jesus. A leader must have this burning desire.
5. **A student of the Bible.** The group leader needs to enjoy studying and learning about the scriptures on the daily basis. A leader cannot facilitate a scriptural study if they do not study personally.
6. **A willingness to be teachable.** It is a must as a small group leader to remain teachable.
7. **A willingness to make a commitment of time.** It takes time to be a group leader. The leader must be willing to prepare for the weekly meeting, spend one day/night

a week in a group meeting, make sure the members' needs are being met and attend regular scheduled leaders' meetings.

FUNCTIONS OF A LEADER

There are several functions that are basic to positive leadership. A successful group leader;

- Seeks to develop personal relationships with members of the group.
- Is sensitive to the needs, feelings and personalities of the members and affirm their individuality.
- Continually models love, trust and acceptance as normal behavior for Christians.
- Will be truly be a facilitator, guiding, the flow of the discussion and attempting to involve all group members in a nonthreatening manner.
- Encourage members to listen to, accept, and respect those whose views differ from of the leader or other members of the group.
- Assist the group in accomplishing its goals and growing into a mature Christian community.

GROUP AGREEMENT

Type of group_____

Purpose_____

Meeting location_____

Weekday_____ Beginning time_____ closing
time_____

Our group will meet for_____ months/years

Group leader (name and phone)

Assistant leader (name and phone)

Host (name and phone)

We wish our group to be

Open continually to new members

Open for weeks

Additional elements we want to be a part of our group:

Ground rule we agree to abide by:

1. We will do our best to be on time for the meetings. If we cannot attend we will phone to the leader or another member to let them know.

2. We will look for the ways to assist the leaders and other members in making the group experience as positive as possible.

3. We will share our own personal feelings, but also come willing to listen to others as they share.

4. We will respect the differences in one another and not try to change them. Change is God's responsibility. Our responsibility is to love, caring, acceptance and respect.

5. What the group member share in a group will be confidential

6. Others _____

Ten core values of small groups

There is no single (model) way to 'do' small groups. In summary here are 10 key values of small-group ministry:

1. Each member must accept for themselves Jesus' prayer of oneness, which is a spirit-filled life that makes one a fully devoted disciple of Jesus Christ.

2. Members of a church must see themselves as one body (1 Cor. 12), or they won't care about the person sitting across the corridor at church or living next door.

3. A large-group experience and a small-group experience must be available for all church members.

4. Small groups must mobilize all church members to ministry service and be an experience that is driven by spiritual gifts. This leads an individual to become a fully devoted disciple of Jesus Christ.

5.A small group must include spiritual growth and soul winning (outreach) in order to be biblical. A small group is central to evangelism process of the local church.

6.The small group agenda arises from scripture.

7.Everything the church does must include small group DNA

8.A small group should be culturally relevant.

9.One must actively choose/commit to be a part of those who make small groups successful.

10.No one cares for more people than their life schedule allows, but everyone is cared for.

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

(THE ROLE OF SMALL GROUPS IN THE NURTURE AND RETENTION
OF MEMBERS OF HOIMA AND HOIMA CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN WESTERN UGANDA FIELD)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

Dear church member,

I am requesting you to participate in a survey that will help me complete my degree course. The outcomes are intended to help the church on how to serve its members effectively and your details will be treated with confidentiality though you are not required to indicate your name. Please respond to each question truthfully.

YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO INDICATE YOUR NAME.

Thanks, in advance for your participation.

Be blessed.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick the letter that is against your answer>

1. What is your sex?

[a] Male [b] Female

2. Your marital status

[a] Single [b] Married [c] Divorcee [d] Widow/Widower

3. Your age group

[a] 15-25 [b] 26-35years [c] 36-45 [d] 46-55 [e] 56-65 [f] 66-75 [g] Over 76 years of age

4. For how long have you been worshiping in Hoima Central SDA Church ?

[a] Less than 5 years [b] More than 5 years

5. How long have you a member of the SDA Church ?

[a] 1-5 years [b] 6-10 [c] More than 10 years

6. Do you have a group you belong to at the church?

[a] Yes [b] No

If no, why _____

7. Were you once in a group and quit? [a] Yes [b] No

If yes, what happened? Kindly explain.

8. How often does any member of your group visit you?

[a] Regularly [b] Occasionally [c] Weekly [d] Never

9. How often do you visit you group members?

[a] Daily [b] Weekly [c] Occasionally [d] Never

10. How often do you meet as a group?

[a] Weekly [b] Monthly [c] Quarterly

11. Apart from meeting at church, do you have any other activities that you have as a group?

[a] Yes [b] No

12. If the group activities are not satisfying to you, what do you think can be done to meet your expectations?

13. How many members in your group do you know by names?

[a] All [b] half of them [c] Not many [d] None of them

14. Do you or can you express yourself in your group?

[a] Yes [b] No

If yes, Why and if not, why not?

15. Does your group meet your expectations?

[a] Yes [b] Somehow [c] No

16. Do you see or feel that it is easier for a group to keep a member in the church than a large congregation?

[a] Yes [b] No

Kindly give reasons for your answer

17. Has the group helped you as an individual to grow spiritually?

[a] Yes [b] Somehow [c] No

18. Have you been cared for more than before you joined the group?

[a] Yes [b] No

19. Do you care for your group members than before you joined the group?

[a] Yes [b] No

20. How many are you in your group?

[a] Less than 12 [b] 12 [c] More than 12

21. How many of your group members do you know their place of residence?

[a] All [b] A half of them [c] Few of them [d] None of them

22. How many members of your group regularly attend when you meet as group?

[a] All [b] A half of them [c] Few of them

23. Do you feel having lost a lot when you miss a meeting with your group members?

[a] Yes [b] No

24. Do you feel obligated to find out what happened to those who miss your group meeting?

[a] Yes [b] No

25. How long have you stayed in the group? _____

26. How many have left/quit your group since you joined it and why?

27. Basing on the time you have spent in a group, can you encourage others to join any group of the same kind?

[a] Yes [b] No

Thank you.

APPENDIX D
SEMINARS OUTLINE

1. What is a small group?
2. Why small groups today?
3. Formation of small groups
4. Keeping the existing small groups

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