

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry
Emphasis in Mission

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

**TITLE: MEMBERSHIP NURTURE AND RETENTION IN THE FREETOWN
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS,
SIERRA LEONE**

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Date completed: July 2016

Over the years there has been a great loss of new converts in church attendance in the Freetown Central District (FCD). This negative aspect has affected the growth of the church both numerically and financially. Membership Nurture and Retention is a vital church program that enhances the growth of the church both spiritually and numerically. But there is sharp decline in church attendance over the years. This shows a concern for the church's administration. The nurturing and retaining process of new converts is perceived and supported by both Old and New Testaments of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and other Christian writers. If this issue is not properly addressed, the growth of the church will be stagnated and the salvation of members (both old and new) will be at risk.

The decline in church attendance by members led the researcher to this project in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. However, to improve church attendance

by new converts, a program of nurture and retention was developed and implemented in the two selected churches (Three Angels' Messages SDA Church and East End SDA Church) of the FCD in a bid to resolve the problem.

In connection with the above topic, data were collected and relevant literatures were reviewed. More so, for this research other methods were engaged to validate the nurturing process of new members in the church. This included both qualitative and quantitative approaches by administering questionnaires and also focus group discussion for both churches. The findings of the study carried out in the two organized churches in Freetown Central District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were analyzed. The results derived from the findings helped in designing the various interventions in the two churches to enhance membership nurture and retention.

At the end of the post-implementation period of the intervention, it was obvious that the church attendance had improved in both churches in the district and the spirituality of members was also improved. In order for the churches to sustain the project, seminars and training of both old and new members will be carried out by the elders on a quarterly basis.

The implementation of the intervention for membership nurture and retention is a key for the growth of the church, not only in FCD but the entire Mission and beyond. The officers of the churches appreciate the fact that nurturing of new members in healthy church programs will enhance their stay in the church and also involve them in church activities to continue discipling others.

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Theological Seminary

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CENTRAL DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS,
SIERRA LEONE

A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Michael Saidu Koroma

July 2016

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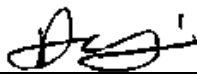
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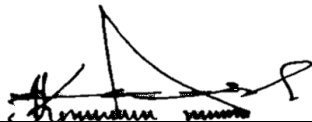
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This piece of work is dedicated to my wife, Victoria Esther Fatmata Koroma, in gratitude for her unflinching support during this dissertation journey and for her having been with me throughout my ministry, to our sons, Milton and Michael II, to my late mother, Madam Madiana D. Koroma, and to other family members and friends both far and near for their kind support towards this work and the ministry.

May the good Lord continue to bless each one of you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AID Africa Indian Ocean Division

AMO Adventist Men Organization

AWM Adventist Women's Ministries

AYM Adventist Youth Ministries

FCD Freetown Central District

MBCs Muslim Background Converts

NT New Testament

OT Old Testament

SDA Seventh-day Adventist

TAM Three Angels' Messages

WAD West Central Africa Division

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Being a pastor in this generation has numerous challenges to grapple with. Among these challenges in the gospel ministry and more so, in the Sub – Saharan Africa is how to nurture and retain new converts in the church. Evangelism has been the bedrock for soul winning in the Adventist church, Jesus Christ commanded us to take the gospel to “all nations, tongues and people” (Rev 13: 7 NKJV).

As a minister of the gospel, having worked in the Adventist church for some time now, I have been involved in evangelism, no sooner new converts are baptized they leave the church unnoticed. This trend has continued for some time now and this is the reason that prompted the researcher to research into this topic: “Membership Nurture and Retention in the Freetown Central District of the Seventh-day Adventist church.”

This challenge stimulated my desire to find out the various causes for this trend and the obvious reasons that will help resolve these challenges. The aim of this study is to increase membership attendance in the FCD of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Sierra Leone.

It is also the aim of this project that church administrators and elders will embrace the strategies of nurturing and retaining new converts in the church. The advantage of this research will not only nurture and retain new converts but will help old members to grow spiritually as well.

Description of the Ministry Context

Salvation for the human race depends solely on the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus declared before His death, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3: 16 NKJV). For those that will believe in Him, after His resurrection, He ordered His disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen” (Matt 28: 19 – 20). The commission of disciple - making may be a difficult and painstaking venture. It involves funds and other human resources.

Though the commission is hard in making disciples, the FCD of SDA Church have the aspiration to obey and carryout this command by nurturing the new converts and be certain they stay as they grow in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Over the years, SDA Churches in FCD of Sierra Leone has been losing their members in a rapid succession. For instance, Pastor Gabriel Boakye Dankwa the then Global Mission Director of the West Central Africa Division (WAD) conducted an evangelistic campaign in Freetown, during April 29 through May 12, 2003 with the theme: “Vision for Life,” he baptized 265 souls and established the “Vision for Life” Branch Sabbath School. Today, you can hardly find twenty faithful members in that Branch Sabbath School. As a trained and ordained minister, the researcher has served in the ministry for over fifteen years and has conducted several evangelistic campaigns in this local field. Members of the church should be trained in the methods of nurturing and retaining members as is being proclaimed by Apostle Peter recorded in Acts 2.

Statement of the Problem

The topic “Membership Nurture and Retention in the Freetown Central District of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Freetown” under consideration appears that no researcher within the SDA Church in Sierra Leone has yet examined the outflow of new converts from the church immediately after they are being baptized.

There has been a great loss of new converts in church attendance in the FCD of the Adventist Church over the years. This negative aspect has affected the growth of the church both numerically and financially. Campaigns conducted during these years and persons baptized as it currently stands, can hardly find them in the church. This issue needs serious consideration and thoughtfulness if the church is to retain new converts after baptism.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this in – ministry dissertation was to develop a strategy for membership nurture and retention in the Freetown Central District of Seventh-day Adventist Church and implement and evaluate its success for nurturing and retaining of new members in the selected local churches (TAM and East End Churches) within the district for a period of twelve months.

Justification

1. A. This study will serve as a tool for nurturing and retaining new members for the churches in Freetown Central District.
2. B. This study also intends to nurture her members in an atmosphere that fosters growth and care among them.
3. C. Church leadership and members will be trained in the process of nurturing and retaining new members.
4. D. Through every baptism, the church intends her members to stay as they endeavor to complete the work.

5. E. It is the duty of every old member to nurture new members in the principles and doctrines of the church.
6. F. Matthew 28: 19, 20 encourages the church to teach as a form of nurturing her new members and expects them to stay in fellowship.
7. G. Nurture and retention make members to be abreast with the knowledge of the church and improve on their spiritual life.
8. H. By nurturing new members, it becomes a way of life for the church to reach the unreached.
9. I. Finally, this study will equip the Personal Ministries department at all levels of the church.

At the completion of this work, members of this district would be actively participating in the aspect of nurturing new members. The results of this study can be adopted by the leadership of the church to address these issues nationwide and beyond.

Delimitation

The modern church is face with numerous challenges among these is how to nurture and retain new converts that got baptized into the church. Membership nurture and retention are prerequisites for the growth of the church not only in Sierra Leone but for the world church at large. However, this dissertation will be limited only to membership nurture and retention as an element for a church program. This study will be conducted in a district comprising two organized churches. The two churches are Three Angels' Messages and East End SDA located in the urban area in the capital city of Sierra Leone, so that the implementation of the research would be monitored.

Methodology of Study

This research is a theological study based on nurturing and retaining new members in the FCD of SDA Church. This study is a mixed method (quantitative and

qualitative). The quantitative method would include questionnaires to obtain pertinent information.

The qualitative method would make use of textbooks, magazines, focus group discussions, the internet and journals in a bid to realize the objective of this research. Data collected will be analyzed to ascertain its success. The Bible would be used as the theological foundation for nurturing and retaining new members. The principles of nurture and retention in the Spirit of Prophecy would be reviewed for members to emulate.

Besides, the work of other scholars would be reviewed to authenticate the importance of nurture and retention as a strategy of membership increase. The researcher will obtain permission from the Sierra Leone Mission Executive Committee and the District Board to conduct the research. A strategy for membership nurture and retention would be developed, analyzed, implemented and evaluated to determine the success of the work. The researcher would summarize the project chapter by chapter and lessons learnt would also be outlined. The researcher's recommendations made would be sent to the Executive Committee of the Mission, District board, West Africa Union Mission and the local church boards of the two churches.

The research will be presented in the following order: Chapter one is the introduction of the research work which includes:

1. Introduction
2. Description of the Ministry Context
3. Statement of the Problem
4. Statement of the Purpose
5. Justification for the Dissertation

6. Delimitations
7. Methodology of the study
8. Expectations
9. Definition of Terms
10. Summary

Chapter two deals with the theological and biblical foundations for membership nurture and retention. This involves strategies related to the topic as found in both O. T. and N. T. of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Chapter three deals with literature review that seeks to discuss the strategies from Adventist literature and other Christian writers on the related issue at hand.

Chapter four deals with project design, the description of the church and local settings. This includes the socio – cultural, historical and economic background of the Central district. More so, the distribution of questionnaires, focus group discussions, collection and analysis of data, project design and presentation of strategies, evaluation, monitoring and reporting.

Chapter five provides the description of the implementation before, during and after workshops, sermons and implementing the evaluation. The final chapter deals with the final evaluation of the research and its evaluation, summary, conclusion and recommendations for future study.

Expectations

This dissertation shall definitely serve as a reference tool for pastors and the church at large. Through this strategy of membership nurture and retention, members will realize the importance of caring for new members. Churches using this strategy of membership nurture and retention would be revived. In collaboration with the church leadership, members will be involved in team ministry for the salvation of

others. It will also generate the demand for the researcher to provide a working tool to be used by the church leadership as well as the entire membership.

Moreover, this work will serve as a guide for other researchers who will want to venture in the principles of nurturing and retaining new members. It will also enhance and broaden the knowledge of readers. This work will increase church attendance, spiritual growth and ministry participation. It will become an ongoing program for the entire fields whenever evangelistic activities are conducted.

This dissertation will further broaden the researcher's horizon and experience in the area of membership nurture and retention. It shall also serves as a future tool of reference for other Christian researchers. Besides, Muslim Background Converts (MBCs) will be nurtured and retained in safe places where there will be no threat to their lives. Finally, the researcher will want to experience membership retained in the churches.

Definition of Terms

These are terms that are unfamiliar to the reader and needs explanation.

Membership

Here refers to the total number of persons whose names are recorded in the record of a certain church where they have communion with God and fellowship with one another.

Nurture

According to the Chambers combined Dictionary, the word nurture is from the Latin word "nutire" meaning to "nourish." The word nurture is from the Greek word Paideo meaning "to train, instruct, learn, teach, correct and discipline."

Retention

The word “retention” is from the Latin word “retentio” meaning the “act of retaining, holding back, preserving and keeping.” The word “retention” is also from the Greek word *Krateo* meaning to “obtain, hold fast, hold back and keep.” In other words, it indicates how to take care, train, develop and educate members on how to hold back new members in the church through implementing the tenets of the church.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher carefully considered the introduction to the research, the ministry context, which shows the interest that gave rise for the research, the statement of the problem and the statement of the purpose. This chapter also considers the justification, delimitation, methodology, expectations and definition of certain terms. Chapter two would lay the groundwork for the research by deliberating on the biblical and theological foundations for the research work. The Bible and Spirit of Prophecy Writings would also be considered.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF MEMBERSHIP NURTURE AND RETENTION

This chapter introduces the reader to a biblical and theological foundation for membership nurture and retention as found in both the Old and New testaments, and the writings of Ellen G. White. The church over the years is faced with numerous challenges in the issue of nurturing and retaining new members. The ratio of members after being baptized leaving the church is alarming and there is a need to curb this loss.

Kipsigis says, “We cannot give birth to children and then leave them.”¹ “Nurturing stems from the very heart of God. God is a vinedresser who devotedly tends His vineyard (Isa 5:1-7), a physician who tenderly nurse His patients (Jer 8:22), and a parent who lovingly teaches His child to work (Hos 11:1, 3). God is seen in scripture as the ever-present, compassionate Lord sending His messengers to nurture His people to come into relationship with Him.

Nurturing, then, is building up the body of Christ so that each part of the body supplies its gifts to the whole. It is the process of bringing individual Christians and the Christian community as a whole to maturity. It implies that new believers must be taught how a Christian worldview shapes and influences all facets of life. Nurturing is the preparation to withstand the fire of persecution. It is relationally mentoring new believers to live out Christian principles in their lives.²

¹ Kipsigis, “Nurturing New Christians,” *Global Christian Centre*, accessed September 22, 2015, <http://www.Globalchristiancentre.com/administrative-leadership/organization-design/24375-nurturing-newchristian>.

²Ibid., 3.

The main point of nurturing and retaining new members in the SDA Church depends solely on how we understand the ministry of the church. The church can influence the world with positive care and loving relationship or disregard the world by the same understanding of the word. We can only save this world if we interact with the world, we can find solution to the problems of this world when we understand the culture, needs, problems and pains of the world. And to achieve this, the church should try to understand the world first. Just as individuals need to understand others first for effective communication between them, so the church must completely understand the nature of the people to be evangelized.

However, the problem associated with this is the loss of first love. John the Revelator cautioned the church of its lukewarmness (Rev 3:16) at the end of earth's history. The Laodecianism attitude of church members weighs the church of God today and she has lost her first love. Because of the loss of first love and the lukewarmness of members, the church has turned inward and failed to extend or reach out to others with the gospel. Another issue that has affected the church is the infiltration of false teachers. Paul the Apostle warns of this impending crisis, when he says:

For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves will enter among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:29 -32 KJV).

Nurture in the Old Testament

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed the blissfulness of the companionship with their Maker. God had been visiting the couple in the Garden of Eden at the cool of the day. Before sin entered the human race, God had made the

provision of life by offering them every tree except “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 3:3 NKJV). After Adam and Eve sinned, God laid a plan of nurturing and retaining the couple that would restore them. God declared enmity between the serpent (Satan), and its seed and the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). God did not condone sin but shielded Adam and Eve from immortalizing sin. God paying the couple visits indicated the nurturing and retention methods to preserve them from further sin.

However, the evaluation of Israel’s ancestors was partly favorable and unfavorable. The people then remembered Israel for their key role in the development and later in the reformation of the covenantal religion. Yahweh was first identified as “the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3: 6).

The remembrance of a patriarchal or ancestral intuition of God laid a basis for theological development and refinement. The ancestors of Israel, the patriarchs willingly accepted and interacted with Canaanite form of worship and lifestyle. The patriarchs are seen to worship at traditional Canaanite shrines like “the sacred place at Shechem (Gen 12:6), at Hebron (Gen 13:18), and at Beersheba (Gen 21:33). In the early days of the Israelites they worshipped Yahweh and the Canaanites worshipped Baal and they lived side by side in Shechem. At this early period there were no religious authorities or creedal statements to direct the Israelites.

According to Max J. Miller, “The important differences between the worshippers of Yahweh who emigrated from the wilderness and settled agricultural worshippers of Baal could not prevent Israel from borrowing from the very first secular and religious customs and practices, which were assimilated rather quickly

from the settled population in Canaan. This led to a struggle between Yahweh and Baal.”³

In this circumstance the patriarchs absorbed certain Canaanite’s culture and were hardly distinguishable in language, architecture, farming, legal system and values. Yet they rejected the worship of Baal. A new call came to Abram, “Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Gen 12: 1 - 2).

While God called the Patriarchs away from their country and their kindred, to be parents of a unique, elect people, it was done in such a way as to show the positive contribution from secular environment and preexisting “pagan” religions. Abraham lived among the Canaanites’ religious polity and existing culture where he acquired his own religious language, style of worship and system of moral values. The children of Israel came to view through the call of Abraham from his father land to a place where the Lord showed him. He accepted the call and went to the place where he got the promise of being the father of many nations.

Moses’ Methods of Nurture

During the leadership of Moses, a formal inauguration of a new religion with its priesthood was established. The creativity and genuity of Moses, the Israelites gradually acquired (a) a sacred object, the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:1 – 31, 18, 35:1 – 40) and the tent of meeting (Ex 33:7 – 10, Lev 1: 1, 6: 26, 30) for drawing near to God in the Sinai wilderness. (b) Sacred ministers, the Levitical priests (Num 1: 47 – 54, Num 3:4, Lev 8, Deut 31:9, 24- 28 and (c) a ‘creed’ or formal statement of faith

³ Max J. Miller, *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 435.

(Ex15, Deut 26:5- 10, Josh 24). Moses the leader was not only a guide enabling his compatriots to escape from Egypt but was also a chief who united them into a single people, author of their faith, legislator and religious initiator.

Though Moses was not considered as a Judge, Priest or Prophet, he was all of these and more of these. He was the man who received the revelation from Yahweh (God) and communicated them to the people. Moses was an instrument used by God in the history of Israel's salvation and to retain the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel was well established with Moses in Egypt, taking the Hebrews out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

Through Moses the Hebrews had been instructed to train their children to industrious habits, and it was regarded as a sin to allow the youth to grow up in ignorance of physical labors. Even though a child was to be educated for holy office, knowledge of practical life was thought essential. Every youth, whether his parents were poor or rich, was taught some trade. Those parents who neglect to provide such training for their children were looked upon as departing from the instruction of the Lord.⁴

This clearly shows the early church had nurturing program to train their children in physical endeavor in a bid to keep them fit for the present and future life and for them to pass it on to succeeding generations.

This brief history showing the immergence of Israel as a nation and Moses the author of the Pentateuch dealt extensively with the subject under consideration. He requested the people "to love their God with all their hearts, with all your soul, and with all your strength," (Deut 6:5 NKJV), showing affection, desire and inclination, and his capacity for action and they should write it upon their hearts.

Moses the author of Deuteronomy, whom God called out of Midian to be the leader who will bring His people out of Egypt to the land He promised their forefathers. The theme of Deuteronomy is "grace." The grace which God has shown

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1950), 347.

to Israel in the past will one day be surpassed by His provision of a lasting solution to the problem of human sin. This grace was extended to Israel in a number of times; from the time they were in Egypt on to the crossing of the Red Sea God has been gracious to them.

In Deuteronomy 4:9-10, this text is saying as a faithful Christian serving God with all sincerity and diligence, the faith one has must be kept and shall teach them to one's children. In other words, the teachings of the Lord must be observed, nurtured and then be a household possession that will be passed on from one generation to the other.

Moses further asked the parents to instruct their children in matters of duty and destiny day by day. The Jews in this regard wore phylacteries on their heads, and on their left arm. In some of the Eastern countries today inscribed words of desired blessings and promises are seen on their doorposts, the Muslims and Hindus for instance (Deut 6:4-9).

The specific instruction given here by God is for the people of Israel to keep God's word in their hearts and then teach their children and it shall be a sign between them and God. Moses admonished the Israelites that the word of God should be bounded in their thinking in order to commend themselves to God (Ex 13:9). These admonitions were reiterated to parents from time to time the child begins to speak, and shall instruct the child in the language and in the Torah (Deut 11:18- 21). These further showed the nurturing principles of the nation of Israel under the leadership of Moses.

Solomon's Methods of Nurture

However, Israel's polity did not end with Moses but continued with other leaders. Solomon, a King in Israel, played an important role in sustaining the

governance of the Hebrew nation. He authored the book of Proverbs. Instruction in Hebrew is “musar” from the root word “yasar” meaning to “admonish, discipline, correct and chasten.” Instruction in Proverbs 1:8-10 here includes the thought of discipline, suggesting that the father should be the ultimate authority in the home. Even though the mother is the first teacher and has most of the time to the training of the child, she should use her gentle guidance to lay the path for the child.

The writer of Proverbs 2:1-5, appeals to hide the commandments, he is referring to store away the words in their hearts and minds for guidance in future difficulties. And he continued by saying in Proverbs 3:1-2, “my son” which was a common form of address from teacher to his pupils. The law here mentioned is the Torah meaning teaching, instruction. “Forget not my instruction.” The LXX uses the word nomos meaning “anything assigned, such as a custom, convention or law.” “Loving obedience to the teaching of God will result in an extension of the life span” (Ex 20:12).

Moreover, Proverbs 4:1-4 mentioned the word “hear,” it is from the Greek word “akouo” meaning to “hear.” In this context the word needed is “Eisakouo” to hear so as to obey (1 Cor 14:21), to hear so as to answer, of God’s answer to prayer, (Matt 6:7, Luke 1:13, Acts 10:31, Heb 5:7). What Solomon was saying is, he knew the doctrine was good, for he received it from his father, David. Solomon had learnt wisdom from his father for his future upbringing and development of his character.

Solomon continues to say, “Train up a child in the way he should go. When he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6 NKJV), this has been a popular verse quoted by parents to their children to see them become prosperous in their future endeavors. It is rather misconstrued by parents all through the ages endorsing or coercing the child to do what they the parents wanted the child to do. The verse

counsels that parents are to learn the way in which their children can be expected to be of most service to him and others. The counsel to parents is to lead, direct, educate and develop the child to the specific station in life in order for him to be of service to himself and others and in the things he finds maximum happiness.

The Greek word “mathetes” meaning learner, pupil, disciple (noun) and “manthano” (verb) in the present tense denotes the process by which one acquires theoretical knowledge. What the individual Israelite has to learn in respect of God’s will does not make him a “pupil” in relation to his “Master,” God. For even as a learner the individual always remains as part of the whole, a chosen people. Joshua was the servant of Moses (Exodus 24:12, Numbers 11:28), Elisha was the servant of Elijah (1Kings 19:19), Gehazi was the servant of Elisha (2Kings 4:12) and Baruch the servant of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 32:12). As a result of the positive relationship the leaders of Israel had with their subordinates or people, the nurturing and retention principles were imminent in their society.

The Principle of Retention

The O. T. is filled with activities that showed God retained His people from apostasy. God asked Abram to leave his country to a land He will show him and be a blessing to others (Gen 12:1,2 NKJV), God needed to retain Abram and His chosen people for salvation. God had wanted to use Israel to reach out to the “Lost sheep of Israel.” Besides, the Bible records individuals that God retained, those who were converts from the Gentiles to the worship of the true God, Rahab (Josh 6:17 – 25), Ruth (Ruth 1:6- 18).

In the theology of retention, God’s intention for Adam and Eve was to establish a family who will portray love and warm fellowship with Him forever. Also as a sign of allegiance, God gave them a tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the

“tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9). He charged them not to eat of it, the day they eat of it; they will surely die (Gen 3:3). God vested much interest in Adam and Eve with the intent of having a long lasting relationship with them. The episode continued, at the cool of the day God used to visit the pair in joyous and welcoming manner. But they fell short of God’s glory and sinned against Him by eating the forbidden fruit. This rebellious act disconnected God’s plan of retention for Adam and Eve.

God readily intervened by restoring Adam and Eve through declaring enmity with the devil, the woman and her seed (Gen 3:15). God also shielded the pair from immortalizing sin and He the offended visited the offenders. This was the retention method God used to save Adam and Eve. God also used the Ark of the Covenant as a retention method to save Noah and his family (Gen 8:15-19). The purpose of God retaining His people was for a total transformation of their culture and worldview and come to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Retention of Israel as a people

God called the Israelites out of Egypt, an idolatrous nation to the Promised Land, Canaan, where they had sojourned for 430 years (Ex 12:40, 41). On reaching the land of Canaan, they had stronger and larger neighbors with rebellious and idolatrous activities. It was forbidden for Israel to associate herself with the inhabitants of Canaan. God said, “For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods, so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly” (Deut 7:4 NKJV).

The Israelites were forbidden not to intermingle with the traditions and cultures of their surrounding neighbors, more so with the idolatrous Canaanites but it was impossible for them and that cost them a lot of sad experiences. As a result of

separating from God, they proved unfaithful to His commands and were taken to captivity by the Babylonians. God would do anything to reform and restore His people, if they should forsake their traditions, beliefs and past experiences and worship the true living God of heaven (Deut. 28:1).

The provision of food and materials (Gen 2:8-8, 15-17, Ex16, 17:1-7, 13:21-22, Ps 78:14, Deut 1:3, 8:2, 29:5). For the people of Israel kept them in harmony with God. The church should not be silent about the general welfare of new converts. In this depressed economic situation, we found ourselves, it will be impossible for the church to cater for every new converts. But it will be prudent for the laity to organize workshops and seminars to train new converts on small entrepreneurship, so that they too can begin a new life and earn their living.

Moreover, Ex 20:1- talks about the ten commandments, this also was used to preserve the people. It distinguished the Israelites from other nations. When the people disobeyed God, He used the law to punish them and when they obey, He used the law to put fear in the people neighboring Israel. And by so doing new converts are established and retained.

Nurture in the New Testament

In this section, nurture in the context of the N.T. will be explored in the gospels, the Pauline epistles to show how the Jews and Gentiles were nurtured and kept as a unified body for mission. The Greek word “*paideuo*” means to “train”⁵ and can be synonymous to instruct. The verb is used of family discipline, (Heb 12:6, 7, 10, 1 Cor 11:32, 2 Cor 6:9, Rev 3:19). It can also mean “teach” from the Greek word “*didasko*” to give instruction (Matt 4:23, 9:35, Rom 12:7, 1 Cor 4: 17, 1 Tim 2:12,

⁵ W. E. Vine, *Vine's Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 435.

4:11). To nurture in this regard is to disciple someone, just as an apprentice is to his master. This means one who follows the teaching of others, as disciple of John, (Matt 9:14). In a wider sense, the Jews became Jesus' adherents (John 6:66, Luke 6:17). The call of the twelve apostles (Matt 10:1, Luke 22:11). "All who manifest that they are His disciples by abiding in His word" (John 8:31). A disciple was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teachers, (John 8:31, 15:8).

Nurture in the Book of Matthew

The book of Matthew illustrates the commencement of the ministry of Jesus by calling the first apostles (Matt 4: 18 – 22). Some of them were tax collectors, and others, fishermen.

David C. C. Watson says, 'Fishing is one of the commonest means of livelihood the world around. It requires skill, patience, courage and perseverance. All these qualities are necessary for those who would persuade others to follow Christ.'⁶ It is crystal clear that following Jesus requires patience and courage. In Jesus' ministry and His preaching on the sermon the Mount, He encouraged the poor in spirit; these are those who are in need of the things the kingdom of heaven has to offer. And to those who mourn, these are those to be exhorted, consoled, encouraged and comforted." God meets the spiritual needs with the grace of heaven (Matt 5:13), so He comforts those that mourn.

To the meek, Christ is asking the church to be gentle, mild and lowly of heart, mind and life that prepares the way for true satisfaction. Meekness toward God is that we accept His will and His dealings with us as good. And to the hungered and thirst, these are those who look for righteousness, so also the new converts should be treated

⁶ David C. C. Watson, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge: University Printing Services, 1999), 12.

by feeding them with God's word. And to the merciful, deeds of mercy should be shown to both old and new members. Christ extended God's pity and forgiveness because humans are sinners who deserve punishment. Christians are to be peacemakers among themselves (1Thess 5:13), and to follow peace with all men (Heb 12:14).” Christians are to pray for peace, Work for peace and to take a constructive interest in activities that contribute to a peaceful state of society.”⁷ Christ asked man to love his enemies (Matt 5: 43- 48), helping and praying for the poor (Matt 6: 9 – 15)

More so, in Christ's ministry He cleansed a leper (Matt 8: 1 – 4), Peter's mother in law was healed (Matt 8: 14 – 15). Christ healing generated enormous popularity and because of this healing and more miracles (Matt 8 16 – 17) He performed, many people were converted to the church. The modern church should emulate the examples of Jesus and present to the world activities that will nurture and retain the new converts in the church.

Matthew's gospel is the central universal mission of the church. The global commission to “make disciples of all nations” brings to conclusion the gospel (Matt 28:18-20) and is sufficient evidence in itself. The presence of an explicit mission further demonstrates that the mission is a prime issue in the evangelist's theology. Matthew's audience was not only Judaism itself but the mixed population of his own Christian community.

For the Jewish Christians, Matthew wanted to affirm that Jesus' mission was “not to destroy the law and the prophets but to bring them to fulfillment” (Matt 5:17). At the same time, both Jews and Gentile Christians, Matthew sought to put the universal mission of the church in perspective. It was God's plan and was in accord

⁷ Francis D Nichol, “Matthew,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, Rev. (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1980), 5:328.

with the pattern of salvation detectable in the O. T. and in the history of Jesus Himself.

Despite the tension such a mission had brought to the community, the very nature of the gospel demanded that the teaching of Jesus be brought to “the entire nation.” Jesus the Son of pre – eminent and the inaugurator of a new age of salvation extending to all nations. The centrality of mission and Matthew’s Christological concentration explains the gospel emphasis to Jesus and His message. With Jesus’ words in Matt 28: 19 – 20, the church was established. It was not to be a babysitting operation, but it was to be a mission agency.

It is the reason to go forth and make disciples among all people groups. This message comes to us in the authority of the risen Lord. Jesus declares that He possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. You cannot get any more authority than that. Jesus is the Chief Executive Officer of the universe. He is not asking us to go; He is telling us to go. We have no choice, if we are His disciples, we will obey and go.

Nurture in the Book of Mark

The gospel of Mark was originally written for communities freshly formed by the missionary efforts of the church. There is every reason to believe that all of these communities were mixed, composed of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The gospel is not propaganda, not equipment designed for proclamation to non- believers. They are mission documents for the church itself, meant to justify, renew and motivate the church’s claim on the heritage of Jesus’ own boundary- breaking ministry.

The “journey” was announced from Isaiah (Mark 1: 2-3), heralding the “way” of the Lord.” John’s ministry (Mark 1: 4- 8) is the advent of the “way” and Christ embodiment. He is clearly designated as God’s Son (Mark 1:11, 9:7, 12:6) as the last

Messenger to be sent (Mark 12:6), as the one animated with the Spirit (Mark 1:10). His way takes Him into Galilee, into a forceful and almost breathless ministry of healing, exorcism, teaching and conflict. The Son of man must go to Jerusalem and give His life for the sake of many (Mark 10:33, 8:31, and 14:21). Just as the disciples are called to follow Jesus' way at the beginning of the gospel story (Mark 1:16 – 21, 2:13- 15) so that the call is interested as the direction shifts toward Jerusalem. The Christian message is described as a way, as a mobile, dynamic transmission of God's word that sweeps through the heart of Judaism. Thus, the personal message of Jesus will necessarily propel the community beyond traditional confines.

Nurture in the Book of Luke

The nature of the Church's universal mission became clear only in the Post-Eastern experience of the community. Luke wants to ground the universal mission in the history of Jesus. Jesus as His custom was entered the Synagogue and read from the book of Isaiah when the unction of the Holy Spirit came upon Him. His mission on earth was to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken hearted, proclaim freedom to the captives, give sight to the blind, give freedom to those who are oppressed and proclaim the accepted year of the Lord (Luke 4: 16 – 18) and to teach the worshippers (Matt 4: 23, 12: 9, 13: 54, Mark 1: 21, Luke 4:5 and John 18: 20). The reading and preaching of the word by Jesus made His hearers to be attentive and would want to hear more from Him next time. This is the nurturing principles Christ used to retain His people.

Jesus the Anointed One, came to serve and relieve the poor who have been marginalized by the affluent. The love for the poor by Jesus was one of the great evidences of His Messiah ship. In other words, those who have wealth should endeavor to meet the needs of the poor.

“The gospel of Jesus means relief for the poor, light for the ignorant, alleviation of distress for the suffering and emancipation for the slaves of sin.”⁸ Christians should take an interest in the practice of the gospel command by giving alms and meeting the needs of the poor. The evidence of true religion is the genuine, sympathetic concern for the feelings and needs of your fellow man (James 1: 27), shows sincere conversion (1John 3: 10, 14), love for God (1John 3:17, 19) and readiness to enter God’s Kingdom (Matt 25: 34 – 46).

More so, the marching orders for the community mission came from the authority of Christ and will be carried out “in His name” (Luke 24:42, Matt 28: 19 - 20). The vigor of Jesus’ prophetic ministry, His call for repentance and conversion, His powerful acts of healing and exorcism, His boundary breaking compassion and His efforts to form community, all of these give shape to the community’s own mission.

Besides, the suffering endured by Jesus and His ultimate vindication by God in the resurrection forged a pattern that Luke sees as a trademark of God’s work in history. Luke writes, “It was necessary that Christ should suffer these things and enters His glory” (Luke24:26). Its message of salvation will be brought to the nations through suffering: the imprisonment of the apostles is an opportunity for preaching (Acts 5: 40-42), the death of Stephen brings the message to Samaria (Acts 8: 4-5) and the Greeks (Acts11:19-21). The mission of Luke is a call for conversion and a promise of forgiveness. Through the words and powerful acts of Jesus, He takes away pain, forgives sin and transforms human life.

Moreover, there is a relentless call for full commitment in Luke’s gospel. Response to the gospel must be deliberate (Luke 14: 28-33). When the Pentecost

⁸ Ibid.

crowd in Jerusalem cries out to the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter’s response echoes the commissioning statement of Jesus: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts2:37, 38). Salvation and its consequences are dominant themes in Luke gospel. Luke reminds his community that salvation remains the goal of its mission to the world.

Nurture in the Book of John

Hillel, a Rabbi of the first century BC has this to say, “One who has acquired unto himself words of Torah, has acquired for himself the life of the world to come.”⁹ “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). This passage indicates that the scriptures have to be studied with the eye of faith in order to understand it fully and to be abreast with eternal life. Studying the scriptures will help one to grow spiritually and also be conversance with happenings in Christendom.

Nurture in the Book of Acts

The book of Acts portrays the concluding aspects of Jesus’ ministry and the commencement of the apostles’ ministry. These untrained men waited for the unction of the Holy Spirit to fall upon them and did exploit for the Lord by preaching and casting out demons and healing those that were ill.

Luke the author of the book of Acts shapes the sequence of the community’s early history, he confirms the statement of the risen Jesus that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Acts 1:8). The disciples were having regular meetings and they stayed

⁹ Francis D Nichol, “John,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1966), 5: 954.

together as a united body, selling of possessions and sharing the proceeds together thereby caring for one another. They had fellowship with one another (1 Cor 1:9, Phil1: 5, 3: 10), they had charitable contributions and brotherhood was developed between the apostles and the new converts.

The breaking of bread could mean the sharing of their meals among themselves and they ate to show the spirit of oneness as a church. In the book of Acts, the new converts were meeting as a congregation. Four basic elements according to Nichol were seen in the life of the new converts:

1. The believers grew in knowledge of the truth through the teaching of the apostles.
2. They were conscious of fellowshiping with Christ, and with one another in acts of common worship and mutual kindness and benevolence.
3. They participated in the breaking of bread.
4. They engaged in prayer, both private and corporate.¹⁰

With this incidence, the impact of the believers upon the non-believers was great. The apostles had great powers not only in preaching but also in working miracles.

They were together. Due to the converts new found love for Christ, they were ready to share material possessions with one another (Acts 1: 11). The new Christians sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to every man as his needs may be. Sharing was done willingly not by compulsion but out of sympathy and self- denial.

These new believers were constant in their daily devotion. They worshipped in the temples but had their communal life, breaking of bread and sharing of their food from one house to the other. But this act did not go for long, there were discrimination of the church's economy and then depended on the gentile booty. In one instance,

¹⁰ Ibid., 5:121.

Ananias and his wife sold their land and brought a portion of the proceeds, both of them were killed because they lied to the Holy Spirit. It was a community of telling the truth.

The diaspora Jews are the first to hear and accept the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:5-12), God-fearing Gentiles who came to Israel, such as the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius are the pioneers of the Gentile church. As the gospel makes clear the “salvation of all flesh” is intended by God from the beginning. The baptism of the Ethiopian, the conversion of Cornelius and the mandate of Paul to go to the Gentiles are clearly the result of an explicit divine initiative, regardless of the Jews. Paul’s speeches in Acts 14:15-17 and 17:23-31 affirm that the offer of salvation to the Gentiles is not a mere crust from the table of Israel but is part of God’s saving care for all peoples already expressed in creation.

The Bereans studied the scripture daily with heavenly angels beside them, enlightening their hearts. Anywhere the gospel is taught, those who honestly desire to do the right are led to a diligent searching of the scripture. In this stage of our history, if those who will listen and follow the example of the Bereans, searching the scripture daily by comparing God’s word with the messages brought to them would today be a large number of people who are loyal to God’s holy law.

Nurture in the Pauline Epistles

We have seen how the gospels have related to the subject in question; we will like to see the writings of Paul on the above subject. The word patient is from the Greek “*hupomeno*” and it can also mean to endure.

Paul in this verse of Rom 12:12 is encouraging Christians to exercise patience endurance in spite of trials or difficulties one is encountering and should exercise caution, so much so that one should not stir up hostility. Besides, in life’s journey

every man or woman has right to his or her conscience but as the Bible states, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14 12), one has to be accountable for his or her actions either good or bad done on this earth. In the church of our living God, the ultimate goal for Christians is salvation, so whatever one does on this earth will be considered greatly.

With the ensuing narratives of the subject under consideration, for a church to be nurtured well for its growth and sustainability, each follower of Christ must possess a gift to help in the smooth running of church administration. The word gift in Greek is “Charismata.” For nurturing and retaining of members in the Seventh – day Adventist Church members need the diverse gifts but one should be cautioned that the working of these gifts are being controlled by the Holy Spirit. The words nurture and retention can also mean, “To give to drink” (Heb 5: 12 – 14, 1Pet 2: 2) from the Greek word “potizo.” In this respect, the milk represents the elementary principles of the gospel (1 Corinthians 3:2). In other words, the gospel must be taught and imbibed in the fuller and deeper words of truth. According to Nichol, he says:

This whole world is a stage on which the conflict between sin and righteousness, truth and error, is being carried on before an intensely interested audience composed of the inhabitants of the universe. It is the duty of every believer to let the light of truth be seen by all with whom he comes in contact with. If Christians realized that the eyes of the universe are focused upon them, there would be a revival of the faithful witnessing that characterized the lives of the apostles.¹¹

Christians are to be light bearers to the world and be ready to teach everyone they come in contact with and introduce them to Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul mentioned in Col 3:16 “dwell in you”: meaning make its home in you. This phrase should bring enrichment to the soul, lives in the heart of man, guiding his thoughts and actions and enrich the Christian in the things of heaven. Imparting knowledge

¹¹ Francis D Nichol, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1966), 6:684.

patiently and systematically in a simple while progressing into the profound. The one who has Christ's word dwells in his heart must teach its principles to others as his own life as an example.

The scriptures both Old and New Testament supposed to be taught or communicated because it is the inspired word of God that is profitable for reproof, correction, discipline and training (nurture) (2Tim 3:16) as in Eph 6:4: "As a child is taught the basic responsibility of manhood, so the Christian finds in the scripture those principles that will help him to grow up to the 'perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'" (Eph 4:13). This process of "growing up to be like Christ is known as sanctification, a training that continues throughout life."¹² Besides, men of spiritual fervor must be ready at all times to give reasons of their hope in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). It is a continuous program of study in understanding the will of God that is the believer's only road of character improvement.

Nichol continues to say,

We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18; Eph 4:13; Phil 1:9; Col 1:9, 10). "Honest men are entitled to expect church members to be able to present their convictions in an intelligent, convincing manner. In fact, church members must be prepared to meet the challenges of the world's keenest minds. Truth is reasonable and is never afraid of the facts."¹³

The present-day Christian must be prepared to face the numerous challenges confronted by the church and present the truth to the world as she endeavors to nurture them.

¹² Nichol, "Matthew," 7:345.

¹³Ibid., 572.

Meaning of Retention

The word retention is from the verb “retain” which the Chambers combined dictionary defines as to continue to have, contain, hold, or use. The theology of the word retention studies how the local church can retain, keep and hold on to new members. The theology of retention is purely based on God’s nature and His activities among the people on earth. God’s nature is love (1 John 4: 8).

God sacrificed this love by giving His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ as an offering to save the human race. God’s love supersedes the punishment that will be meted upon the people on earth. Yoseph N. Otieno asserts, “The use of words as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousand, forgiving wickedness, rebellion over sin, yet does not leave the guilt unpunished.”¹⁴ This clearly shows the love God manifests for His people on earth. The Creator God has compassion for His people and it indicates the theology of retention. Compassion according to Chambers Combined dictionary is the “feeling of sorrow and pitying someone in trouble.” God said to Moses, He is a compassionate God. In other words, God is full of pity and mercy.

These special attributes of God are all embedded in the person of Jesus Christ. The gospels are full of Jesus’ love and compassion. He is the true model of compassion. “But when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered like sheep having no shepherd” (Matt 9:36). At another occasion, He told His disciples, “I have compassion on the multitudes because they have been with Me for days and have nothing to eat” (Matt 8:2). The widow at Nain who lost her only son, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep” (Luke 7:13).

¹⁴ Yosef Nyambega Otieno, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa* (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission, Andrews University, 2015), 205.

Beginning from our first parents, Adam and Eve unto this day, we are sinners who have fallen short of God's glory. Sin, according to Horn "Is any deviation from the will of God, either of neglect to do what He has specifically commanded."¹⁵ Adam and Eve sinned and fall short of God's glory and they were to be forever lost. No one is exempted from eternal damnation and all deserved to die. But for the loving compassion of Jesus Christ, He gave His life a ransom so that those who have faith in Him will not perish (John 3:16). Paul in the book of Romans said, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6: 23). Jesus bore the sin of the world so that we can live and testify about His goodness.

The church is a community of believers who are destined to promote the agenda of Christ on earth. God is depending on His church to lead others to Christ through the studying of His word. There are many who do not know the Lord Jesus as our sovereign God, for instance, the Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Traditionalists. When a repentant sinner returns to have fellowship with the community of believers, it is incumbent for the church to plan and strategize on how to retain such converts, because to gain one convert to Christ is expensive. Jesus accomplished the nurturing and retaining process by living and working with His disciples. The question comes how Jesus succeeded in nurturing and retaining His disciples. He did it through the following means.

Retention in the New Testament

The N.T. shows significant methods of retention through the ministry of Jesus Christ to His disciples that led to the Christian church. These methods of retaining members will be looked at through the ministry of Jesus.

¹⁵ Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1960), 1043.

Jesus' Methods of Retention

Jesus prayed for His disciples and taught them. Even though these men were having varied vocations, temperaments, background and character, Jesus schooled them and retained them for His ministry. He told Simon Peter and his brother “I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19). Irrespective of their background and character, Christ was able to nurture and retain eleven of the twelve called. Jesus achieved this through the following means:

Prayer: Jesus depended on His Father for strength and direction and this He did through prayer, He prayed throughout the night (Luke 6:12, 13), and that led Him to draw people to Him. Jesus pleaded with the Father when He prayed, “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name (John 17:11).

This was the strategy used by Jesus to plead for His disciples for protection and direction. In evangelism members are sought for to join the fold but immediately at the end of the evangelistic period, prayers of thanksgiving are offered for its success and not for the new converts. In one instance, Jesus said, He came to do His Father's will, (John 4:34, 6:38). This indicates to us that Jesus had an absolute dependence on God. For the church to succeed in nurturing and retaining new members, she has to be prayerful and have total dependence on God the Father.

Teaching ministry. More so, one of the most important methods of nurturing and retaining His disciples were through teaching. He taught them the principles of living and object lessons that covered all areas of life and what they were to encounter in the future when He must have left them. Most of Jesus' teachings are in parables. For instance, the Beatitudes recorded Luke 6: 20 -26, was explained to the disciples in a clearer tone. He taught in the synagogues and the temple (Mark 14:49, John 7:4). He was patient with them and at times asked whether what He is passing on to them is

been understood. Christ taught in villages, cities, at a well, beside the lake and in homes (Matt 11:1, Luke 13:22 Mark 6:34). Christ's true and faithful disciples are those who obey His teachings (Matt 7:21-23; John 15:14).

The leadership of the church must also patiently have Bible studies program in the church for new members. These studies if properly conducted will enrich their spirituality and develop their relationship with one another and Jesus. Sermons should be Bible centered so also is Bible studies. The church should be able to give detailed explanation of the doctrines of the church that brings salvation message to these new members. Monitoring and close supervision of new members is required for them to grasp the new faith and be acquainted with the word.

Preaching ministry. The 21st century preachers, more so with the mega churches, preach what their congregations want to hear. The "thus said the Lord," has been laid aside while preaching their own words to suit their comfort. Currently, you hear sermons on prosperity, New Year's success and progress messages, get healed; miracle messages, victories over your enemies all in the name of Jesus Christ.

Stuart Olyott once said,

God's word in the world and preaching are intimately linked. Wherever God is at work, preaching flourishes. Wherever preaching is devalued or absent, the cause of God goes through a thin line. The Kingdom of God and preaching are conjoined twins who cannot be separated, they stand or fall together.¹⁶

Jesus said, "I bring you good news" (Luke 2:10) and to bear witness to the facts (John 4:39). The Samaritan woman bears the fact of what she saw and heard from Jesus and reported the content of the conversation to others. More so, Paul bears witness of and reported of what he had seen and heard. In Acts 5:42, we read that the apostles did not cease from teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. We also read

¹⁶ Stuart Olyott, *Preaching: Pure and Simple* (Wales, UK: Bryntirion Press, 2007), 11.

that Paul and Barnabas spent time in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord.

Paul used his house in Rome for teaching and preaching the everlasting gospel. Good sermons will certainly not corrupt the mind of members. The trade of the preacher is to deliver sound Bible – based sermons and liberate his members from the impending doom. In nurturing and retaining of new members in the church, biblical preaching should be used to re – awakening the soul and rebuke the sins of members and help them gain salvation. Jesus preached Bible based sermons and rebuked His hearers and led them to make the right decision in their lives.

Visitation. Jesus showed love and compassion for His disciples by visiting them (Matt 9:15-17, Mark 1:29, John 12:2). Jesus valued His disciples to a point that He broke the norms of the day which the Jews vehemently rejected by visiting Levi the tax collector (Mark 2:15-17). Jesus cares and caters for His disciples by feeding them when they were hungry (Matt 14:13-21, 15:32-38), He also healed their relatives of sicknesses (Matt 15:29-31, Luke 5:18-26). Christ condescended to even roast fish for His disciples to eat (John 21:9-14). He exhibited such love for them and took all of them without favoritism as family. It is the responsibility of the church to show pastoral care and concern for new member. The new members won have various needs, the church should be mindful to render some assistance to the needs of these new members. The church should endeavor to show love and concern for their members.

Small groups. In the early part of Jesus’ ministry, He organized a small group of twelve men to work with Him. These men were later known as apostles. This organization was borne out of love for one another and Jesus prayed for their unity. This small group of men prayed, worked and stayed together while consulting one

another. As Johnson puts it, “Jesus spent three years modeling community, family oneness to His disciples. Jesus had poured His life into this motley group of misfits because He firmly believed they could live together in oneness”¹⁷ This shows Small Group is an essential tool for nurturing and retaining new members in the church. It is a worthy venture for the church to organize her members into small groups that will stay together, encourage and help each other. Show love, care and be capable of addressing the various needs of new members.

Delegated responsibility. Jesus gave His disciples the opportunity and engaged them in His ministry. During His sermon to the crowd, the disciples prepared a boat where He preached (Mark 3:9). Also, He gave them the opportunity to arrange the crowd while feeding the five thousand men (Matt 15:36, Mark 8:6). As Otieno asserts,

He gave them opportunity to practice their evangelistic skills, understanding their shortcomings. When they did something wrong, failed, or revealed lack of faith, He rebuked them gently and showed them the reason for their failure after hearing their report. For example, when they happily reported how evil spirit obeyed them, He told them they should not be happy for that, but for the good news that their names are written in heaven.¹⁸

The disciples of Jesus were given the opportunity to go about ministering God’s word to the people and returned to report their findings.

The wife of Zebedee went to Jesus and asked for her sons to sit one at His right hand and the other at His left hand (Matt 20:20 – 22, Mark 10:35 – 40). Jesus taught His disciples humility and how to live peaceably with one another. The church needs to be patient with new members who are struggling with the new-found faith. Older members in the church should endeavor to teach the new members for them to be grounded in the faith.

¹⁷ Kurt W. Johnson, *Successful Small Group* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2011), 18.

¹⁸ Otieno, *Biblical Principles for Missiological Issues in Africa*, 220.

Persecution. As the disciples live among people in the community, it was possible that they will face rejection, hatred and even martyrdom (Matt 10:34 -36, Mark 13:10, 11). The new members should not think joining the new faith is an easy ride to life, Jesus was persecuted, mocked and then murdered in the presence of His disciples (Matt 26: 27 – 58, Mark 14:21 -42, Luke 22 :15 – 22). Following Jesus means persecution, loss of job, rejection by family members and friends and even death. On the other hand, it can bring joy, happiness and prosperity for the new members. The church can faithfully prepare these new members in the prevailing circumstances as they face life, they will be able to remain committed and faithful to God.

Rebuke. The then world of the disciples was filled with hypocrisies, hatred and animosity as it is with us today. The disciples rebuked and punished offenders who deceived, and taught heresies among them in order to eradicate such teachings that will be detrimental to the church. Ananias and his wife (Sapphira) died for lying to the church (Acts 5:1 – 11). This act shows God is not pleased with “ravenous wolves” who try to infiltrate the church of God with teaching that will disturb the peace of the church. The disciples were firm in their decisions regardless of position, status or fame. The church leadership in administering discipline should emulate Jesus and His disciple’s type of leadership and be firm in making decision.

Community service and fellowship. Luke, the writer of the book of Acts posits, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2: 42). This shows that the early church taught her members the word of God, they had loving fellowship with one another, and they ate together, prayed for the success of the church and for one another. In other words they were sincere to each other and were ready to help themselves.

Also, lands and house owners sold their property and the proceeds were brought to the apostles, who distributed it according to the needs of the members (Acts 4:32- 35). They were genuine in dealings with one another. They lacked nothing because concern and love was manifested and God kept blessing them daily. The church should show love by paying visit to their new converts in the communities and pray for them and allow the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself to the church and miracles will be wrought.

Nurture in the Writings of Ellen G. White

The principles of nurture propounded or advocated in the writings of Ellen G. White, in the form of training, assigning of responsibilities to new members, doctrinal grounding and special meetings will be considered in this section.

Training

Ellen G. White's writings have much information on the principle of nurturing new members who joined the church. These principles are in conformity with the scriptures even though her writings were distant away from Bible authors. They form a unity of doctrines that guide the church in nurturing her members.

For carrying on of His work, Christ did not choose the learning or eloquence of the Jewish Sanhedrin or the power of Rome. Passing by the self- righteous Jewish teachers, the Master chose humble, unlearned men to proclaim the truths that were to move the world. These men He purposed to train and educate as teachers of His church. They in turn were to educate other or send them out with the gospel message.¹⁹

Christ is looking for humble men and women who are willing and committed to be trained and take out His message to a dying world that needs His saving grace. The Bereans were willing to investigate the word with all readiness of mind and to know whether the things were correct. The same attitude should be inculcated by the

¹⁹ White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 17.

leaders and members of the church in order to correct the false teachings that are now prevailing in Christendom.

Ellen White continues,

The Hebrews had been instructed to train their children to industrious habits, and it was regarded as sin to allow the youth to grow up in ignorance of physical labor. Even though a child was to be educated for holy office, knowledge of practical life was thought essential.²⁰

This simply means every youth, whether his parents were poor or rich, was taught some trade. Those parents who neglected to provide such training for their children were looked upon as departing from the instruction of the Lord. Paul established many churches. He and Barnabas retraced their steps and visited the churches and chose men they could train to unite in proclaiming the gospel. Experienced workers now trained young workers and place responsibilities on their shoulders.

Assigning Responsibilities to New Members

New members should be given work to do in the church. “There is danger of religion of losing in depth that which it gains in breadth. New members are to be taught by giving them something to do, in some line of spiritual work that their first love will not die but increase in fervor.”²¹ These members have abilities, useful in helping the church to come nearer to God, and working in various ways to act upon the elements essential to the church which will be a means of acting beneficially upon the church.

²⁰ Ibid., 347.

²¹ Ibid., 356.

Doctrinal Grounding

In *Pastoral Ministry*, Ellen G. White said,

Give Bible studies to the new converts to fully and firmly establish them in the truth. Direct the mind to Him who guides and controls all things. Christ will be the manna and the spiritual dew to these converted souls.²²

Studying of the Bible should be the topmost priority of the church. With this, it makes one to be abreast with the word of God and leads oneself to spiritual maturity. Teach new converts to study the scriptures. New converts should be impressed by earnest labor and persevering study of the word through knowledge gained. “People look to the ministers to search the scriptures for them and to explain what they teach.”²³

New converts cannot retain the message presented to them in sermon but reading the printed pages in the form of papers and books which are the Lord’s means of nurturing and keeping the message, it will enlighten and confirm the truth than ministering of the word alone.

As men of spiritual understanding conduct Bible studies with them telling them how to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, that they be fully and firmly established in the truth, the power of God will be revealed.²⁴

Let the elders of the church who are spiritually minded conduct Bible studies with the new members and assist them to realize the marvelous powers of God in their lives.

Special Meetings with New Members

Group up men and women who are candidates and should understand their duty, the pastor of the church has a duty to these young souls in the faith. The Pastor

²² Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Berrien Springs, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 206.

²³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1940), 367.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 284.

should give the Bible readings, converse and pray with them and plainly show the claims of God upon them. Show them the fruit of conversion, and the evidence that they love God. Help them to know that true conversion is a change of hearts, thoughts and purposes. They should be able to give away evil habits such as evil speaking, jealousy, and disobedience.

“Warfare must be waged against evil traits of character. Then the behaving one can understandingly take to himself the promised,”²⁵ “Ask and it shall be given thee” (Matt 7:7, Luke 11:9). There should be an aggressive but loving means of wading off of evil traits from the characters of old as well as new members; this will certainly bring about the knowledge of the true God to all.

Four Neglected Areas of Instruction

There are four important branches of the work, ministers do neglect them, and they are Health Reform, Spiritual Gifts, Systematic Benevolence and the great branch of the missionary work. With earnest labor a large number may embrace the truth. When these truths are taught in the fear of God, presents the practical duties, God’s claims will be upon His people.

Even though some may draw back, saying, “Our ministers who brought us to the truth did not mention these things. We have been deceived. These things were kept back.” They will be offended because of this, they will not accept the system of tithing, reject systematic benevolence, and they will turn away and no longer walk with believers and truth lovers. If these teachings are being well taken by these converts, it will open new fields of work. “Religion must first begin with emptying

²⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 95.

and purifying the heart, and must be nurtured by daily prayer.”²⁶ If the church is to nurture new converts for Christ, then, she should endeavor to educate her members to uphold the various teachings of the church.

Sabbath Worship Service

The Sabbath School is supposed to be an exciting moment for members in the church. As the name implies, it is a period where the members are actively involved in studying the scriptures. This stage is the preparation ground for outreach program. Members share testimonies, and songs. Prayers are offered to overcome the various challenges they face. The Sabbath School is vital for the nurturing of new converts and crucial for old members to grow spiritually in the faith. Even though the Sabbath has been neglected by many, Ellen White has this to say as a guide for the church:

The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. The laws forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day: but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.²⁷

Based on the above quotation, the Sabbath Service is a joyous moment for both old and new members. This command is from the Creator of heaven and for His people on earth to obey Him. It brings to memory the creative power of God. Through the Sabbath services new members can be nurtured and the old can continue to grow spiritually in the faith.

²⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 535.

²⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1940), 207.

Small Group

Another means of nurturing and retaining new members into the church is by organizing Small Groups. Ellen G. White states, “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 also for the unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others.”²⁸ Small Groups are means of reaching the message of God to new members who are babies in the faith through in- depth studies, praying and caring for one another. Jethro asked Moses to group the people for effective administration (Ex 18:13 – 26).

Retention in the Writings of Ellen G. White

This section considers the writings of Ellen G. White on retention.

Teaching Ministry

Ellen G. White asserts that new members should be “instructed by faithful teachers of God’s word that they may increase in knowledge and love of the truth, and may grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”²⁹ The pastors, evangelists, elders and teachers of God’s word should endeavor to teach the truth from the Bible relating to the various disciplines the church finds itself. These teachers of the church should cooperate with the Holy Spirit in directing their students to Jesus Christ and not to the church. She also requested that the church teaches more

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 22.

²⁹ White, *Evangelism*, 337.

than sermonizing. This is because the recipient will be groomed in the doctrines of Jesus Christ that leads to spiritual growth and development.

White also avers that new converts needs to be cared for by both the ministers and the entire church members in order to snatch them from the any ploy of the devil. She further posits that such individuals should be assigned to fathers and mothers to be mentoring them through prayer, love, visitation and life example.³⁰

This clearly shows new converts should be cared for by the ministers of the gospel by nursing, educating, helping and encouraging them of their God given duties in a bid for the evil one and his agents not to snatch them from His church.

Thorough Preparation before Baptism

A thorough preparation should be done before baptizing new members into the church of God. Jesus says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16a). This truly shows that before one is baptized he or she should thoroughly study the Bible and gets the understanding for undertaking such step in life. Ellen White says, “Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ, to be renewed in heart.”³¹

Baptism calls one to be united with his or her Maker by following the precepts laid down for him. In other words, the sinful traits we battle with will be won for us through grace in Jesus, prayer, obedience and submission to His will.

Before baptism thorough investigation must be done and great care must be taken. Also, great care should be exercised in accepting members into the church, for Satan has his specious devices through which he purposes to crowd false brethren into

³⁰ Ibid., 319.

³¹ Ibid.

the church, through which he can work more successfully to weaken the cause of God. The evil one is fast working to undo the church of the living God, so leaders that are spiritually inclined must be on guard before deciding on baptizing candidates.

Public evangelism is a great tool in soul winning. Visiting evangelists could come in a week or two to conduct campaigns and baptize a great number because they are interested in the numerical figures not the quality of the candidates and when they leave these members also leave. Great care should be taken and more studies be done to allow them decide rightly and remain as fellow believers in the fold.

New Members and Giving

The Lord says in Malachi 3:10 “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house” (KJV). New Members should be taught to return faithful tithes and offerings to God and not to the church. It is the duty of every member to finance the work of God on earth. Leaders of the church should not forsake this important duty.

The pastor who forsakes this sacred role as Ellen White puts it, “He has left undone the most important part of his work.”³² New members are to be instructed in the duties of the church and also be cared for not only in physical needs but should be trained in different skills for their future development.

Make Church Worship Attractive

New members coming from other churches have different ideologies and experiences, some from traditionalist background should be made to feel the presence of the living God in the church and the services and programs must be lively and interesting. Most of these members are coming from their Cathedrals to either a

³² Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1940), 105.

classroom or small church, church services should be relevant, Bible – based teachings and Christ- centered sermons which strengthen their relationship in the new found faith. Ellen White says, “Our meetings should be made intensely interesting.”³³ Programs should be well organized and those presenting must be accurate and prompt and make it to the point to keep interest of the people alive.

Worship is important to God’s people. In fact, the Bible emphasized on it (Matt 5: 23 – 24). Worship edifies the people. “The goal of worship is for people to be spiritually refreshed, nurtured and transformed.”³⁴ Worship is “an active response to God in which we acknowledged His great worth.”³⁵ Worship if done properly is to God the Father in heaven.

Nurture and Retention in Other Christian Literature

There are various Christian authors who have written extensively on this topic and the researcher will try to see the contributions made so far.

Unity

In nurturing and retaining members in the church unity is of essence. When the church experiences oneness, there is harmony among members. “Unity is the soul of fellowship. Destroy it, and rip the heart out of Christ’s body.”³⁶ I want to agree with Rick, unity in the church brings strength and love. “You are commissioned by Jesus Christ to do everything possible to preserve the unity, protect the fellowship and

³³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1943), 609.

³⁴ Audrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 331.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 332.

³⁶ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Oasis International, 2002), 160.

promote harmony in your church family and among all believers.”³⁷ The Bible says, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). It is the responsibility of God’s people to protect the unity of the church.

Train Old Members

Numerous authors have written on it, so that the challenges facing the retention of new members can be solved. The trend is not only with the Seventh-day Adventist Church but the whole of Christendom. Halversen states, “A lack of training old church members to disciple and assimilate new members is the major hindrance to new member retention”³⁸ I want to subscribe to what Halversen said that old members in the church do not nurture the new converts and as such the rapidity of members leaving the church is imminent. Pastors are requested to train the old members so they themselves can train the new members when they enter the church.

The Role for New Members

New Members also have a role to play in staying in the church; this includes making friends with older members, cooperating with officers of the church and Bible teachers. New members should participate in the services and other programs like evangelism, returning of tithes and offerings and camp meetings.

Assisting Members Withstand Crises

After baptism, the new members are challenged with identity crisis and how to integrate themselves into the church. This is what Mark Finley calls the “crisis of

³⁷ Ibid. 161.

³⁸ L. R. Halversen, “Nurturing and Preserving New Converts: Ways of Caring for Newcomers after Baptism,” *Adventist Archives*, accessed December 10, 2015, <http://www.docs.adventistarchives.org>.

discouragement.” Old members should acquaint new members about the church and its principles. They should be thoroughly orientating them about the church.

Establish New Member Ministry Committee

Evangelisms are conducted and baptisms done but the follow – up processes are left out. Without proper follow – up program the new members would leave. As Shirley Benton puts it, “People often join or remain in churches because of relationships, not just a conviction of the doctrines. Established church members can play a vital role by intentionally mentoring those who are newly baptized.”³⁹

There is the need to establish a New Member Ministry Committee that has sincere love for people and soul winning. People who are patient, non – judgmental, forgiving, committed and have clear understanding of what is involve. Each new member should be assigned a shepherd or guardian. This committee should endeavor to encourage new members by training, developing and maintaining a close relationship with Jesus Christ.

Summary

The Theological and Biblical background and writings of Ellen G. White investigated the underlying principles of nurture and retention. God’s intention for Adam and Eve was to establish a family who will portray love and have warm fellowship with Him forever. He was visiting the couple showing care and concern for their welfare. Sin separated them. Even though their rebellious act disconnected them from God, He intervened and restored them. The call of Abraham as the father of many nations brought the Israelites together to worship the true God known as Yahweh.

³⁹ Shirley Benton, *Nurturing New Members Program, Women’s Ministries* (Columbus, OH: Columbia Union Conference, 2014), 9.

Moses brought out the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan inaugurated a new religion with its priesthood. Moses taught parents to train, educate and instruct their children in matters of duty and destiny day by day. King Solomon also played a major role in the governance of Israel as a nation. He wrote the book of Proverbs as a guide to admonish, discipline, correct and chastens them when the need arose. These are the methods used to nurture and retain the Israelites.

In the N. T. the methods are clearly seen to disciple - making, teaching, praying, and sharing one's possession, visiting and instructing one another in the faith. Besides, the training members, meeting in their homes for Bible studies, organizing small groups which fostered unity, and caring for one another is clearly seen in the N.T. These were the means used to retain members in Bible times and in the writings of Ellen G. White and other Christian writers.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter dealt with the theological principles and writings of Ellen G. White on Membership nurture and retention. In the O. T., the children of Israel were seen to be nurtured through the patriarchal or ancestral intuition of God which laid a basis for their theological development and a formal inauguration of a new religion with its priesthood was established. The parents were asked to instruct their children, this nurtured and retained them as a nation. In the N. T., the Jews were to train, and give instruction and make disciples of everyone they come in contact with. The same principles run through the writings of Ellen G. White. The purpose of this chapter offers the understanding of the principles as being done in the work of other writers.

However, the word “nurture means to train, teach and correct, chasten and give instruction and to retain, hold back and continue to have.”¹ The principles for discussion will be prayer, teaching ministry, preaching ministry, visitation and small groups.

“Do you remember when you had to arrive early in church to get a seat? Do you remember when activities at the church were abundant and there is always something to do? Do you remember when baptisms occurred regularly at your church? Do you remember your church when seemed alive with the spirit that you just longed to be there Sabbath after Sabbath? Is your church like that today? Or has your

¹ Vine, *Vine's Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words*, 175.

church dwindled to the place where most members realized that its glory days are in the past?”²

The problem associated with this, is the loss of first love. John the Revelator cautioned the church of its Luke warmness at the end of earth’s history. The Laodiceanism attitude of the church members and leaders weighs the church of God today and she has lost her first love for God, resulting in Luke warmness of members and their leaders. Moreover, the church has turned inward, and failed to extend her hand of fellowship or reach out to others with the gospel. Another issue that has affected the church is the infiltration of false teachers. Paul in Acts 20: 29 – 32, warns of this impending crisis. This is an opportunity for the church to reclaim her lost members through the nurturing and retention processes.

Ellen G. White has this to say, “Every true disciple is born into the Kingdom of God as a missionary.”³ I agree with Ellen G. White, because if the gospel of the Kingdom is to be proclaimed and the growth of the church is to be retained, it is incumbent on church leaders to disciple and train new members and existing old members will continue to grow spiritually.

The ratio of members leaving the church is prevalent within the SDA Church globally and in FCD where the study is located. This means new members joining the church do not often stay, but eventually leave. The question now is, why do new members leave the church? There are fundamental problems in the nurture and retention programs of the church. However, the SDA Church in FCD must take an honest look into this issue and determine to find ways of correcting it, by nurturing the new members and retaining them.

² Russell Burrill, *Waking the Dead* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 2004), 9.

³ White, *The Desire of Ages*, 195.

What is Nurture?

The word nurture is from the Greek word ‘Paideuo’ denoting “to train children” (Acts 7:22; 22:3; Titus 2:12). It means “instructing, learning, teaching, correcting, disciplining and chastening”⁴ (Eph 6: 4). Domestically, nurturing is like a mother giving instruction to her child for his future upbringing, academically it is like a classroom teacher teaching the students and agriculturally it is seen as a farmer cultivating the soil, sowing the seeds, weeding and pruning his crops in the farm for a better harvest. In the same vein, in the nurturing new members, there should be guiding principles such as home visitation, personal Bible study etc, that encourages the topic under consideration.

When Jesus voluntarily graced His life on the cross 2,000 years ago, He did not die for a cause. He died for people. During His brief ministry on earth, Jesus had the world on His heart, but He saw the world through the eyes of His men. The mission of God is “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19: 10). The commission of Jesus is for His followers to be instruments for God’s mission (Matt 28: 19 -20). God calls on the church “to seek the lost and to baptize the converted, He desires that the lost be saved and He commanded us to make disciples.”⁵ Jesus’ followers can become members in an active community and to attain this is to be part of the “people of God.” The centrality of God’s plan and vision for human restoration is by creating disciples.

Jesus charged His disciples to take the gospel throughout the world by making disciples. In discipling church members, faithful men should be sought for to teach others. Solomon affirms it by saying, “Most men will proclaim everyone his own

⁴ Vine, *Vine’s Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words*, 635.

⁵ Admin, “Nurture and Retention,” *Adventist Review*, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/-nurture-and-retention-summit-statement>.

goodness; but a faithful man who can find” (Prov. 20: 6)? These faithful teachers (men and women) have not always been available. The one that are to be sent as disciples must first be disciple for them to disciple others. Jesus spent more time discipling His disciples, while He taught, preached and healed. “By discipling I mean helping other persons to develop a personal, lifelong obedient relationship with Christ in which Jesus transforms their character in Christlikeness, changes their value system to kingdom values, and involves them in His mission in the home, the church, and the world.”⁶ God still seeks out for them.

More so, in discipling church members, teaching is paramount and that is where the discipling process begins. Teaching entails the imparting of a life mission of the gospel. While faithful men are teaching others, more faithful men should be raised discipleship. Dawson Trotman founder of The Navigator asserts to this by saying, “Activity is no substitute for production. Production is no substitute for reproduction.”⁷ Ministry must be productive.

The church is seen as a farmer who cultivated his farm with seeds that needs to grow and mature. The church has a choice to see it growing piece by piece, committee by committee and program by program. The leader should also see his church as elastic one guided creatively by the Holy Spirit through the word. The church is not a plastic entity but an organic one. In other words, the church is not inanimate but alive.

1. The church is defined by its planting and nurturing processes. Jesus and Paul proclaimed and expounded the same issue. The church is basically about seeding

⁶ John Mark Terry, Smith Ebbie, and Anderson Justice, *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundation, History and Strategies of World Mission* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 681.

⁷ Jonathan K. Dodson and Matt Chandler, *Gospel-Centered Discipleship*, 1 edition. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 29.

and nurturing not harvesting. The congregation that is nurtured determines the DNA of the church and understands its nature well. Her members are tended with quality and purpose through the use of the word. Jesus is the divine harvester on the close of earth's history and the organic church recognizes that

2. The gospel of Jesus Christ is driven by salvation through the nurturing church. God's message of grace is balanced with His loving expectations, proclaimed in repentance and forgiveness through the Lord Jesus. The intensity of the gospel was described by Christ in Luke 24: 46 -47. The church that is healthy is inspired, compelled and empowered by Jesus Christ Himself. "Clearly, Christ's love guides us. He died for all people so that those who live will no longer live for themselves but for Christ who died and was brought back to life for them. God has done all this. He has restored our relationship with Him through Christ and has given us this ministry of restoring relationship."⁸
3. The "seed," which is the word of God as food and water, the Holy Spirit develops the nurturing church. The church's ministry is built spiritually through the use of God's word. The seed brings the congregation into being, expands it and continually influences it in its ministry of discipling."⁹ Paul in Acts 6: 7 states, "The word of God continues to spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem grew very great." Also in Acts 12: 24, he relates the same. But God's word continues to spread and win many followers. Bible studies as well as leaders who are trained on the basis of the word are key factors in developing the church."
4. The Great Commission directs the nurturing church. Into the field Christ sends His people and gives them a mandate of His commission to carry out as being recorded in Matt 28:18 – 20. The task of disciple – making are teaching, and evangelizing.
5. The biblical "delivery system" distinguishes the nurturing church. The mission of the church is to convey spiritual resources effectively to her members. The church equips and prepares leaders and members for their individual ministries. The church's role is to plant, feed and water. The nurturing church employs a scripture – centered system that is conducive to disciple – making. The church should not be satisfied until the congregation is transformed into a nurturing church.
6. Finally, the absence of disciple – making and evangelizing is a fatal defect in any church. Discipleship is the total involvement of every Christian in the activities of the church. The vision of discipleship is to work together to share Christ's love with a Great Commission passion.

⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁹Ibid. 56.

Methods of Nurturing and Retaining New Members

This section considers who is a disciple and those to be disciple.

Who is a Disciple?

The word disciple comes from the Greek word ‘Mathetes’ meaning “learner, follower, pupil,” this shows the process by which one acquires theoretical knowledge. Men are dependent upon one another and their lives shaped by each other in many ways. A learner in this sense is someone who is truly committed to the task of his master. Michael Wilkins supports this view by describing a disciple in this way:

Disciple is the primary term used in the gospel to refer to Jesus’ followers and is a common referent for those known in the early church as believers, Christians, brothers/ sisters, those of the way, or saints, although each term focuses upon different aspects of the individuals relationship with Jesus and others of the faith.¹⁰

A disciple is a true follower of Jesus. The disciple is a pupil, a learner, or an apprentice. In developing mature members four basic habits must be inculcated: “The habit of time with God’s word, the habit of prayer, the habit of tithing and the habit of fellowship.”¹¹ These words are statements made by Jesus that defines a disciple: a disciple follows God’s word (John 8: 31- 32), a disciple prays and bears fruits (John 15: 7 – 8), a disciple is not possessed by his possessions (Luke 14: 32) and a disciple expresses love for other believers (John 13: 34- 35).

Bill Hull in his book, “The complete Book of Discipleship,” has three principles of making disciples; first, come and see principles (John 1: 35 – 4 : 46). This is the introductory aspect of Jesus and His ministry. Jesus invited Philip, Andrew, Peter and Nathaniel to come and experience the real Jesus. Come in order

¹⁰ Hull, Bill, *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (Colorado Springs, CO: Naypress, 2006), 32.

¹¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Commissioning Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 349.

words means giving time and space to those seeking God and to see means reality of God in their lives. When God's peoples meet frequently it musters reconciliation, courage, instruction and motivation (1 Cor 14:3, Heb 10: 24, 25). Members do enjoy such fellowship organized by the church.

Second, come and follow Me (Matt 4:19, Mark 1:16-18). Jesus spent considerable time in teaching those He called and his desire is to establish follower through the importance of prayer, the need for community and the work of outreach when members are trained in the word of God, and the positive relationship, they enjoy and it becomes a life - long experience.

Third, Come and be with Me (Mark 3:13, 14), Jesus called the twelve and trained them so that they too can replicate other with talents and skills suitable to be disciple - maker. Matthew says, "The harvest is plenty for you but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into is harvest field" (Matt 9: 38). New members are to be trained within the church to become missionaries in their various assignments of life.

Finally, Remain in Me principle (John 15:5, 8). Jesus has completed His mission and it was time for him to go. He needed His disciples to know how they could make practical what they have been taught. Though the disciples were not happy because Jesus was leaving them, He transforms their lives physically, leaving them with the Holy Spirit (John 15: 7) and leaving them with responsibility (2Cor 5:18-20).

In ancient times, schools of interpretations were established for learners by the Greek Philosophers. These learners or disciples were similar to that of Jesus' disciples. Jesus called the ones He wanted and their task was to bear witness about Him. John shows the concept of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus (John 8: 31).

The “true disciple” abides in His word. (John 2: 11; 20: 24 – 29). Matthew declares that, the true disciple is one who hears the words of Jesus and puts them into practice (Matt 7: 24). “This commitment to Jesus shapes the entire of the disciples.”¹²

The early church used the words such as believers, brethren, saints to refer to Christians in general and not just to those who knew Jesus personally. A disciple is one who follows his master. The disciples in the New Testament times leave all to follow Jesus (Mark 10: 28; Luke 5: 11). “To follow Jesus is to participate in the salvation which He offers. To follow Him also implies participation in the face of Jesus (Matt 8: 19; John 12: 25, 26). Furthermore, following Jesus is not a private or individualistic attachment to Jesus; it is life in community with others who have had the same call.”¹³ To be a true follower of Jesus, a disciple needs certain characteristics for a successful work. These are as follows:

1. He needs a vision to inspire. The disciple needs a dream in his life, something that will spur him. By living a life of studying, meditations and with humility, his life will be inspired.
2. He needs training. Training involves having knowledge of what is to be carried out. While knowledge gained could be accounted for and be at rest with the future.
3. For the disciple to be empowered, he needs structure. The structure denotes guide for a disciple and that will help him as he submits to accountability. The structure also helps him to take action, setting his goal and reshape his actions.

The commission of Jesus is gospel centered. The main thrust of His gospel is to reach the unreached and teach the gospel to disciples who know him. “The gospel is central to making disciples.”¹⁴ The word disciple is frequently mentioned in the Bible than Christians. “We are disciples first and parents, employees, pastors, deacons

¹² Watson E. Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Georgia, GA: Mercer University Press, 1991), 215.

¹³Ibid., 215.

¹⁴ Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, 36.

and spouse second.”¹⁵ A disciple has dynamic relationship with his Master and the commitment he shows to Him. The followers of Jesus were instructed through sermon, stories, and object lessons. The church should inculcate the methods Jesus used to reach His audience through spirit - filled sermons and spiritually based activities.

Jesus taught His disciples the gospel and lived it out in everyday life, by sharing. Christ choosing twelve men with different vocations and gave them everything. Dodson agrees by saying, “Jesus shared His meal, His heart, His teaching, His sufferings and His hopes for the future with these men, and all while taking road trips, mountain hikes, and moving toward His urban martyrdom.”¹⁶ This bond of friendship with the disciples shows a family relationship. “A disciple is rational (learner), relational (family), and missional (missionary).”¹⁷ For a disciple to be successful, he must adopt the three aspects. The commission of Jesus to the church is teaching them to observe all that I have commanded (Matt 28:20). The aim of discipling is not only to teach but to live the gospel. “The heart of being a disciple involves living in intimate union and daily contact with Christ.”¹⁸

Jesus’ mission was focused on a sinful world because He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He also came that humanity might believe in Him (John 3:16). The disciple who is a learner must also disciple others. Allen Hadidian puts it this way by saying, “Discipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals

¹⁵ Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born* (Toledo, OH: Chariot Victor, 2001), 11.

¹⁶Ibid., 31.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸ Hull, Bill, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 28.

who have been won to Christ, the purpose being to aid and guide their growth to maturity and equip them to reproduce themselves in a third spiritual generation.”¹⁹

The goal of making disciples is to enable believers to reproduce their lives and faith in others. Discipling others results in spiritual growth and change of wrong behavior and emulating Jesus.

The advantages of discipling are as follows: it brings joy to them (3 John 1: 4; 1 Thess 2:19 – 20), purifies their lives, and develops their ministerial skills. For the church, it strengthens the body, develops godly lives and extends God’s mission to the world. James Cress supports this view, “The value of discipling to the world is that individual lives are change – lives of individual who will inhabit Christ’s Kingdom.”²⁰ The church through discipling will be nurtured.

However, in the mission of the church, evangelism is one factor that supports it. But it is a decision centers around a point in time. The discipling model is one that centers on an ongoing lifestyle. The success of evangelism is the nurturing of new members. In nurturing new members, after evangelism, the follow up process is not an option but a deliberate act for the new believers to remain in the church. James Cress posits, “Follow up to incorporate new believers is not an option; it is an imperative – an integral part of the whole process. Anything less than an all – out effort on behalf of the newborns is child abuse! It is criminal.”²¹

It is an obligation to incorporate new believers into the life of the church through a follow – up program. As biblical teaching is applied to life, growth and fruitfulness result. Hypocrites under their spiritual masks are having some deep

¹⁹ James A. Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care*, General Conference Ministerial Association Resource Centre. (Ontario, Canada: Maracle Press, 2000), 9.

²⁰Ibid., 15.

²¹ Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care*, 29.

struggles in arriving at a lifestyle that conforms to the example Jesus gave. The responsibility of the church for these newborns is to train, coach, empathize, model, reason, teach and supervise them to the stage of maturity.

What is Discipleship?

Discipleship according to Bill Hull “is the effort both to be a disciple and to make other disciples.”²² It is about the immense value of God at work in one individual’s life and the resulting impact on other lives. More so, in the early part of Jesus’ ministry, the term disciple was frequently used to designate Jesus’ followers, this was the central theme of the church throughout the ages as they make disciples of all nations (Matt 28: 18 – 20) and this helped new believers advance in their discipleship in following Jesus. Jesus’ disciples were those who heard His invitation to begin a new kind of life. “Discipleship is a relationship between a teacher and a student which has a goal of intellectual growth, spiritual growth and ministry skills development.”²³ This can be accomplished in schools, churches, homes and places of business.

Nurturing involves modeling Christian disciples. Christians should be disciplined to turn their hearts to God in prayer, humble themselves before God in fasting, acknowledge Him through worship, seek His truth through Bible study, and then reflects on God’s work in their lives through meditation. Nurturing is an ongoing process; otherwise, the church grows stale and dies. One generation teaches the next generation which in turn teaches the other. God commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

²² Ibid., 21.

²³ George Janvier, *Evangelism: Discipleship* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Baraka Press, 1999), 71.

God created us to be part of His family. God built a family who will love, honor and reign with Him forever. “His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave Him great pleasure.”²⁴ God is love, He treasures relationship. His nature is relational and identifies Himself in family terms: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God exists in loving relationship. When we place our faith in Christ, God becomes our Father, we become His children, other believers become our brothers and sisters and the church becomes our spiritual family.

The characteristics of a normal discipling church are:

1. Christ instructed the church to take part in it
2. Christ modeled it
3. The N. T. disciples applied it

Embedded in the Great Commission is the key to understanding discipleship (Matt 28: 18 – 20). Every disciple should make disciples. Jesus gave the command to the apostles, with humanity sinful tendencies. New converts should be taught the essence of discipleship for better retention. Warren says, “teaching of the new converts is basic and these include: (a). a time with God in prayer (John 15: 7, 8), (b). a time with God in studying His word (John 8: 31 33), (c). a time with God in fellowship (John 13:34, 35) and (d), a habit of tithing.”²⁵

Small Group

There are various authors who have given various definitions of this term. Here are few: “A Cell is a small group with an ideal size of eight to fifteen people

²⁴ Kipsigis, “Christian Living Men,” *Global Christian Centre*, accessed August 23, 2015, <http://www.Globalchristiancentre.com/christianliving/men/32719-fellowship/>.

²⁵ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Commissioning Message and Mission*, 349.

who meet together on a regular basis for worship, Bible study, outreach, discipleship and prayer.”²⁶ A Small Group with the church is a voluntary, intentional gathering of three to twelve people meeting regularly together with shared goal of mutual Christian edification and fellowship. Bill Hull also asserts, “A Small Group is an intentional gathering of three to fourteen people who meet on a regular basis, with the common purpose of inviting the people they love to join them in discovering and growing in the adventure of a Christ – honoring life style at work, in family life and with extended family members.”²⁷

For instance, in Ex 18: 13 – 26, we see Moses’ father- in law advising Moses to divide the people into small groups for effective administration. This was a means of retaining the people while working, sharing, and growing together. The small group meets the social, physical, and mental needs of the people in the group also sharing burdens can be best achieved when members are in small groups. It is beneficial to members, group and the church.

Jesus spent more time on one to one or in Small Group settings than large ones. The reason for this may be people are saved as individuals, not as a group. The most important rationale or priority behind Small Group concept are the people. The members of Small Groups should study the Bible together, live the scripture, support and pray for one another. In training the disciples, Jesus used the Small Group model, where they listened and gained experience for the ministry (Luke 8). “The Small Group environment provides opportunity for each member to minister to the others in the group, invite their friends and relatives, and learn ministry in a non-threatening

²⁶ Kurt W. Johnson, *Small Groups for the End-Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 74.

²⁷ Bill Hull, *The Disciple-Making Church* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revel, 1999), 245.

setting.”²⁸ Jesus used Small Group model to share spiritual lessons, to impact leadership traits in them.

The Small Group initiative was important to Jesus because the Christian gets his/her formation, development and success. The Christian church and its ministry began with Small Groups. Membership retention may enhance in small group setting.

Small groups and the early Christian church. During the early days, the church was called the “household of faith” (Gal 6:10). They were meeting in homes of believers; they were not allowed to erect church buildings not until AD 313. Acts 12:12 tells us that the church met in the house of Mary, John Mark’s mother. The church converging in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16: 3- 5, 1 Cor 16: 19), the church also met in the house of Nympha (Col 4: 15).

They met to share their resources, daily Bible study, fellowship and prayer. One of the early church fathers, Clement describes a house meeting as: “The Master of the house welcomed us, and led us to a certain apartment, arranged like a theatre and beautifully built. There we found considerable crowds waiting for us, who had come during the night.”²⁹ This concept is not new to the church but it appears nonfunctional in some churches. These groups existed long ago: the prayer Cells, Sabbath School Units and other groups are small groups in the church. These groups stay together help nurture the church membership and the spiritual life of members becomes much stronger.

Consequently, small groups do not just begin its work in the church and the different communities; there must be a vision to drive it in the minds of members. Aubrey Malphurs defines vision as “a clear, challenging picture of the ministry, as

²⁸ Johnson, *Small Groups for the End-Time*, 52.

²⁹ Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches*, 53.

you believe that it can be and must be.”³⁰ This clearly shows that vision is a deliberate act of strategizing for the future. The vision must be clear, specific, have belief in it and must be precise, shared and acceptable by all. God has a vision in His church for all His people through the small group principle.

Sabbath School Worship Service

One of the vital parts of Adventism is the Sabbath Services. The Sabbath according to scriptures (Ex 20: 8 – 11) is a day of rest for God’s people and SDA members celebrate it as sacred. Ellen White says,

The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day; but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.³¹

This clearly shows the Sabbath must be used for rest from hard labor and be of service to Human kind. This can be accomplished through studying the Sabbath School lesson, Praying together and fellowshiping with one another, while the rest of the service is followed by preaching a sermon. The Sabbath school provides for enrichment of members by teaching standards of the Bible, Bible study, prayer, and fellowship enhances retention. Through the studying of these quarterly lessons, praying together and having fellowship with one another nurturing of members takes place.

³⁰ J. D. Payne and John Mark Terry, *Developing a Strategy for Missions (Encountering Mission): A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 194.

³¹ White, *The Desire of Ages*, 207.

Personal Visitation

This term is now called friendship evangelism. It is classified into two, pastoral and lay visitation. This is to establish relationship with members of the same faith and non – members, friends and neighbors with an intent of introducing them to Jesus Christ through visitation. The purpose of visitation according to the SDA Minister’s Handbook, “is not social, is not utilitarian, and is not to prove you have been in every home. The primary purpose of pastoral call must always be spiritual.”³² In other words, it is not a social gathering for merry making, even though it fosters nurturing but it serves as a spiritual vehicle for the members. “In most cultures a home going preacher makes a church going people.”³³

“As someone commented, the road from study to the pulpit runs in and out of houses, hospitals, farms and factories.”³⁴ The gospel bearer must make visitation a priority in order to win the hearts of his flock.

It is the duty of every minister to pay visit to his flocks whether in their homes, farms, hospitals and offices. Ellen G. White also commented,

Remember that a minister’s work does not consist merely in preaching. He is to visit families in their homes, pray with them, and to open to them the scriptures. He who does faithful work outside of the pulpit will accomplish tenfold more than he who confines his labor to the desk.³⁵

Visitation is an essential element in the program of the church.

³² General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook* (Silver Springs, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1997), 162.

³³Ibid., 161.

³⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Handbook*.

³⁵ Ibid., 170.

Cress asserts that, “Every pastor ought to visit the members. Every visit ought not be made by the pastor.”³⁶ Visitation of members should be systematic and expectations of members would be met. For pastoral visitation to be successful, James Cress categorized five methods of visit:

1. Proactive visitation. The board of elders should be divided along with the congregation for regular visit on behalf of the pastoral team. Elders must be in the company of another member.
2. Reactive visitation. “Family crisis such as death, traumatic illness and anointing or unexpected challenges received a higher priority in which elders knew to involve the pastor in the visitation process.”³⁷ More so, in joyous times like wedding preparations, birth and child dedications, graduation celebrations or home dedication. Jesus accomplished more in His ministry at banquet, funerals and social gatherings.
3. “Deactive” visitation. This is when members are emotionally unbalanced and tend to usurp the valuable time of the pastor with lengthy discussion. Matters to be discussed in this instance should be written and handed to the pastor.
4. Creative visitation. This is a personal visit that will create influence contribution to the church. Visiting and praying for government officials and asking members to introduce to the pastor their business associates, neighbors whose influence would impact the church.
5. Instructive visitation. This form of visitation is to “develop people for spiritual growth, preparation for baptism and church membership, pre – marital counseling and leadership development where the church can expand.

Even though the church divides into visitation units, the pastor must prioritize his visit. Those with serious illness at home or in the hospitals should be visited and share God’s word of assurance with them and pray for healing and restoration. When pastor visits family in grief, provides meaningful care than words. Give the family the assurance of Jesus’ return, our home in heaven and God’s final restoration of everything when Jesus returns the second time.

³⁶ James A. Cress, *Common Sense Ministry: Multiplied* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press, 2010), 97.

³⁷Ibid, 98.

Visitation if well-coordinated it will retain more members and make active participants in the service of the church. Chor-Kiat Sim asserts that “Our lives are measured by what we give and how we serve.”³⁸ When the church especially the pastor exhibits the attitude of visitation to both members and non-members, we show concern for one another and also be of service to man.

However, the following nine principles for successful visitation can be of significant help in reaching our members and non-members alike.

1. **Organization:** The church should have a well-planned program for pastoral visitation and the church boards should make it a priority in their monthly/quarterly meetings.
2. **Training:** Ellen White said, “You must educate and train yourselves to visit every family that you can possibly get access to. The results of this work will testify that it is the most profitable work a gospel minister can do.”³⁹ It takes patience, compassion and diligence for members to assist the pastor in visiting new as well as old members. Education is needed by training members for visitation.
3. **Time:** Visitation fails due to poor planning or no hours and energy set aside. The duty of the pastor and elders is to set time for visitation and this should be included in the annual calendar of the church.
4. **Faith:** Members’ faith is increased and strengthened when leaders of the church visit them and meets their spiritual needs. When the church leadership is involved in the visitation program, members grow interest in the activities of the church and their spirituality will grow and deepen.
5. **Holy Spirit:** The church leadership must trust and depend in the work of the Holy Spirit, when members in the congregation gain confidence and see the witness of the Holy Spirit which is the source of our strength in the pastors and elders great miracle will be exhibited.
6. **Commitment:** The hearts of the pastors and elders should be filled with commitment, love, and passion for the sheep of Jesus Christ this will motivate the visiting process of members.
7. **Education:** The saying “you cannot give that which you do not have.” Training in the aspect of pastoral care and spiritual nurture enhance the smooth growth of the church and also membership attendance.

³⁸ Chor-Kiat Sim, “Nine Keys to Successful Visitation,” *Elder’s Digest: Quarterly Resource for leaders*, September 2014, 20.

³⁹ White, *Evangelism*, 442.

8. Back to Basics: The Bible is a great reservoir that helps us on how to care for members. Other materials such as the Spirit of Prophecy and sermons can go a long way in assisting us take care of God's flock.
9. Adequate support: Chor said, "Any successful program requires personnel, strategies and money. Nurturing the strong, and visiting the sick and aging are necessary. Reaching out to new interest and neighbors in the church community requires funds."⁴⁰ The church in should involve in their annual budget for pastoral visits. Pastors should make visitation a priority in the program of the church.

Personal Prayer

It is often said that "a church that prays together stays together." As Kurt puts it, "If Christians are to grow spiritually, or have an effective ministry; they must spend time daily with God."⁴¹ The means of reaching God is by having constant prayer with Him. Prayer "is the life blood of the group."⁴² It bonds the people together, strengthens members for daily life, strengthens relationships, and assists members. Ruth Jacobsen posits, "The church's greatest deficiency is not in programs, strategies, materials or ideas but in prayers."⁴³

Prayer is meant to change the hearts of people and bring them into harmony with God. Members are to find time to pray daily. Members should always put prayer first. An ideal prayer for members is the Lord's Prayer. Members should learn to trust God in all circumstances.

Ellen G. White says, "Trust all with God. The practice of telling our difficulties to others only makes us weak, and brings no strength to them."⁴⁴ Members should endeavor to pray and confess their sins to God. As they talk to Him, it is

⁴⁰ Sim, "Nine Keys to Successful Visitation," 22.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Small Groups for the End-Time*, 67.

⁴² Ibid, 69.

⁴³ Ruth Jacobsen, *The Difference Is Prayer* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1998), 10.

⁴⁴ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1941), 146.

essential to learn to talk and hear from God. Individual and corporate prayers should be encouraged among members. New converts should be informed that their pastor is praying for them.

Among Christians, there are two types of people who pray: those who are looking for answers to their prayers and those who are looking for God. Prayer should have a first place in our lives. In respect of those Christians looking for instant answers to their prayers, it behooves with the promise with God all things are possible, and my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory (Phil 4:19). These sets of Christians think if they say the right words, live the right life, or push the right button, God will grant them their requests. In the other hand, those seeking a closer relationship with God must pray earnestly. These are Christians who need relationship with God.

Morris Venden agrees with the above statement by saying “the primary purpose in prayer is communion with God.”⁴⁵ Prayer in this sense is opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to God.”⁴⁶ Ministers of the gospel should endeavor to teach their members how to pray and for the right purpose.

Benefits of prayer. Watts outlined three major benefits of prayer:

1. “It slows you down. It helps one to check his speed on earthly chores and recommit his life to his maker.
2. It helps one to focus on his/her relationship with God. To be in a positive relationship with someone, you need to spend time with the person, sharing your dreams and activities.

⁴⁵ Dorothy Eaton Watts, *Praying Country: A Tour to the Wonders of Prayer* (Canada: Pacific Press, 1993), 10.

⁴⁶Ibid., 14.

3. It puts balance into your prayer life. Your prayer life shows appreciation and words of admiration and expression of honesty to God.”⁴⁷

“Prayer is everyone’s business. Someone said, ‘You are what you eat,’ in other words, you are what you pray.”⁴⁸ Jesus exhorts us in Matt 6: 5 – 8 not to pray as hypocrites, who wanted to impress others with their prayers and also not as the heathen who use many useless words. God wants us to pray in secret and He hears us there. Our prayers will not change God but changes us. The challenge as Christians is to continue to pray for people and keep eyes open for opportunity to do something good for them and give them spiritual impulses. The goal of prayer is to know God. Through prayer members are being nurtured and retention is made possible for them to practice their new-found faith in God.

Fasting

Fasting means according to Ruth Jacobsen is “to cover the mouth.”⁴⁹ In other words fasting is to cover the entrance or accesses to the body. It can also mean the covering of the eyes and ears of our minds and filter what is taken into the mind. The objective for fasting is for spiritual renewal, guidance, healing and for problem resolution. It also helps to eliminate worldly influences from the mind and gives room for direction and guidance from God.

Fasting is the only spiritual discipline that meets all the conditions of 2Chron 7:14 (NKJV): “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” “I humble myself with fasting

⁴⁷ Watts, *Praying Country: A Tour to the Wonders of Prayer*, 11.

⁴⁸ William R. Paker and ST. John Elaine, *Prayer Can Change Life* (New York, NY: Gunde Posts, 1957), 11.

⁴⁹ Jacobsen, *The Difference Is Prayer*, 19.

(Psalm 35:13), “Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves” (Ezra 8:21). Ellen G. White confirms it by saying “For certain things fasting and prayer are recommended and appropriate. In the hand of God they are a means of cleansing the heart and promoting a receptive frame of mind. We obtain answers to our prayers because we humble our souls before God.”⁵⁰

Reasons for fasting. First, Ruth asserts that fasting provides more time to pray, seek God’s presence, and repent, this is because one is focused on God and concern less about the daily routines. Second, it brings revelation by the Holy Spirit of our true spiritual condition, leading to brokenness, repentance and change, and it allows the Holy Spirit to work in an unusual and powerful way. Third, it brings a new faith and hope, and greater trust. Fourth, it can help one to regain a strong sense of spiritual determination and restore a deeper love for the Lord. Finally, it transforms prayer into a richer, deeper, and more personal experience.

Preaching

Stuart Olyott once said,

God’s word in the world and preaching are intimately linked. Wherever God is at work, preaching flourishes. Wherever preaching is devalued or absent, the cause of God goes through a thin line. The kingdom of God and preaching are like conjoined twins who cannot be separated; they stand or fall together.⁵¹

Preaching in other words should be thus saith the Lord. It should be the undiluted word of God presented to church members for their edification. The 21st century preachers more so with the mega churches, preach what their congregations want to hear. The “thus said the Lord,” has been laid aside while preaching their own words to suit their comfort. Today, sermons are on “prosperity,” “New Year’s success

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, *Letter 73* (Berrien Springs, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1896), 73.

⁵¹ Olyott, *Preaching: Pure and Simple*, 11.

and progress messages,” “get healed,” miracle messages, “victory over your enemies” have been presented to their members.

In nurturing and retaining new members, biblical preaching should be used to re-awaken the soul and rebuke the sin in the lives of God’s children. Amanze defines Biblical preaching as “knowing the idioms, stories, even the minds or thought of the speakers, as well as the time of writing.”⁵² It is further accentuated by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists that preachers must make Bible their prime source but not secondary when it comes to preparing and delivering sermons. They cautioned against private interpretation of Scripture or speculative truth without biblical affirmation.⁵³

A Bible-based sermon that meets the needs of the people, draws them together or nearer to their God. Preach sermons that will alleviate the sufferings of people and meet the various needs. Paul in 2Cor 2: 17, affirms that “Only those who like ourselves are preachers must be men of integrity sent by God, under God’s watchful eye. We are not like those lucksters, and there are many of them – those whose ideas in getting out of the gospel is to make a good living out of it.”⁵⁴ Good sermons will certainly not corrupt the minds of members. The trade of the preacher is to deliver sound Bible – based sermons and liberate his members from the impending doom.

The business of preaching is in the hands of corrupt – free preachers in a bid to edify his members. Ellen G. White makes it clear by saying, “There is danger that ministers who profess to believe present truth will rest satisfied with presenting the

⁵² Philemon O. Amanze, *Preaching the Everlasting Gospel* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Goldfield, 2007), 84.

⁵³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church Ministerial Association., *Seventh-day Adventist Elder’s Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2009), 147.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

theory only, while their own souls do not feel its sanctifying power. Some have not the love of God in the heart, softening, molding, and enabling their lives.”⁵⁵ To be authentic, preachers should speak to themselves before addressing others

A good sermon is to bring good news or to announce good news. In Luke 2: 10, the angel said, “I bring you good tidings.” The word *martureo* (v) means to bear witness to facts. The Samaritan woman uses *martureo* in John 4: 39, to testify. She reported the content of a conversation. John also uses *martureo* in 1John 1: 2 (bear witness). He reported what he had seen and heard.

The word *didasko* means to spell out in concrete terms what the message means as far as living is concerned. Also in Acts 5: 42, we read that the apostles cease not from teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. Paul and Barnabas spent time in Antioch teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. Paul uses his house in Rome for preaching and teaching the word of God (Acts 28:31). Preaching too can be an asset for the church in nurturing and retaining her members. When sermons preached are divinely inspiring and centers on salvation, the members will certainly remain.

Delegation

In the encounter of Jethro with Moses in Exodus 18: 7- 27 produced the principle of delegation. Moses was overwhelmed with work and Jethro told him to delegate. The Apostles solved several problems by delegating responsibilities to others (Acts 16: 1-7). New members should not be left idle; work should be given to them to help them grow in the faith.

George Knowles recommends the following for membership retention:

⁵⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 4 (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1948), 187.

First, visit new members and their families. Second, help new members discover their spiritual gifts and third, divide the members into small groups. In the SDA Churches there are various types of meetings designed to nurture and retain her members. There is the cottage meeting: they meet during the week to have Bible study, prayer, and fellowship and share testimonies. Bible Readings: this emerged at a camp meeting when a heavy storm prevented preaching to go. Doctrinal lessons were presented. Open – Air Meetings: affords the church an opportunity to preach the gospel openly and persons are won to the church.

Social Meetings

Social meetings also play an important role in membership retention this method was early used to help church members share their testimonies and experiences the Lord's blessing. Such experiences encourage new members to go and remain in the faith. A church that meets regularly has the potential of retaining her members. Older members can be empowered, equipped and also being transformed while new members are taken care of and their burdens shared. Burrill holds that social meetings in addition to bible study also augment nurturing of new converts.⁵⁶

I am in agreement with Burrill that social meetings like camp meetings, youth camps and music festivals bring the old and new together and new friendship are been established, even marriage partners meet in these settings and settling of old disputes could be resolved. The church should organize more social meetings for both old and new members in order to nurture and retain the members. For new members to grow spiritually, the Adventist church has suggested seven principles to be followed.

⁵⁶ Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 186.

1. A life of spirit. The Spirit of God not only give birth to new life, He first starts the spiritual growth and helps the new convert to daily work with God (John 14: 17,16:13, Rom 8: 14,2Cor 3: 17, 18).
2. A life of love and unity. A Christian life starts by being reconciled to God and then to one another, for sin had brought separation (Is 59: 2). In Christ there is a reconciliation (2Cor 5: 18). Love is a requirement of any believer for has Christ loved us so we must love one another (John 13:35).
3. A life of study. As food is a basic to sustain the physical life so it is with God's word – it is liken to His word (Heb 4:12) the word equips the Christians with all good virtues for the Christian journey. It is to study daily and regularly (2Tim 3:16, 17).
4. A life of prayer. To know God's way is part of what is needed for spiritual growth. This will be possible only as one has a constant life of communion with God- life of prayer (Luke 18:11, Eph 6:18). Prayer is liken like oxygen for the soul.
5. A life of fruit bearing. A Christian lifer is demonstrated by what the bible called fruit of the spirit (Matt 7:20, Eph 2: 7, 8). It is a life of obedience which is the result of believers' relationship with God. Love is demonstrated in action (John 15: 4).
6. A life of spiritual warfare. The Christian journey is filled with warfare war between good and evil and between Christ's people and the Devil (Eph 6:12and 13, 1 Pet 5:8, 9). A Christian life is both a battle and a march.
7. A life of worship, witness and hope. Christian growth takes place within a community of the redeemed. In other sense, we have community of those without visible body of Christ. This life happens while we are being together with other members"⁵⁷ (Act 2: 42-47). Burrill concurs, and suggests six points on how to retain new members in the church.

New converts need friends. A church must be based on friendship or a relational model to keep new converts in the church. New converts who stay needs to experience high degree of change in their situation the more rapid the change the person undergo in life, the open and receptive the person is to a new orientation of life. This means that conversion involves several changes occurring at the same time.

New converts who stay developed relationship with church member prior to conversion. Most issues of retention of members are based on relationship of persons.

⁵⁷ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook*, 155 – 171.

When new converts have relation with old members of the church this helps them to remain in the church. People without friends often leave.

New converts who stay developed friendship in the church. This often involves becoming active in a small group since it is not easily to be a friend of all the church members. Small group participation is mandatory for any church that is serious about keeping new members

New converts who stay fit in the church are more likely to be in the church if they have a similar socio - economic status as other members. Age group also have an impact, the young can attract the young while the old attract the old

New converts stay when integrated in a group and given a role or task. New members should be given some kind of church duties to keep them involved so that they are able to identify themselves with the church.”⁵⁸

The above points however show that new converts who stay have immense opportunities while they grow spiritually and also live happily with other members. The minister’s manual says, “The most miraculous thing about Pentecost is not that three thousand were baptized in a day but that they continue steadfastly in the Apostle’s doctrine and fellowship (Act 2: 42). With the Holy Spirit’s aid, it is possible to enjoy both quality and quantity in church growth.”⁵⁹This simply shows baptism is not the factor but teaching the members and have fellowship with them is of importance.

In a bid to retain new converts, the church should develop a friendship system with those who are respectful and who care for one another. Paul says, “We then that

⁵⁸ Burrill, *Waking the Dead*, 75 – 83.

⁵⁹ Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *The Minister’s Manual of Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 129.

are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak” (Rom15:1). “This person will act as guidance, sponsor, under shepherd, or as a friend to the new members. This guardian will report to the pastor at least quarterly how the new convert is getting on.”⁶⁰ The church has the authority to choose credible people that can shepherd the new converts and can also instruct them continuously. “As new born babies, desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby” (1Pet 2: 2). So also, new believers are to be dependent on the parental role of the church for their survival.

Assign them some work and let them to be trained on how to witness to their immediate friends and family member the same method was by Christ in Mark 5: 19

James Cress in his books, “You can keep them if you Care,” itemizes three vital elements needed to keep new members in the church:

1. He/she must be able to articulate the doctrine of his/her faith
2. He/she must have friends, 6-8 within the congregation
3. He/she must become involve in meaningful activities.”⁶¹

The church can only keep her members if these new members understand the doctrines of the church and make positive relationship with her members and also be involved in meaningful activities that will enrich their spirituality.

Cress continues with the following strategy, as church baptizes new members in order to keep them in the church:

1. “Build an “Incorporation consciousness”
2. Develop an incorporation structure
3. Provide friendship – building of opportunity

⁶⁰Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *The Minister’s Manual of Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 130..

⁶¹ Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care*, 46.

4. Structure need – meeting ministries
5. Create new roles and task
6. Monitor incorporation results”⁶²

As the church continues to baptize thousands of new converts, the essence is not to fill the church record or to make them members but it is to direct them to the Savior of the world whose redeeming grace is ever sufficient for humankind. It is imperative that the church retains members by developing structured programs that involve these new converts and retention will be enhanced.

Paul in Eph 4: 11- 16 made this assertion that the leaders of the church are to prepare the new members for service by listing the following:

1. -To build up the body (verse 12)
2. -To assist the members in obtaining unity of faith (verse 13)
3. -To assist the body in growing in their understanding of who Jesus is (verse 13)
4. - To become mature members of the body (verse13)
5. - To attain a lifestyle like that of Jesus (verse 13)
6. -To become fully connected to Jesus Christ in all aspects of daily life (verse13).

When Small Groups are formed in the church and place people who have the growth of the church at heart and are willing to nurture new converts, the church will be spirit – filled and more members will be retained in the church. This principle leads us to examine another issue in this project.

Personal Bible Studies

Bible study is vital in the spiritual life of every Christian. Bible study gives Christian trust in God, encouragement to continue to stay and build up their faith. A church with many members giving Bible studies and many seekers receiving the word

⁶²Ibid., 57

indicates a growing church. The SDA Church in its inception held a tent meeting in Lemoore, California. One evening Steven N. Haskell was preaching and a heavy storm interrupted the meeting and prevented the people from hearing the message, so he came down from the podium and began giving Bible studies. Questions like “How were the Holy Scriptures given?” The people read from the Bible and got the answer (2 Tim 3: 16, 2 Peter 1:21). Another question was asked “For what purpose were the scripture written?” The answer again was found in the Bible (2Tim 3: 16, 17). The people were fascinated and really showed concern.

White then had to convene a meeting for all elders and ministers and told them it was God’s plan for the Bible readings came from God. There are many both men and women, who can engage in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God. By this means the word of God has been given to thousand; and the workers are brought into personal contact with people of all nations and tongues.

Ellen G. White says, “Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest.”⁶³ The Bible is brought into families, and its sacred truths come home to conscience. Men are entreated to read, examine and judge for themselves, and they must abide by the responsibility of receiving or rejecting the divine enlightenment. God will not permit this precious work for Him to go unrewarded. God will crown every humble effort made in His name. Church members are missionaries who have been called to teach and educate new converts on how to study the Bible and be in tune with the Lord.

How to prepare for bible study. In preparing Bible study, select a Bible text

⁶³ White, *Evangelism*, 699.

and find good questions for the supposed topic. This can be done in two ways: Stage 1: The leader must thoroughly study and go through the three steps of Bible study, a. Observation, b. Interpretation and c. Application. Stage 2: Develop the questions which will help your friend discover things for himself in the text. Bible study questions preparation is important and few things must be kept in mind:

1. Write down all the questions that cross your mind, and then choose the relevant ones from the list.
2. It is more helpful to explain the context of the Bible verse before asking questions
3. In asking questions in Bible study, one has to be flexible
4. Summarize the content and use it to introduce your interpreting questions.

In conducting Bible study, it is not the sole prerogative for the minister to do it but allow others to render their assistance. Ellen G. White has this to say, “The minister should not feel that it is his duty to do all the talking and all the laboring and all the praying; he should educate helpers in every church. Let different ones take turns in leading the meetings, and in giving Bible readings; in so doing they will be calling into the use the talents which God has given them, and at the same time be receiving a training as workers.”⁶⁴

Members will be fascinated to see them leading and giving Bible study in their homes. It is an easy means of reaching the people with the word of God and as a result enormous growth will be realized. Discovering answers to questions asked from the Bible texts proves rewarding experience for members.

Reasons for studying the bible.

1. The Bible answers your need for love. “For God so love the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3: 16).

⁶⁴ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1941), 62.

2. The Bible answers your need for guidance. “You have known the scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3: 15).
3. The Bible answers our world’s need for peace. “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14: 27).
4. The Bible answers your need for life. I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Summary

The nurturing and retaining process of new converts in the church cannot be over emphasized; this is because it rests solely on the leadership of the church. The leadership can be of great help by providing pastoral care, Bible studies, and pay home visitation to the new converts and as well as the old members, share their burdens by providing if possible and then create programs that will spiritually uplift them to grow in the faith they professed. Prayer is key in this process of nurturing and retaining these hard-earned souls. There would certainly be good number of decent Christians in the church and who are prepared to disciple others for Christ. The process of creating Small Groups in the church will further enhance the closeness and positive relationship of both old and new members. Small Groups make it possible for them to be acquainted as one family.

CHAPTER 4

A STRATEGY TO NURTURE AND RETAIN NEW MEMBERS

This chapter will present a strategy to improve church attendance through various means such as a study of the ministry context, preparation of survey tools, designing of strategy, presentation, evaluation, monitoring and reporting. This first section entails the description of the local setting, demography of the country, political structure of the people, socio-cultural and economic background of FCD and the religious affiliation of the people. The development and distribution of questionnaires, focus group discussions, collection and analysis of data follow. The purpose of this chapter is to develop an appropriate strategy that aids in the implementation of the intervention.

The chapter outlines a salient strategy in an orderly manner to address the existing problem. Nurturing and retaining of new converts joining the church from various religious backgrounds calls for decisive efforts from the leaders and the church in its entirety. Nurturing and retaining of new converts is a very serious challenging task for the process of evangelization and its success. For the church to curb the loss of members, a thorough investigation must be done and solutions be found to reduce the underlying problem.

Project Setting

This section of the project deals with the analysis of the macro and micro setting where the work will be carried out. The macro setting would comprise of the

Freetown (West of the country). The nation of Sierra Leone is made of various ethnic groups, among them are the four major ones: Mende, Temne, Limba and Krio and Freetown is the home of the Krios where the research would be done. The micro setting will comprise the Three Angels' Messages Church and East End SDA Church. The data collected would be carefully analyzed, evaluated and the results would be used for implementation.

Geographical Location

Sierra Leone is a small country on the West Coast of Africa measuring 27,925 square miles (or 73,326 sq km). It is bounded on the West and South–West by the Atlantic Ocean and on the North and North–West by the Republic of Guinea and on the South and South – East by the Republic of Liberia.

The name “Sierra Leone” was derived from a Peninsula Mountain. “A Portuguese sailor, Pedro da Cintra, called this range of mountains “Serra Lyoa” (Lion Range) in 1462.”¹ This name was gradually changed to Sierra Leone by the British and came into being in 1896. Before 1896, it was the mountainous peninsula that was referred to Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone was founded by the British merchant philanthropists as a colony for freed slaves in 1787. “In 1808, this colony became a British territory and its inhabitants, British subjects.”² This simply means that the inhabitants became British protected persons, not British people. There were distinctions between the colony and the protectorate. The protectorate was then sub–divided into provinces, districts and chiefdoms.

Currently, there are three provinces namely, the Eastern, Southern and the Northern Provinces. There are three districts under the Eastern Province namely,

¹ Joe A. D. Alie, *A New History of Sierra Leone* (Malaysia: Macmillan, 2010), 4.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

Kenema, Kono, and Kailahun. Under the Southern Province there are four districts: Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba and Pujehun while the Northern Province has five districts: Bombali, Kambia, Port Loko, Koinadugu, and Tonkolili respectively. Sierra Leone attained her independence from Britain on 27th April, 1961. The Colony was designated the Western Area, where the capital city (Freetown) is located. Sierra Leoneans, though in a small nation are friendly, accommodating, and generous. The country is rich in minerals (Diamonds, Gold, Rutile, and Bauxite etc), fish and fertile lands for agriculture. About sixty percent (60%) of the people are small scale farmers.

Various ethnic groups are found in the country with diverse cultures and traditions. C. Magbaily Fyle says, “There are, in all, in Sierra Leone sixteen ethnic groups. The largest of these is the Mende, found in the Southern and Eastern Provinces. Next to them in number is the Temne in the north.”³ These groups have been divided into three main language categories – Mande, Mel and Others. Under the Mande, we have the Mende, Vai/Gallinas, Kono, Loko, Koranko, Soso, Yalunka and Madingo. The Temne, Sherbro, Kissi, Gola and Krim form part of the Mel group. The Others are the Limba, Krio and Kru. The total population of the country according to the “December 2015 Census report is six million five hundred and eighty eight thousand one hundred and ninety (6,588,190) persons, with fifty one percent women and forty nine percent men.”⁴

The focus of this paper is on the Western Area where the researcher will base his work. The Western Area is made up of the Western Urban and Western Rural. The population of Freetown is one million four hundred and nine thousand (1.409m) persons according to the 2015 Census report. The population is mixed but it is the

³ C. Magbaily Fyle, *The History of Sierra Leone* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Evans Brothers, 2002), 3.

⁴ John S. Kanu and Author, “Statistics Office, Freetown, Sierra Leone,” May 10, 2016.

home of the Krio ethnic group. Because of this mixture there are varied customs, habits and manners.

Demography of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is made up of indigenous population from sixteen ethnic groups. According to the 2015 Census report the current population of Sierra Leone is, “6,588,190 persons. Out of this number 3, 220,150 are current male population (48.9%), 3,368,040 are the current female population (51.1%).”⁵

Age Structures

More so, “2,729,751 are young people under 15 years old (1,354,826 are males/ 1,374,990 are females) 3,557,812 persons are between 15 and 64 years old (1,705,654 are males/ 1,852,159 are females) 238,192 persons are above 64 years old (105,392 are males/ 132,800 are females).”⁶ The major parts of the population are children and youth. Thirty six percent of the population of the country lived in urban areas. The Krio language unites all the different ethnic groups, especially in their trade and interaction with each other.

Freetown: Sierra Leone

Freetown is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the rural area known as the Freetown Peninsula. The historical background, the political structure, economic activities, socio – cultural activities and Demography and religious affiliations of the people will be dealt with in this section of the paper.

Historical background of Freetown. Freetown is the capital and largest city of Sierra Leone. It is a major port city on the Atlantic Ocean located in the Western

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Area of the country. “Freetown is Sierra Leone’s major urban, economic, financial, cultural, educational and political center. Study shows that the city was founded on March 11, 1792 by Lieutenant John Clarkson and African American ex-slaves and freed people called Nova Scotia settlers, who were transported to Sierra Leone by the Sierra Leone Company in 1792. Freetown is the oldest capital to be founded by African Americans.”⁷

The capital city, Freetown is surrounded by many Villages named after the settlements the slaves came from in Europe. Some of these villages are Regent, Bathurst, Goderich, Sussex, Hamilton, Wilberforce, Waterloo, Hastings, Gloucester, etc. Freetown is seat of the government of Sierra Leone, as the city is home to the State House, the House of Parliament and the Supreme Court and the National Stadium.

The population of Freetown is ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse among Muslims and Christians. The city has a significant number of all the country’s ethnic groups, no one single group forms the majority of the city’s population. English is the official language of Sierra Leone, yet the Krio language which originated with the freed slaves who returned to Sierra Leone after the abolition of slavery, is the primary language of communication and widely spoken by all. Sierra Leoneans will be thrilled to hear a visitor use some basic Krio words such as “kusheh” meaning hello, “tenki” – thank you, and “how di bodi” – how are you?

The Freetown Municipality is divided into the East End, Central and the West End. The East End is the most populous of the three regions and it housed the country’s natural harbor named after the Queen Elizabeth II Quay, according to study, it is the largest natural harbor in the continent of Africa. Central Freetown is made up

⁷ Fyle, *The History of Sierra Leone*, 45.

of Downtown Freetown and the Central Business District (CBD) commonly called Central 2.

Most of the important national government buildings and foreign embassies, the principal office of the President on Tower Hill are found in Central Freetown. The historical Cotton Tree, which is at the center of the city, shows it represents the christening of Freetown in 1792. “Connaught hospital was opened in 1922 to replace the Colonial Hospital that was destroyed by fire two years earlier,” is also found in Central Freetown. Nearby the hospital is “King’s Gate” with the inscription which reads “any slave who passes through this gate is declared a free man.”⁸ This gate was used for liberated slaves to pass through. Fourah Bay College (FBC) the oldest university in West Africa is housed on a hill in Freetown.

The first settlers to dwell in the Central District of Freetown are the Lokos who migrated from Regent village. The next group was the Creoles from villages in the mountain rural. The other group that settled are the Fourah Bays whose origin according to study was from Nigeria (basically from the Yoruba clan with names like, Babatunde, Taiwo, Ayodele, etc), majorly Muslims.

The political structure of the people. The polity of Sierra Leone is that power is vested in the president under the country’s constitution who is directly elected by the people. Cabinet ministers are appointed by the president; the ministers are responsible for various government departments and ministries.

Multi party legislative power is vested in an eighty member parliament, both the President and parliamentary terms of reference is for five years. Paramount Chiefs serve in the various Chiefdoms in the districts. The Chief Justice is head of the courts. The Freetown municipality is governed by a Mayor who is directly elected by the

⁸ Alie, *A New History of Sierra Leone*, 204.

residents of Freetown for a period of four years and has executive authority vested in him. He is responsible for the general city management. This position is solely for the Krio ethnic group. The Central region of Freetown is divided into constituencies.

According to the local Chief, Pa Sheku Kamara, “there are three constituencies namely, constituencies 104, 105 and 106. These constituencies are further divided into Wards. Constituency 104 has wards 368, 369 and 370; constituency 105 has wards 371, 372 and 373 while constituency 106 has 376, 377 and 378.”⁹ These constituencies elect their Members of Parliament and Councilors; they run the machinery of the constituencies and Wards. Though the Supreme Court is in the central region of the city, there are tribal heads (Mende Tribal Head, Temne Tribal Head, Limba Tribal Head, and Fula Tribal Head etc.) for each tribe that hails from the provinces and they preside over matters relating to that particular ethnic group.

Economic Value of the People

Subsistence agriculture comprises of the rural economy. Cash crops such as coffee, cocoa, peanuts and tobacco are important as small scale marketing and commodity trade. The country is rich in diamonds, bauxite, rutile, and platinum and gold. The country exports diamonds, gold, bauxite and rutile. The mining sector contributes four percent (4%) of the GDP and is the biggest foreign exchange earners. But sad to say, it is not felt by the general populace due to mismanagement, widespread smuggling and corruption. Sierra Leone’s economy is largely informal, with small scale marketing and trading of basic commodities such as cloth, cigarettes, shoes, pots, pans and mats. Women dominate the market with foodstuffs.

⁹ Pa Sheku Kamara, “Temne Tribal Chief, Mountain Cut, Freetown,” interview by Author, April 10, 2015.

Freetown is the economic and financial base of the country. The national television station and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and in addition to other private owned television and radio stations are based in Central Freetown. The tourism sector has enormous potential and is steadily becoming a major player in the socio-economic development of the country. Lebanese, Indians, and Fulas play a major role in the trade of the country and majority of them are based in the city of Freetown. On the streets of the city one will find so many youth hanging around due to the high rate of unemployment in the country. Self-employment has been created for the youth by involving in commercial motor bike riding commonly known as “Okada” in a bid to earn their living.

Freetown offers both international and national cuisine. Rice is the staple food for Sierra Leone. Without exaggeration a Sierra Leonean would say, “If I haven’t eaten rice today, then I haven’t eaten.”¹⁰ They eat variety of fruits, sea foods, potatoes, cassava etc, but these are considered as “snacks” and not “real food.” Real food is rice, prepared in numerous ways and accompanied by a variety of sauces made from some combination of cassava leaves, potato leaves, groundnut soup, ‘binch’ (beans) with beef, hot pepper, okra, eggplant, onions, tomatoes, chicken and fish.

Along the streets of Central Freetown, one can find fresh ripened fruits, including pineapples, mangoes of different varieties, pawpaw (papaya), banana, plantain (raw or roasted), cassava (raw or roasted), small bags of popcorn or peanuts, skewers of grilled meat or shrimp and oranges from market women, situated outside of the main supermarkets and big stores.

Local bars sell “poyo” the sweet, lightly fermented palm wine tapped from palm trees. Poyo bars can be areas of informal debate and conversation among men.

There are taboos in certain villages against eating certain foods. It is either attributed to someone's ancestor or the founder of the village. "Violation of such taboo is usually seen as a risky proposition and can incur the ill feelings of would-be guardian either living or dead."¹¹

Food and Customs at Ceremonies

Ceremonial occasions such as wedding, funerals, initiations and memorial services call for the preparation of large dishes of rice, distributed to invitees. Depending on the occasion, a portion may be offered to the ancestor's honor in the corners of a house or in his former room. More so, the "Mende Muslim will mark a burial ceremony with "lehweh," a ball of rice flour mixed with water and sugar serve with kola nut on top. Sierra Leoneans value kola nuts highly and are "often associated with greetings, diplomacy, provisions of respect, religious rites and initiation ceremonies. Kola nuts are also used as stimulants, a clothing dye and in the preparation of medicines."¹²

The Socio-Cultural Activities of the People

Culture is from the German word "kultur" meaning "to develop or grow," it helps to understand human similarities and differences from society to society."¹³ Freetown is made up of an astonishing diversity of ethnic groups mentioned above and has a wide range of other nationalities who are also residents in Freetown contributing to growing the ethnic diversity and a growing economy. English is the

¹⁰ Janet Cole, "Economic Value of the People," *Every Culture*, accessed July 6, 2016, <http://www-everyculture.com/sa-Th/Sierraleone/htm>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ B. M. Howell and J. W. Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 27.

official language of Sierra Leone but regular use limited to literate minority. It is the Krio which was originated with the freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area that is the lingua franca. Krio is widely spoken in Freetown. The people of Freetown have a unique blend of cultural traditions. “They are vibrant, exuberant and expressive people and their cultural values, traditions and belief systems are widely practiced and respected. The people of Freetown have a variety of food, flamboyant clothing, jewelry, handmade crafts, lively festivals and the performing arts are expressions of this colorful society.”¹⁴

Rituals and ceremonies are performed by different groups at different times, including ‘secret societies.’ These so called secret societies are hugely secretive and members (men and women have separate societies) obey a strict code of conduct.

During ceremonies dances are performed like the Limba - Gbangbani, the Mende -wunde and the Temne - Rabai. They use “Sangbori” (drum) to dance and entertain visitors, poro or bondo drums accompany by balangi (xylophone), the kora, fifaru and sangbei.¹⁵

The average Sierra Leonean drinks much palm wine commonly described as the drink that comes “from God to man.” It comes fresh from the palm trees; palm wine is a natural and cheap low – alcohol drink. For non – alcoholic refreshment is from coconut water served from the shell sold on every corner of major streets in Freetown.

Marriage, Family and Kinship

Marriage to the Sierra Leoneans is a mark of adulthood that brings prestige and honor to the bride and groom. Bride price is often given the prospective bride and her family. This money could be found by the groom and or support from the father.

¹⁴ Janet Cole, “Culture of the People,” *Every Culture*, accessed June 6, 2016, <http://www.everyculture.com/sa-Th/Sierra.Leone/htm>.

¹⁵Ibid, 2.

All marriages are arranged between families. The basic household structure is an extended family. Many households are polygynous in nature, where a husband has more than one wife. The senior and first wife has authority over the “junior wives” in training and organizing them into a functional unit. In the urban and Christian setting monogamy is practiced. Sierra Leoneans love children and larger households. This system of having larger household is to accumulate wealth by creating large labor pool and bride price for its daughters during marriages.

Death and After Life

Depending on the region, religious burial customs vary, yet they have a firm conviction in the existence of God and the spirit world. More so, one’s deceased ancestors intervene in the activities of everyday life. Sacrifice, ritual remembrance and prayer are made in order to enlist ancestor’s support and good favor.

However, the development of Adventism in the country is seen in the subsequent paragraphs.

Religious Affiliation of the People

This section of the work will discuss the religious background of the people. The people are religiously inclined and belong to one religious group or the other which includes: African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam and Christianity.

Traditionalists (ATR). The population of Sierra Leone accounts for “thirty percent (30%) of indigenous religious beliefs.” These indigenous religious practitioners are able to mediate with the spirit world. These include diviners, healers, and men’s society such as the *poro*, women’s society such as the *bondo* and witchcraft specialists. Water is often considered especially important and many rituals are done near the edges of lakes, rivers and streams. “Religion was related to the worship of one god through objects believed to have mystical powers given by

God.”¹⁶ They mediate through these objects such as trees, stones and carved structures. “These objects serve different aspects of life; some for wars, sickness but each village had its main emblem.”¹⁷

There are many citizens practicing a mixture of Islam and traditional indigenous religious beliefs or Christianity and traditional indigenous beliefs. These diviners sometimes inflict their victims with mysterious acts and even caused death and other related damages.

Additionally, the city seems to have two main religions (Islam and Christianity), majority of their members are in the indigenous religious beliefs. This is because many still believe that mystical power does exist with the unseen world. Others visit these media for supernatural powers to guide and protect them from witchcraft, and other unseen evil spirits.

Islam. Islam is the largest religion in Sierra Leone. “Statistics for Islam estimate a Muslim population of representing sixty percent of the country’s population. The Temnes are the main tribe in the north and are predominantly Muslim.”¹⁸

Sierra Leone is a leading example of religious tolerance. Muslims and Christians live side by side and intermarry and children typically learn both Muslim and Christian prayers in government schools. Almost each major ethnic group in central Freetown has a mosque called by the tribe, (Mende mosque, Temne mosque, Fourah Bay Central mosque, Limba mosque, Mandingo mosque, Fullah town mosque and Soso mosque).” The first mosque that was erected is the Fullah town mosque in

¹⁶ Fyle, *The History of Sierra Leone*, 8.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸ Mohamed Basiru Sillah, “Muslim Population,” *Muslim Population*, accessed April 8, 2016, <http://www.muslimpopulation.com/Africa/sl/islaminsierraleone>.

the 1830s.”¹⁹ Currently, there are more mosques than churches in the central city of Freetown. The Muslim population is steadily increasing due to high birth rate and conversion, from other religions to Islam. This shows how proliferated the Muslims are in Freetown and the country as a whole.

Interestingly, one good platform enjoyed by the entire populace is the religious tolerance, as stated earlier, as you ply the streets of Freetown, minibuses conveying passengers to their different destinations bear slogans like these, “Allah is One,” “Trust in Allah,” “Jesus Never fails.” Hassan Kargbo, a Muslim, is one of the Sierra Leoneans who have been known as “Chrismus.” He identifies himself as a Muslim and also believes in Christianity. Before he starts work on Sunday, he goes to church and visits the mosque every day. He says, “All of us say it is the same God that we’re worshipping.” Kelfala Conteh, a caretaker of the oldest mosque in Freetown, says, “of course Christians come here.” “We have Christians and Muslims praying side by side. No fighting. Jesus was the messenger to tell the people to worship one God. I respect him after Muhammad. I believe in the Bible and the Koran.”²⁰ Marriage across sectarian lines is common, and is referred to as conversion.

Currently, in the development strides of the nation, many schools have been established, radio stations and medical facilities being provided by Muslims. The vast majority of Sierra Leonean Muslims are Sunni. The level of religious tolerance in Freetown shows how the various denominations are losing members either to other churches or Islam. Churches are losing members to Islam and the Adventist church is not an exception.

Christianity. Christians make up ten (10%) percent of the country’s

¹⁹ Admin, “People Culture,” *Welcome to Sierra Leone*, accessed May 6, 2016, <http://www.welcometosierraleonesl/saleinpage/people-culture>.

²⁰ Sillah, “Muslim Population.”

population. Early seventeenth century, the European Christian Missionaries came to Sierra Leone but it was not easy for them to spread the gospel due to limited funds and lack of experience. In 1605, Father Balthasar Barreira was sent to Sierra Leone by the Catholic Church. He was the first missionary to Sierra Leone.

The work was met with stiffed resistance from Muslim clerics and he bitterly commented, “One of the greatest impediments to conversion is that there are already in this region Africans from other parts, who take upon themselves to spread the teachings of Muhammad.”²¹ This shows how the Islam had first penetrated the country and spread to west. The next to follow the Catholic Missionary were the Baptist Missionary Society led by Jacob Grigg and James Rodway in 1795. These too did not thrive due to illness. Then followed the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) led by Reverend C. L. Hansel in 1833.

The Maroons from Jamaica are the third group to settle in Freetown, and “the seat of the St. John Maroon Church was built in 1820.”²² The St. George’s Cathedral’s “foundation was laid by Governor McCarthy in 1817 and construction was complete eleven years (1828) later over budget and time.”²³ These churches are still in existence today and have contributed immensely to the growth of education, medical and infrastructural development not only in the city but the entire nation. In and around the Central District are many churches that have been established. Among them are the Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Aladura, Catholics, Wesleyans and many Charismatic and Pentecostal churches.

²¹ Alie, *A New History of Sierra Leone*, 102.

²² Admin, “Heritage and Historical Site,” *Visit Sierra Leone*, accessed May 29, 2016, [http://www.visitsierraleone.org/heritage and historicalsite.htm](http://www.visitsierraleone.org/heritage%20and%20historicalsite.htm).

²³ Ibid.

The vast majority of Sierra Leonean Christians are Protestants, of which the largest are Methodists and Evangelicals. Other Protestant denominations in the city include Presbyterians, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists and Lutherans. Catholics are the largest non-Protestant Christians division in Sierra Leone and form about five percent of the city population. The Jehovah Witness, Anglicans, Latter-day Saints form a small community of the population. A Christian can go to church on Sunday and still make a sacrifice to the ancestors for good fortune. Christianity in Sierra Leone is flexible and accommodating.

Historical Analysis of SDA Church in Sierra Leone

The development of Adventism began with people from other regions of the world who commenced the work of preaching to Sierra Leoneans. “The first ever known Adventist to preach in Sierra Leone was J. M. Hyatt, a Negro American layman, who arrived in Freetown in 1905 from the Gold Coast now Ghana where he had been since 1903. He began work by holding prayer meetings in his home and also by distributing papers.”²⁴

Moreover, “David C. Babcock and his wife were appointed to West Africa at the General Conference held in 1905. In Sierra Leone, the Babcocks lived for a time in the home of J. M. Hyatt. In 1906, W. N. Lewis and his wife (American Missionary couple) joined the Babcocks and opened a day school, enrollment rapidly increased to 125 pupils that academic year.”²⁵ This shows Adventism entered the country early and a school was already established to assist the new converts working as missionaries and their children and wards. In 1907 a series of six-week Bible Tent

²⁴ Don F Neufeld, “History of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sierra Leone,” in *The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1966), 1192.

²⁵Ibid.

Meetings were conducted in Freetown which drew about 1,600 attendants to the program every night, resulting to an opening of a thirty-one-member church.

Among the first converts were African Anglican ministers—L. W. Browne, and C. E. F. Thompson from Jamaica, and R. P. Daulphin and I. W. Harding. These new converts later embraced evangelism thrust per their background as former ministers to established churches at Waterloo, Bonthe Sherbro, Matotoka and Kpangbama.²⁶ This clearly shows that Adventism was brought by Missionaries to Sierra Leone and it spread in the various regions of the country as it is today.

Early Organization of Adventist Church and its Growth

In December 1913, the Sierra Leone Mission was organized under the European Division with E. W. Myers as the first President. In 1932, it became known as the Sierra Leone Union Mission with J. Gronett as President. At that time the Mission had four churches and 282 members. Three years later it became a detached Mission under the Northern European Division.

During the World War II the Waterloo Mission compound was taken over and used as a military base. The workers then were Scandinavian missionaries working in a British colony, due to the war all left and J. J. Hyde a British took over the mantle of leadership as President of the Sierra Leone Mission. Presently, the work has expanded to nine of the twelve political districts. The western urban and Peninsula area have four church districts, the northern region has seven church districts and the southern region has four church districts. The total membership is nine thousand one hundred eighty two members according to the last membership audit, including seven ordained

²⁶ Ibid., 1193.

ministers and thirteen evangelists. The church has entered two of the major groups (Mende and Temne) with a small presence in Kono.

Description of the Project Site

This study of “Membership Nurture and Retention” is focused on the Western Area of the country bearing the Krio minority. This exercise shall be carried out in the FCD of SDA comprising two organized churches and two companies. The names of the two organized churches are TAM SDA Church situated at Circular road, center of Freetown and East End SDA Church situated at Ross road, east of Freetown. The two companies are Visions for Life situated at Regent Street and Present Truth situated at Dworzark in the south of Freetown.

Historical Background of the Selected Churches

The first established and organized church in the country is the Three Angels’ Messages (TAM) which is located on Circular road and the East End church which was borne out of the Three Angels’ Messages church, is situated along Ross road in the east of the city. These churches form the basis for my study.

Brief history of TAM church. The first Adventist preacher to preach in Freetown was J. M. Hyatt, a Negro American layman. The church he established is the TAM located on Circular road in Central Freetown opposite the Circular road cemetery. The first converts to be baptized were L. W. Browne, C. E. F. Thompson, R. P. Daulphin and I. W. Harding, an Anglican minister. These new converts were trained and sent to various districts, Browne was sent to Waterloo, Thompson went to Bonthe Sherbro, in the south of the country, Daulphin went to Matotoka in the north of the country and I. W. Harding went to Kpangbama in the mende speaking district of the south.

The TAM church was the first church to be established and organized in Freetown and Sierra Leone as a country by the early Missionaries, it was commonly known as “Saturday Church.” Study showed that the early missionaries came in 1895 but due to the outbreak of malaria that killed the missionaries they had to return to America.

Ten years later in 1905, these missionaries returned and built the first church (a wooden structure) which was miraculously burnt down in December 1985. This church was rebuilt and rededicated to the glory of God by Pastor J. J. Nortey the then Africa Indian Ocean Division (AID) President now West Central Africa Division (WAD) with Headquarters in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. It was a church for aristocrats, Krio by descent. For many years missionaries served as pastors in this church until late 1990s when the indigenes took over. There are many churches in this community; among them are the Baptist, Anglican, Methodist, Pentecostal and a good number of Charismatic churches.

Brief history of East End SDA church. An evangelistic campaign was conducted by late Pastor Jonathan A. B. Palmer where a crop of members were won and this church was established called East End Seventh-day Adventist and it has been in existence for a good number of years. The members then met and worshipped in Bishop Johnson Memorial Secondary School (BJMSS) operated by the Anglican Diocese of Freetown for a long period. It is located on Fourah Bay road, a busy street in Freetown. Until mid-2000s when the government of Sierra Leone issued a communique that all churches worshipping in schools must leave and find a place. This church was re- located to John F. Kennedy primary school (a private owned school) along the main motor highway. The church bought a piece of land along Ross road from a devout Muslim and built the current edifice that house God’s people for

worship.

This church in the district is among a high density of Muslim population. The Muslims are engrossed in secret societies, marrying more than one wife, live and enjoy frivolous lives and business (trade) is their main occupation. Despite the many campaigns (national and international) conducted in this church, the more evangelistic meetings, and the number of the members keeps dropping. It is on this note that the researcher wants to develop a strategy on how to stop members leaving the church.

Letter of Permission

After having a fruitful discussion with the Mission administration on the project proposal, a letter of permission was sent to the chairman of the Executive committee of the Mission (Appendix A) and also a copy was given to the district pastor.

Problem Statement of the Project

The SDA Church has been in existence in Sierra Leone for some time now. There have been numerous evangelistic campaigns being conducted by national and International evangelists, souls are being baptized but these members lost unnoticed from the churches. This gives the researcher the cause to delve into this research. The problem of members to be retained in the church has caused considerable loss and it has hinged on evangelism so much so that investing in it is a mere waste.

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine why new converts drop out of the church no sooner they are baptized. The causes could be there is no proper preparation of baptismal candidates before and after baptism. Also, it appears that the old members seem to be unfriendly. As a result of the above problem and causes, the topic under consideration appears that no researcher within the SDA Church in Sierra

Leone has yet to examine the outflows of new converts immediately after they are being baptized.

Comparison of Membership Loss for Both Churches

Table 1 below shows the rate of new converts leaving the church as soon as they are baptized. We will compare the membership of the two selected churches for a period of five years.

Table 1. Membership of TAM and East End Churches 2011-2015

Year	TAM Church				East End Church			
	Membership	Baptism	Loss	Present	Membership	Baptism	Loss	Present
2011	145	57	37	165	58	15	10	63
2012	165	38	25	178	63	10	18	55
2013	178	0	9	169	55	0	0	55
2014	169	15	16	168	55	5	4	56
2015	169	28	15	182	56	14	8	61

The data was collected from the Mission secretariat. The above table shows a decline in the membership for both churches in the district. The more the baptisms the more members are leaving the church unnoticed. Reasons for this will be the researcher's findings.

Research Design

The designing of the research for the project will cover the type of research, rationale for selecting of research method, appropriateness of the study and population sampling and instrumentation will be considered in this section of the project.

Type of Research

This research will use mixed method (qualitative and quantitative). The qualitative data describes the responses derived from focus group while quantitative

data will use numbers. The focus groups discussions conducted and the preparation of questionnaires are for the purpose of this research.

Rationale for Selection of the Research Method

The rationale for selecting this mixed method is that not all the respondents will be able to express themselves in writing good English. More so, it will be prudent for the researcher to use the common medium (Krio) for clearer and better understanding. And for the literate people even though busy the questionnaires will be relevant to them.

Appropriateness of the Study

The two churches in the FCD for the survey are in the same church region even though far apart, it is advantageous to use the questionnaire approach and focus group for the study.

Population Sample

The total membership for both selected churches stands at two hundred and forty three (243), with TAM having one hundred and eighty two members (182), and East End church has a membership of sixty one members (61). The fifty prepared questionnaires covered all age range for former members. Eight members from each church comprised of each focus group and this involved for church officers: elders, youth leaders, women leaders, men leaders, children departmental leaders, church clerk, deacons, Sabbath School superintendent and lay members. This was so because these members or church officers involved form the nucleus of the church and should be in a good position to provide the right answers.

Instrumentation

For this research, two instruments were used in the field. Fifty questionnaires will be prepared for fifty backsliders (Appendix B). There were seventeen questions administered and analyzed. And the focus group discussion questions were ten in all (Appendix C), these questionnaires and focus group questions were for both churches in the selected district.

Development of Questionnaires

The questionnaires were developed in relation to the biblical and theological basis of the study and the writings of Ellen G. White and the researcher's personal reflection on the topic. The questionnaires were developed focusing on members who had left the church. Fifty questionnaires were developed to gather general information from respondents (backsliders).

Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaires and responses from the focus groups was analyzed and addressed such outcomes appropriately. The reason is to ascertain why members leave the church and oral discussion by the focus groups was carried out on July 15, 2015 for the TA M Church and on July 22, 2015 for East End church. Only thirty-four questionnaires were returned.

Data Collection Procedures

Fifty questionnaires were administered and thirty-four were collected. Collection of questionnaires began on June 8, 2015 and completed on July 10, 2015. This was accomplished with the assistance of four youths (Robert A. Conteh, Gershon A. Blackie, Margaret K. Gbla and Daniel Kamara), and discussion questions were

also prepared for two focus groups with eight existing church members of the two selected churches in the district were conducted by the researcher.

Focus Groups

Questions are prepared in the form of discussion will be conducted to two groups of church member in the district. The discussion questions will be administered to the first group in TAM church and this comprises of two elders, two deacons, two youth leaders and two Sabbath school discussion leaders. The next focus group in the East End Church includes: one lay man, one lay woman, two deaconesses, two children ministries departmental leaders, one church clerk and one Sabbath school superintendent. Data collected will be analyzed in the subsequent chapter to know why new converts leave the church.

Presentation and Description of Findings

The findings of this project were tabulated, figures shown and in addition, responses gathered from the focus groups are presented in this section.

Evaluation of the Project

The researcher will collect data for evaluation in the respective churches. The findings will be shared with the Executive Committee members of the Mission, the FCD board. Questions of this nature will be of relevance, “Did the strategy work adequately?” “Did we achieve our desired goal?” “Resources used were they adequate?”

The evaluation serves as measure for the success of the project. It also helps to show whether we realize our achievements of the project in relation to the specific objectives. This demands the utilization of the various tools in the survey, the questionnaires, focus group discussions, and contributors engaged for the success of

the project. The final evaluation will indicate the percentage of membership increase or retained in the churches.

Designing of the Intervention

Over the centuries, Matthew 28: 18 -20 has been the church's Great Commission to a dying world in a bid to redeem it by making disciples. In order to check and control of members leaving the church, this project is undertaking a strategy to curb the underlining problem. The main aim of this project is to develop and implement a strategy to improve membership nurture and retention in the churches. To accomplish this, five major outputs will be made by this project. They are: (i) permission from the Mission (ii) Focus Groups discussion (iii) Seminar materials produced (iv) seminars conducted (v) Monitoring and evaluation concluded.

This project implementation will run from January through December 2015. In the first quarter of the year permission will be received, focus groups discussion will be conducted in the first quarter of the year, materials will be developed from the Bible, Ellen G. White's writings, and other Christian authors in the second quarter of the year and seminars will be conducted in the fourth quarter of the year. Monitoring, evaluation, summary and recommendations will be carried out in the fourth quarter of the year.

Strategy

For every project to thrive one has to think it carefully. Malphurs has it that, "It is one thing to make a strategy and another to implement. Strategies often die due to lack of implementation."²⁷ Strategies can best be utilized when the intended purpose is accomplished. Strategy is defined according to the Advanced English

²⁷ Audrey Malphurs, *Advancing Strategic Planning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 175.

Dictionary “as an elaborate and systematic plan.” In other words, a strategy is a plan used for getting the required result. A strategy could be short or long term depending on the goals and objectives of the project. Strategy depicts the goal and implementation to be carried out with the fundamental principles on how to accomplish the goal of the project.

A Christian strategist depends on God for success. God is the Master planner and we are the channels needed to succeed in His Mission and He has everything it takes for His mission on earth to triumph. Paul in Phil 4: 13 states, “He can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Strategy for the planner is an attempt anticipating the way God is leading and it is a means of communicating to other Christians the way we think and acts.

D. J. Robb says, “Effective strategy is composed of a clearly defined purpose, measurable goal, making progress toward fulfillment of the purpose, and practical action plans as to how we will go about attaining our goals to make accomplishment of the overall purpose possible.”²⁸ There are various principles to be used for nurturing and retaining members that could be used by the church, but for the sake of this project, the researcher will concentrate on three of the principles studied in Chapter three in order to enhance the spiritual nurture and retention of church members. These are: Visitation, Bible Study and Small Groups formation.

Visitation for the minister and his members is necessary to let them know that the church cares. Visitation as earlier discussed is associated with problems. Problem such as the distance to be covered might be long more so for larger churches and distance away from each other.

²⁸ John D. Robb, *Focus: The Power of People Group Thinking* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1987), 52.

The church that wants to nurture and retain her members should plan with the various organizations of the church (AMO, AWM, and AYM) for visitation. The churches after the training organized her members, “Special groups include evangelistic interests, spiritually discouraged, the sick, grieving, beginning marriages, failing marriages, new parents, and parents whose children are leaving home,”²⁹ were visited using the trained members.

The church needs to train and encourage members to always visit fellow church members both old and new. The members were encouraged to contact the pastor for special occasions such as:

1. Before going to hospital
2. When a baby is born
3. When there is death in the family
4. When there is prolong reaction to grief
5. Before giving up on marriage
6. When spiritually depressed

The church should create a friendly atmosphere for both old and new members to relate so that friendship can ensue nurture of church members. Another method in the strategy the researcher will implement is small group ministry. Small Groups are another means of nurturing and bringing new members into the church. A Small Group may be defined as “a group of not less than four or more than fifteen persons who come together, usually in a church or home, to share in fellowship, Bible study, and prayer.”³⁰ The Home fellowship group, Sabbath School units and outreach

²⁹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, *General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook*, 162.

³⁰ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook*, 122.

groups, Prayer Group, Support group and Bible study group are examples of Small Groups. As Ellen White states, “If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, not to work only for the church members but for unbelievers also.”³¹ Small group is the life wire of any church. The cells make up the life in the body, so if the cells die the entire body dies.

The purpose of Small Group Ministry is to create a family bond within the larger Christian community that meets the needs of its members. It is a tool for the church to feel accepted irrespective of the color, race or religious background. Because the group is small, it gives them the opportunity of learning and sharing a meaningful worship and Bible study and help them realize a positive spiritual experience. The main duties of Small Group are to share, study, pray and minister to one another.

Another vital tool for the church in nurturing and retaining members is Bible Study. Sad to say most churches have neglected the studying of the Bible, without it the church cannot know Jesus’ words, His way of ministry, His character and life experience. The church should encourage members to study the Bible. It is God’s infallible word, perfect and pure (Prov 30: 5- 6). It is not only infallible but inerrant. The church members should be students of the Bible.

Again, God’s word is complete and it is for man’s salvation. God’s word is the only source for divine authority and for His church. Studying God’s word is totally sufficient for all our needs. Christians can be totally secured in the Lord by studying the Bible because it is God’s plan for His church. The church that stops conducting Bible studies has completely stop nurturing members and the retention process ceased. E. D. Hirsch writes, “To be culturally literate is to possess the basic

³¹ White, *Evangelism*, 115.

information needed to thrive in the modern world.”³² This informs us about the various arts like music, philosophy, literature and many more.

Another reason why Bible study is important is for personal edification. The word of God is edifying for Bible believing Christians but more so for those faced with life challenges, moral choices and situations that are applicable to the modern man. “It is not only for intellectual purpose but for personal level.”³³ It is also useful to help others in living a transformed life. The church should study the word of God in order to know Jesus and His ministry and also to know God better. Finally, the Bible tells us, “Watch your life and doctrine closely” (1 Tim 4: 16 NIV).

Activities to be Carried Out

During the second quarter of the 2015 of the project, permission will be requested from the Sierra Leone Mission, focus group discussion will be carried out, result from questionnaires to backsliders and data collected will be analyzed. In the second quarter of the same year materials on membership nurture and retention were developed from both the O. T. and N. T. of the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy and other Christian writers. Seminars will be conducted for the church members and materials prepared on membership nurturing and retention will be distributed to the selected groups. The third quarter of the same year, the output of the various activities will be monitored, evaluated, and make summaries and recommendations.

Production of Training Materials

By the end of the second quarter of 2015, the training materials will be produced. Theological principles on membership nurture and retention will be used to

³² E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy* (Boston Burr Ridge, IL: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 13.

³³ Raul Ries, “Bible Study,” *Bible Study Tools*, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible>.

teach. These principles will be taken from the Bible, writings of Ellen G. White and other Christian writers.

Training of Elders and Church Members

Seminars were conducted for the two organized churches involving the elders and church members in the third quarter of 2015. These elders in turn served as trainers (TOT) for their various churches. In the third quarter of 2015, the church members will be grouped and information on how to nurture and retain members in the church will be shared.

Teaching Materials in the Churches

By the fourth quarter of 2015 each church will have received the training materials. The weekends (preferably Sabbaths and Sundays) will be set aside for training of the facilitators and church members.

Expected Outcome of the Project

The following is expected at the end of the project:

1. The churches will be informed on the process of nurturing and retaining new members
2. Leaders of the churches will show commitment and interest in the nurturing of new members
3. Church attendance will increase to 15 percent and members' spirituality would have improved.

Evaluation of the Project

The researcher will collect data for evaluation in the respective churches. It is important to carry out the evaluation; it serves as a measure for the success of the project. And it also helps to show whether we realize our achievement of the project in relation to the specific objectives.

Reporting of the Findings

The researcher will report his findings to the Sierra Leone Mission of SDA Church and also to the local churches where the survey will be conducted for further studies.

Limitations

1. Funds for the project was inadequate
2. Fifty questionnaires were distributed only thirty-four were retrieved which did not give more information needed by the researcher.
3. The analyzed data confirmed that the existing problem is in the church and as such the church and Mission need more intervention to curb it.
4. The changing of officers in church election disrupt program implementation
5. Culture plays a major setback in the running of the church program

Summary

This chapter deals extensively with the strategy needed in the process of nurture and retention of members. The project setting shows where the research will be conducted. The demography of the people showing the age structures, political structure of how they are being governed, the varieties of food and the economic value of the people. These people have different ceremonies conducted during funerals, weddings, initiations and memorial services.

The socio-cultural activities of the people depict the warmth of them. Also, they are conscious of the Divine, Islam, Christianity and representation of indigenous religious beliefs. However, the expanse of Adventism in Sierra Leone through Missionaries brought the organization of the church. The project in question was designed showing the strategy of how to curb the loss of new converts and increase members' attendance to church.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The theological and biblical basis, the writings Ellen G. White and other literature review indicated that it is essential for new converts to be nurtured and retained in the church. As a minister of the gospel and having worked in various departments of the church for some time now, there is a loss of new converts from the church immediately they are baptized.

This chapter gives the description of the intervention which includes project preparation, project implementation (before, during and after through seminars, and sermons). The report for the project implementation covering the various stages of Membership nurture and retention in the FCD will be discussed. In this chapter the researcher will prepare for the project implementation, the participants used the activities for the program implementation like the seminar conducted for the facilitators, the results of the focus groups and responses from the questionnaires.

Preparation for the Project Implementation

To accomplish the project on Membership nurture and retention in the FCD, the researcher continued by undertaking some activities, such a proposal discussed with the Sierra Leone Mission administrative committee, and a letter to the chairman of the Executive Committee, the two churches boards through the district pastor of the F.C. D., Focus Groups (eight members each group) discussions carried out, questionnaire to fifty backsliding members was administered and seminar materials

were developed, conducted, monitored. The participants in the project were church members and former members. The underlined activities were carried out as planned; and were accomplished and completed.

Letter of Approval

The commencing stage in the implementation of this project was the approval granted (see Appendix A) by the Sierra Leone Mission of SDA Church and the Church boards to carry out the project. Immediately the researcher received the approval, a meeting was convened with the TAM church board on Sunday, April 26, 2015 and had consultation with them and informing them of the project. Also, the researcher met with the East End Church board on Sunday, May 10, 2015 and intimated them about the project; both boards were delighted and were willing to give the necessary support and assist in implementing the project.

Project Budget

The total sum budgeted for the project was Le 3,000,000.00 (1US\$=Le 6,000).

Table 2. Project Budget

Item	Amount in Leones
Stationery	400,000.00
Typing and Printing of Questionnaires	300,000.00
Typing Facilitator Handout	300,000.00
Transport	500,000.00
Refreshments	600,000.00
Monitoring and Evaluation Exercises	350,000.00
Recharge Cards (Units)	350,000.00
Miscellaneous	200,000.00
TOTAL	3,000,000.00

Participants

The members involved were church members (Elders, youth, Children's Ministries leaders, superintendents, deacons, Sabbath School discussion leaders and deaconesses, men and women). More so, the District Pastor and Mission Personal Ministries Director were involved. The designed program for nurture and retention was reviewed and materials were distributed for the commencement of the seminar. During the first session, the researcher met with the members of TAM SDA Church, Circular road on May 16 – 17, 2015. And the next session I met with the members of East End SDA Church on May 30 -31, 2015. Two more sessions were conducted in the two venues (TAM and East End churches) on June 13- 14 and July 4 - 5, 2015.

More so, in the discussion with the church members the researcher discovered that the nurturing programs in the church are the Sabbath School, which starts at 8:45am and ends at 10:40am and the divine service commences at 11:00am through 12pm. Also, they had mid – week prayer meetings every Wednesday of the week (17:30pm – 18:30pm). Other nurturing programs are the Adventist Women's meetings, choir meetings, Adventist Youth and Adventist Men's Organization meetings.

Activities for the Project Implementation

The training of the twelve members including elders who will serve as the trainers of trainees (TOTs) was conducted, also in attendance were church board members, the youth, Children leaders and Sabbath School leaders was conducted on two sessions at the TAM SDA church, Circular road, Freetown on May 16 - 17, 2015 and June 13 -14, 2015 respectively.

Week 1

Day 1. Time: 3pm – 4: 30pm; Topic: Christian Leadership; Facilitator: M. S.

Koroma (1 Tim 3: 2 -7, Josh 1:8, Mark 9: 35, John 3:30, Appendix C).

Day 2. Time: 9am – 11:30am; Topic: Christian Marriage; Facilitator: J. T.

Moiba (Gen 2: 22-24, Prov 5: 18-19, Prov 12: 4, Eph 5: 22- 23, etc.; see Appendix C).

This first session was conducted for the participants stated above at the TAM Church on the Sabbath of May 16, 2015 after divine service with thirty persons in attendance. It showed the role of a Christian leader in the church and how to shepherd the flock of God. It was an interactive session with questions from the participants and responses from experienced elders. The session ended with a closing prayer offered by Elder P. A. Kamara.

On Sunday, May 17, 2015, the session commenced at 9am. Twenty persons were in attendance. Twenty minutes devotion was given by the researcher. Topic dealt with was Christian Marriage. This session was conducted by Pastor John T. Moiba (District Pastor). It was a spirit - filled session with questions and answers given by experienced married couples. The seminar ended at 11:30am and the closing prayer offered by a female youth.

Week 2

Day 3. Time: 2:30pm – 4:30pm; Topic: Pastoral Care; Facilitator: M. S.

Koroma (Acts 20: 28, 1 Cor 1: 4, Rom 12: 4 – 21, Appendix C).

On June 13, 2015, immediately after the divine service, the seminar on Pastoral Care commenced at the same venue and forty two members were in attendance showing the role of the elders in leading the church and caring for one another. The district pastor of FCD conducted this seminar for both churches at TAM.

Day 4. Time: 9 am – 11am; Topic: Visitation; Facilitator: M. S. Koroma

(James 5: 14, Job 2:11, 2Kings 13:14, Appendix C). #

The seminar was in two phases. The first phase was for first elders, and church officers. The second phase was for both elders and church members. Thirty persons were in attendance in the first session, and forty three persons were in attendance in the second session. It was observed that the work is not only for the pastor but for everyone and it must be undertaken by all. It ended with a commitment and a prayer offered in that regard by the district pastor.

Purpose of the Training

The purpose of the training is:

1. To provide leadership with biblical techniques on nurturing and retaining of members
2. To encourage church leaders of their roles in caring for new converts in the church
3. To help every member to grow spiritually in Christ.

Intervention

The intervention for the focus groups was done in the two selected churches in the district, using eight members from each church and on June 5, 2015 for the TAM Church and on June 12, 2015 for East End Church. Questions were discussed and responses given are recorded in this research

Findings of Focus Group Discussions

The first group discussion was at the TAM Church on June 5, 2015. This group comprised two elders, two deacons, two youth leaders and two Sabbath School discussion leaders. The following are the responses:

1. What are some of the reasons why so many people leave the church after baptism?
 - a. Lack of follow- up on new members by the church
 - b. People do not fully understand the doctrines before baptism

- c. There is no thorough teaching before baptism
 - d. Neglect from the existing old members
 - e. Failed expectations of new members when they entered the church
 - f. The love, concern and warmth enjoyed during evangelistic campaign are no longer experienced
 - g. Unfriendly atmosphere and no encouragement from members
 - h. Lack of visitation
 - i. Preaching of salvation messages rather than prosperity messages
 - j. Lack of proper and attractive programs
 - k. Worship style is cold and boring and devoid of drum beating and dancing
2. What are some of the weaknesses in the preparation of candidates for baptism?
- a. Members compromised their faith in order to win them.
 - b. They are unfamiliar with the Adventist doctrines due to no proper nurture.
 - c. Duration in preparing the candidates is too short and candidates are not thoroughly grounded before baptism.
3. More people leaving the church, is it because of cultural practices?
- a. New converts leave the church due to the prevailing cultural practices they once involved in.
 - b. They cannot wear jewelry.
 - c. No memorial services conducted for their late relatives.
 - d. No observance of other festivals like Christmas celebration, they prefer to leave and rejoin their former faith.
4. After baptism, is there something the church could do to help members stay in the church?
- a. It is learnt visitation must be a priority if nurturing and retaining of new members will be made possible.
 - b. There should be followed – up programs
 - c. Effective Bible Studies
 - d. Concern should be shown for them at any time they are absent, sick or otherwise.

5. Do you think marrying non – Adventist is a cause for members to leave the church? Are there ways we can remedy this situation?
 - a. It is observed that women of marriageable age leave the church when they fail to find husbands in the church.
 - b. Married women must join the faith of the husband
 - c. Ways to remedy the situation are as follows: Organize seminars on marriage and other programs related to marriage and about its importance, the choice of partner, the required standards, qualities, virtues, and values and promote these in the church. Continue education in the church for the youth (especially female youth) to see the need why one should not marry a non-Adventist.

6. Is the church manual being followed in a consistent manner in matters of discipline?
 - a. The church manual is not available in most of the homes.
 - b. The manual should be taught regularly in the church.
 - c. No disciplinary action has been taken in the church for a long period of time, if at all it is effective for the less privilege and then silent for the affluence and well placed in society.

The next focus group discussion was at the East End SDA Church on June 12, 2015. This group comprised of two women, two men, two Deaconesses, two children ministries leaders, one church clerk, and one Sabbath School Superintendent.

The following responses were gathered from the group:

1. What are some of the reasons why so many people leave the church after baptism?
 - a. Lack of a residence pastor and there is no church activity besides the normal church service.
 - b. The old members look lukewarm and lack of follow- up program.
 - c. The spirit of giving and caring for one another is lacking.
 - d. Members do work on Saturday and youth attend classes on Sabbath.
 - e. Unfulfilled expectations from new members.
 - f. Old members do not encourage new ones and as such they feel isolated and leave.

2. What are some of the weaknesses in the preparation of candidates for baptism?

- a. It was learnt that candidates are not properly grounded in church doctrine before baptism.
 - b. Some are being forced to baptize for obvious reasons.
 - c. Lack of baptismal manual and materials used are not suitable and spirit filled
 - d. Time constraints, the demand of working and attending classes on Sabbath.
3. After baptism, is there something the church could do to help members stay in church?
- a. Visitation must be a priority for the church.
 - b. Assist the less privileged with their education.
 - c. Involve new members in church activities.
 - d. Conduct seminars on marriage for singles and as well as for married couples.
 - e. The church needs sound and spirit - filled sermons.
4. Do you think marrying a non-Adventist is one of the causes for members to leave the church?
- a. Yes, it is observed that it is one of the major causes.
 - b. Couples should be educated before contracting marriage in the Adventist Church.
5. Is the church manual being followed in a consistent manner in matters of discipline?
- a. It was also observed that the manual is followed consistently in matters of discipline by the leadership.
 - b. Church Manual is not taught for the uneducated to grasp current issues.
 - c. Most church members lack the Manual in their homes.
 - d. There should be church Manual week in the annual calendar programs of the church.

From the findings, it is observed that new members leave due to various reasons. The lack of a residence pastor and no thorough pastoral care and visitation are major causes why new members leave the church.

Responses from Questionnaires

Questionnaires were designed and administered to fifty former members who got baptized over the years to check why they had to leave the church after some time. The researcher consulted with both church clerks for membership records where the researcher was able to randomly select fifty names and addresses of former church members with the help of six youths and then visited each home and administered the questionnaires. Only thirty-four respondents turned in their questionnaires. The tables below explain the responses of the thirty-four former members who left the churches for various reasons. Some of the questions are based on personal views of the respondents and while others are simply yes or no.

Analysis of Findings

Out of the thirty-four respondents fourteen are males which make up 41.2 percent of the response and twenty are females which represents 58.8 percent of the study. This show the respondents are more of women.

Table 3. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	14	41.2
Female	20	58.8

Out of the thirty-four respondents two were primary school holders which represent 5.8 percent of the study, fourteen respondents were secondary school holders which represent 41.1 percent of the study, and six respondents were college/university degree holders which represent 17.6 percent and other respondents were twelve representing 35.2 of the study. Table 4 shows there are more secondary level than any other categories.

Table 4. Level of Education

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	2	5.8
Secondary	14	41.1
College/University	6	17.6
Others	12	35.2

Out of the thirty-four respondents eight are within the range of twenty and thirty years which represent 23.5 percent of the study, ten are within the range of thirty-one and forty years which represents 29.4 percent of the study, four are within the range of forty one and fifty years representing 11.8 percent of the study. Six are within the range of fifty-one and sixty years representing 17.6 percent of the study and six are within the range of sixty years and above representing 17.6 percent of the study.

Table 5. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
21 – 30	8	23.5
31 – 40	10	29.4
41 – 50	4	11.8
51 – 60	6	17.6
61 and above	6	17.6

Out of the thirty-four respondents were singles representing 23.5 percent, eighteen were married representing 52.9 percent, four were separated representing 11.8 percent, none divorced and four were widows representing 11.8 percent of the study. Table 6 shows more married couples responded to the questionnaire.

Table 6. Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	8	23.5
Married	18	52.9
Separated	4	11.8
Widow	4	11.8

Out of thirty-four respondents who were invited twelve of them were friends representing 35.2 percent, six were relatives representing 17.6 percent, eight were church members representing 23.5 percent and eight no one invited them to the evangelistic meetings representing 23.5 percent of the study. Table 7 shows that more friends were invited to the campaigns.

Table 7. Invitees to the Evangelistic Meetings

Invitation	Frequency	Percentage
Friend	12	35.2
Relative	6	17.6
Church Member	8	23.5
No One	8	23.5

Out of the thirty-four respondents that attended the evangelistic meetings eighteen went for one week representing 52.9 percent and sixteen attended for two weeks representing 47.1 percent of the study. Table 8 shows those that attended only one week are the majority.

Table 8. Number of Days Attended the Evangelistic Campaign

Number of days attended	Frequency	Percentage
One week	18	52.9
Two weeks	16	47.1

Out of the thirty-four respondents that made the decision for baptizing, twenty six answered yes which represents 76.5 percent and eight said no which represent 23.5 percent of the study. Table 9 shows those who willingly decided to be baptized are in the majority.

Table 9. Decision Made to be Baptized

Decision made to be baptized	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	26	76.5
No	8	23.5

Out of the thirty-four respondents that took the vow before baptism, twenty said yes representing 82.4 percent and six said no representing 17.6 percent of the study. Table 10 shows that those who answered yes to the vows are in majority.

Table 10. Number of People Who Took the Baptismal Vow

No. of people who took the vow	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	82.4
No	6	17.6

Out of the thirty-four respondents twenty said yes they understood the vows well and that represent 58.8 percent and fourteen said no, they did not understand the vows and it represents 41.2 percent of the study. Table 11 shows those who understood the vows are more.

Table 11. Number of Persons Who Understood the Baptismal Vows

Number of persons who understood the baptismal vows	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	58.8
No	14	41.2

Out of the thirty-four respondents all were baptized representing 100 percent of the study. Out of thirty-four respondents who were presented with a Bible, twenty-eight said yes representing 82.4 percent and six said no representing 17.6 percent of the study. The table shows twenty-eight respondents received Bibles.

Table 12. Number of Persons Presented with a Bible

No. of persons presented with a Bible	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	82.4
No	6	17.6

Out of thirty-four respondents thirty answered yes that the church members were friendly to them and this represents 88.2 percent and four answered the members were not friendly to them which represent 11.8 percent of the total study. The table shows that thirty respondents were shown friendly attitude.

Table 13. Friendliness of Church Members to New Converts

Friendliness to new members	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	88.2
No	4	11.8

Out of the thirty-four respondents one attended church service only one week and another one attended two weeks representing 2.9 percent, eighteen attended one month representing 52.9 percent and twelve attended one year represent 35.3 percent of the study. Table 14 shows that only eighteen respondents attended church service for one month.

Table 14. The Number of Times the New Converts Attended Church After Baptism

No. of times attended church service	Frequency	Percentage
One week	1	2.9
Two weeks	1	2.9
One month	18	52.9
One year	12	35.3

Out of the thirty-four respondents eight were visited by the church Pastor and another eight by the First Elder which represents 23.5 percent and no member visited them and eighteen said no one from the church paid them visit this represents 52.9 percent of the total study. The table above shows eighteen respondents did not receive any pastoral care from either the pastor, elder nor the members.

Table 15. Pastoral Care Received

No. of Visitation paid	Frequency	Percentage
Pastor	8	23.5
Elder	8	23.5
Church Member	Nil	Nil
None	18	52.9

Out of the thirty-four respondents six answered yes that they had problems with church members representing 17.6 percent and twenty eight answered no representing 82.4 percent of the total study. The table above shows twenty eight respondents encountered problem in the church.

Table 16. Problem Encountered by New Members

No. of new members that had problem with the church	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	17.6
No	28	82.4

Reasons given for leaving the church by the respondents are as follows:

1. Strong Catholic influence
2. Relocation of families where there is no Adventist presence
3. Change of job to new locality
4. In search of business to places with no Adventist presence
5. Threat from the husbands
6. Lack of pastoral care
7. Strong Muslim influence
8. Unresolved conflicts with church members
9. Work demands on Sabbaths
10. Core subjects/courses taken on Sabbaths

Out of thirty-four respondents eighteen answered yes that they are willing to return to church for service representing six percent while 52.9 answered no representing 47.1 percent of the study. The table above indicates that eighteen of the respondents show interest of coming back to church.

Table 17. Possibility of Coming Back to Church

Possibility of coming back to church	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	52.9
No	16	47.1

The various reasons given by these former members really showed that these selected churches for the project lack pastoral care, no love, and cultural norms have already discouraged the new converts.

However, the intervention of this research has paved the way for the leaders of the churches to embark on visitation, Bible study every Sabbath and also the

attendance of members at mid-week prayer meetings, vespers and church attendance have improved.

Muslim Background Converts Retention and Intervention Program

From observation one of the reasons why Muslim Background Converts (MBCs) leave the church after conversion is that often times they are left to keep their theological baggage. There is no debriefing and de-theologizing. The result is that they are hunted by the feeling that they have made a wrong decision by abandoning their faith for that which does not explain their questions. When an MBC comes into the church there is the need to take them through the doctrines on which Muslims have serious question, so that in clear terms they will come to understand what the Bible says about such subjects. One other thing that makes MBCs to return to Islam is the isolation they feel when they newly joined the church. In most cases they lose their families and friends, and they cannot find substitute for their loss. This creates a gap that must be filled up in order for them not to go back. For this, a seminar is recommended. The third challenge is the challenge of threat to their lives.

Upon conversion to Christianity an MBC becomes an endangered person. Many a times the danger is based on the deep conviction of the families and friends that a family member or friend has become apostate and should be treated as one according to Islamic injunction.

Interventions

However, due to the strong Islamic influence in the community of the FCD and also in the church, an intervention was carried out to curb the loss of new converts especially those with Islamic background leaving the church undetected. Seminars were conducted for church officers and members on how to de – theologize

members coming with Muslim background. The aim of this intervention is to correct the erroneous beliefs they hold over the years about the Son ship and Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Christian Church. Topics such as the Divinity of Christ, Trinity, Judgment, Health and Wellness were discussed. Friendship seminar was also conducted to fill in the gap left when MBCs are being baptized. Due to the busy schedules of members, the seminars were conducted during the week ends.

Activities Carried Out

On August 6, 2016, a lecture was carried out at TAM Church at 3pm for both churches. There were twenty-five persons in attendance. Among these were the District Pastor, church elders, board members and some lay members. The session started with an open prayer offered by one female youth. The topic for discussion was the Divinity of Christ (see Appendix C). The researcher was the facilitator. At the end of the session questions were entertained and answers were given. We came to the realization that Jesus while He was on earth was both fully man and fully God and is truly one hundred percent God.

The following Sunday August 7, 2016, another lecture was carried out in TAM Church at 10:30am. Fifteen persons were in attendance. The session commenced with a short devotion led by the District Pastor (John T. Moiba). The lead facilitator was one of the trained elders (J. A. Leigh), topic discussed was ‘The Body Temple’ (see Appendix C). To the Muslim, health is of essence and to hear a lecture discussing on how to take care of one’s body is a significant milestone in winning them to Christ. This session also ended with questions and answers. Closing prayer offered by the researcher.

On August 13, 2016, the third lecture took place immediately after the divine service in the East End Church for the two selected churches in the FCD Twenty two

persons attended. Bro. Robert A. Conteh was the facilitator and the topic discussed was the Judgment (see Appendix C). A Muslim cleric was invited to throw light on the above topic. It is glaringly stated in the Quran that God will certainly judge this world. Good people will be rewarded with eternal life in heaven while the wicked will be burnt in hell fire. If both religions would agree on such pertinent topic, then it is appropriate to evangelize our Muslim brethren and endeavor to retain them in the church. The facilitator closed with a prayer of unity.

Fill in-Gap Friendship Seminar

Reason for the seminar – rejection and unfriendly behaviors when Muslims get converted into Christianity they lose not only their friends, they also lose their families. Such MBCs often become lonely and sometimes ostracized by their families. The implication is that the pressure of the ostracism often leads the people back to Islam as they are not able to withstand the challenges of isolation and loneliness. So in view of this, this seminar is focused on the old members and it was a day seminar.

How to make Friends with Muslims

This seminar (Appendix M) will help you to understand the background and culture of Islam, offering practical steps on how to start a friendship conversation with Muslim friends. Also, it will help to share the message of Christ with them in a way that allows follow – up for later discussion.

In Arabic the word for “Friend” is “Awlyaa” and it has four literal meanings:

1. Allies, 2. Friends, 3. Guardians, and 4. Companions:

O Ye who believe. Take the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors; they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them for friendship is of them. Verily Allah guided not a people unjust” (Quran 5:51).

Islam does not prohibit personal friendship with Christians or any other people but prohibits forming alliance with Christians. Muslims are allowed to form alliance with Allah.”¹ This clearly shows that Muslims are approachable and can be friendly. Islam also gives room for Muslims to be friends of Christians. “You may take a disbeliever as a companion, a friend can be your neighbor, workmate, classmate or friend who is a brother in faith” (Surah 4: 36).

A Muslim man can also marry a Christian woman. Also some of the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) are from among the blessed ones. Friendship with disbelievers is permitted (Surah 5: 15, 3: 199, 3: 113 – 114).

The first step in making friendship with Muslims is to pray. The next step is to warmly welcome him or her and introduce him or her by someone else. This way they will quickly trust you because you are their friend’s friend.

Visit and Hospitality

1. Go out on your own and seek Muslim friend
2. Pay them visit at appropriate times
3. Never refuse tea or food offer to you
4. Invite him or her to your home. Many Muslims never get inside the homes of Christians
5. Observe his or her hospitality and be sure to extend the same kindness to them when they visit you in your home
6. Get their cellphone numbers and email addresses (if any) and share good tidings with them.

It is important to note that you are out for friendship not on a “ministry project.” Let him or her be able to sense your sincerity that you want his or her friendship. Be patient. It takes time to cultivate a solid friendship.

¹ Admin, “Friendship,” *Answering Christ*, accessed July 28, 2016, <http://www.answering.christ.com/friend.htm>.

Moreover, be sure to be consistent in calling and visiting your friend. He or she may not reciprocate by visiting you in your home due to culture but be sure to visit him or her in their homes.

Besides, dress decently and moderately. For men dress casually and for women wear long skirt, or blouse that covers the hip and arms. “Be careful not to be too friendly to her husband or his wife as the case may be, for them not to think you are romantically interested in him or her. Muslim cultures are very circumspect about interaction between the genders.”² Lastly, learn more about the religion of Islam by asking pertinent questions and read books relating to Islam.

Sharing Jesus Christ to Muslims

1. Take opportunities to share about your relationship with Jesus in your own testimony and experience. Be sure to extend an invitation to know Jesus Christ personally
2. Feel free to pray for him/her, for their families when they are sick, as he/she probably knows of Jesus as the prophet who heals
3. Avoid arguing over theology; emphasize the relationship you have with God. Do not drop your friendship just because he/she seems closed to the gospel
4. Share related materials like Adventist magazines, books, and tracts that will enhance their quest for Christ
5. Treat all Muslims with kindness, courtesy and respect.

Finally, this form of friendship evangelism seminar should be conducted at least twice a year. First session during the first half of the calendar year and the second half during the second half of the year in a bid to nurture not only the old members but also members with Muslim background.

² Admin, “Islam and Christianity Relations,” *Christian Answer*, <http://www.christiananswer.net/q-eden/muslim.htm>.

Relocation for Security and Empowerment Project

MBCs and the Fear of Persecution

Both the Qur'an and the Hadith are eloquently loud enough on what kind of punishment is to be meted to the apostates. For example:

Quran (4:89):

They wish that you should reject faith as they reject faith, and then you would be equal; therefore take not to yourselves friends of them, until they emigrate in the way of God; then, if they turn their backs, take them, and slay them wherever you find them; take not to yourselves any one of them as friend or helper.

Verse 4:65 says that those who have faith are in "full submission" to Muhammad's teachings. This verse explains what should happen to Muslims who do not have faith.

Quran (9:11-12):

But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then are they are your brethren in religion. We detail our revelations for a people who have knowledge. And if they break their pledges after their treaty (hath been made with you) and assail your religion, then fight the heads of disbelief - Lo! They have no binding oaths - in order that they may desist.

Other verses that seem to support the many Hadith (is the second most authoritative source of authority in Islam) that establish the death sentence for apostates are Quran 2:108, 217, Quran 4:137, Quran 5:54, Quran 9:66, 73-74, Quran 88:21, 23-24.

The texts above suggest that apostasy deserves coercion and severe punishment and those apostates are damned. Clearly, it seems established that Islam authorizes capital punishment for defectors. It is for this that MBCs are not safe around other Muslims when they convert to Christianity or any other religion. And this is the reason why missionaries and mission leaders have to think about interventions that could keep MBCs safe when they accept Christ.

Safety run. In the face of the clear punitive provisions from both the Qur'an and Hadiths, it appears the only way to gain safety is by what could be called safety run. Safety run will amount to escape from the people and location of danger. It will mean relocation of the MBCs to a place that seems safer for the persons whose lives are threatened.

The location. An important consideration for safe-run is the location, where does an MBC run to; this is one serious question that must be answered if the safety that is sought is to be achieved. Obviously, if a safe location will be decided, there are some specific things to look into.

1. Is the location close to any relative or friend who belongs to Islam?
2. Is the location of close proximity to the place of conversion?
3. Is the location predominantly Islamic?
4. Is the location under Sharia law?
5. Is the location a place where the MBCs can find something to do?
6. Does the location have the presence of faith-family members?
7. Have there been cases of Islamic terrorism or killing?

Until these questions are answered positively, decision should not be made to relocate such MBCs to the place. It obviously will not be safe to send an MBC to where the persecutors will have a quick link to the MBC, or a place of close vicinity. It is not safe to take an MBC to a place that is predominantly Islamic, under sharia, a place where the threatened will not have circle of friends around him/her, or a place where the killing of non-Muslims will constantly traumatize the MBC.

Safety and empowerment program. One of the other things to think about is the safety and empowerment program where skills acquisition is made available for people, and MBCs can partake and have a safe haven.

Skills available.

1. Fashion design
2. Masonry
3. Carpentry, furniture and Joinery
4. Cookery and dietetic
5. Computer training
6. Entrepreneurial skill acquisition

Funding.

1. Take-off grant to be sourced through ADRA or other relief agencies.
2. Proceeds from the products from the center for the maintenance.

Modality. Allowance system from proceed to candidates.

While the MBCs get to such centers, they pick up a training skill like any other person, the identity is not revealed and he/she lives like ordinary skill acquisition participant. The allowance from the institute will be essential for the survival, so that the MBCs do not become a liability to the church or any member.

As the MBC becomes settled, kind gestures should be discreetly sent to his/her people, for example, if he/she has something to send to his/her family, he or she can send it through another person to their family or friends. Experiences show when that is done over time, the families and friends soften up on the persecution and they seek to accept the person back and the persecution is over. It is important to note that invitational gestures should not be easily jumped at. Time should be taken to test the genuineness of the gestures.

Population Sample

The population of the study covered two churches in the district. Twenty members both current and former members were selected for the purpose of data collection.

Collection of Data

The questionnaires were distributed to twenty selected MBCs who are currently in the church and those who had left the church with the assistance of four youths. Data collection for this study was done by the use of quantitative research procedure. By this the data collected were analyzed through simple percentage procedure.

Analysis of Findings

Table 18 shows that 40 percent of the respondents were male while 60 percent were female. This is an indication that more female responded to the questionnaire. The table above shows that more female responded to the questionnaire.

Table 18. Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	8	40%
Female	12	60%
Total	20	100%

Table 19 shows that 45 percent of the respondents are between the ages of 20 and 40 years while 30 percent are between the ages of 41 and 60 years while 25 percent are between the ages of 61 years and above. This indicates that more young people responded to the questionnaire.

Table 19. Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 40	9	45%
41 – 60	6	30%
61 and above	5	25%

Table 20 shows that 25 percent of the respondents were baptized between the years of 1990 and 2000, while 30 percent were baptized between the years of 2001 and 2010 and while 45 percent of the respondents were baptized in the year 2011 and above.

Table 20. Date of Baptism

Date of Baptism	Frequency	Percentage
1990 – 2000	5	25%
2001 – 2010	6	30%
2011 and above	9	45%

Table 21 shows that 40 percent of the respondents were in search of the truth while 60 percent were in search for true worship. This shows the quest for the word of God.

Table 21. Circumstances Leading to Acceptance of the Adventist Faith

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Search for truth	8	40%
True Worship	12	60%
Total	20	100%

Table 22 shows 50 percent of the respondents experienced Bible – teachings while another 50 percent experienced the need for Jesus Christ. This clearly indicates the urge for thorough study of the Bible in order to better understand the Adventist doctrines as well as the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Table 22. Experiences That Further Re-Enforced Commitment to Stay in the Church

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Bible - based teachings	10	50%
The need for Christ	10	50%
Total	20	100%

Table 23 shows 30 percent of the respondents were shown a friendly, accommodating and welcoming attitude while 70 percent of the respondents experienced cold and unfriendly attitude. This indicates the church’s attitude toward her converts is not favorable.

Table 23. Attitude of Church Members Toward MBCs

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Friendly, accommodating and welcoming	6	30%
Cold, unfriendly manner	14	70%
Total	20	100%

Table 24 shows that 40 percent of the respondents experienced opposition, discrimination and fear in the hands of their former faith while 60 percent experienced dismemberment from their family and the former faith. This shows MBCs faced numerous challenges from their former faith and must be shown love and be friendly to them.

Table 24. Challenges Faced from the Former Faith

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Opposition, discrimination, fear and judgmental statement	8	40%
Dismemberment	12	60%
Total	20	100%

Table 25 shows 55 percent of the respondents expected the church members to exhibit love, care and regular home visitation while 45 percent expected regular Bible study. This shows the church over the years has not been intentional in caring not only for the MBCs but even for the regular members.

Table 25. Expectation of MBCs

Expectation	Frequency	Percentage
Love, care, regular visitation	11	55%
Regular Bible study	9	45%
Total	20	100%

Table 26 shows 40 percent of the respondents stayed in church because of sound Bible sermons and rich Christian songs while 60 percent left due to no healthy programs and lack of friendship being exhibited by church members.

Table 26. Activities that Necessitate MBCs to Stay in or Discouraged Them to Leave the Faith

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Sound Bible sermons and rich Christian songs	8	40%
No healthy programs and friendship	12	60%
Total	20	100%

Table 27 shows that 100 percent of the respondents comment that the church should teach the word of God, visit, show care for her members and have programs that will enhance nurture and retention of members.

Table 27. Activities to Increase, Nurture, and Retain MBCs

Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Regular Bible study, home visitation and pastoral care and healthy church programs	20	100%
Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	20	100%

Outcome of the Project

First, there are regular Bible studies going on every Sabbath in both churches. Second is the establishment of fifteen small groups in TAM Church and three small groups at the East End SDA Church. Third, the elders and church members are now willing to visit old and new members on a regular basis. Finally, the young people have seen the need to marry their Adventist brothers and sisters.

Post Implementation Stage

The entire project was for one calendar year commencing from January 2015 through December 2015. The post implementation passed by for a period of six months, January 2016 through June 2016. Both the researcher and the facilitators monitored the project. In a bid to fast track the monitoring process, I usually made phone calls to the church elders and other facilitators.

Monitoring. The monitoring aspect was carried out from the commencement of the project to the end. The trained elders and the District Pastor were mandated to monitor the various activities of the selected churches in the district from time to time.

Initial evaluation. It was revealed that church programs like Bible study, visitation, and pastoral care were lacking in these churches and as such new members leave after baptism. More so, due to coldness of old members towards new members, it was also discovered that is another reason why new members leave.

Project Report to the Mission and Local Churches

It is good to appreciate the work of elders and other facilitators when a project of this nature has been carried out. The report will be made to the following:

Sierra Leone Mission

The Mission granted the researcher the permission to carry out the survey and as such an official document was presented to the current officers and shared with them my recommendations.

Three Angels' Messages SDA Church

A copy of this document was given to the church leadership for assisting the researcher to carry out the survey in their church and also shared with them my recommendations.

East End SDA Church

Moreover, a copy of the document was handed to the church leadership for their unflinching support render the researcher during the period of the research and also shares with them my recommendations.

Summary

This chapter deals with the project implementation strategy. It ranges from the preparation for the project, approval, project budget, participants that were involved in the process and activities that were carried out for the smooth flow of the implementation. There were weekly seminars and the interventions that were also conducted, Focus Group discussions and questionnaires gathered were analyzed.

Besides, the Muslim Background Converts plan on how to retain after baptism in the church. The various activities carried out in order to make them feel belonging

through seminars conducted and sharing Christ with them. The relocation of MBCs to safe and secure places and project to empower them for self-dependence. A survey was carried out and analyzed. The outcome of the project which involve the post implementation stage, monitoring, evaluation and reporting to the higher entities of the church.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION, SUMMARY, LESSONS LEARNED, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a model ministry program for membership nurture and retention in the FCD of SDA Church in the Sierra Leone Mission. The implementation of the program will contribute immensely to the increase of membership attendance. The chapters of this project would be summarized by the researcher for easy reading. Also, lessons learned would be presented. Moreover, recommendations would be shared to the SDA Mission, FCD and the two Churches about the outcome of the work. The researcher would provide and submit the conclusion of the project to the Sierra Leone Mission, the district and the two churches for future study on how to increase membership nurture and retention in the churches.

Project Evaluation

The project was implemented and evaluated and the goals for the study were attained. Basic elements that were expected to be improved by this project include:

1. To improve attendance to church activities using small groups
2. To improve their spiritual affinity to God and His church through Bible study
3. To create a community relationship among the members empowering visitation and care – giving through small groups
4. To enhance their prayer life through the church organized activities.

There will be at least one evaluation at the end of the year for the MBCs. This is to encourage the congregations to be more welcoming to new MBCs and also to expose the church on how to mentor new MBCs.

These elements were worked into the program conducted bearing in mind the social and religious background of the host communities for the two churches. The Muslims have a community life approach, pray at stipulated intervals, and are trained to recite their readings regularly. These were some of the elements in their background they felt is lacking in the church.

Project Goals

The goals meant for the project were realized. First, the programs organized afforded the members the opportunity to attend to church activities. The programs afforded the opportunity for them to experience community and relationship enhancement. During observation through the program, attendance improved up to 30%. It is hope that consistent follow – up activities will increase attendance further.

Second, the Bible study program created a platform for them to know more about Christ and His ministry and many of their questions answered. They were able to know more as against what they formerly believed in. The program produced the understanding of the scriptures and has improved their faith in God.

Third, considering the fact that most of the converts are coming from the Islamic fold, it becomes evident that small groups will be an effective approach for nurture and retention. This approach has enhanced relationship and care- giving among the groups established. Members in the group care for each other through visitations and praying for themselves.

Fourth, the prayer life of the people has been empowered. The members having been taught that prayer is not regulated but to follow Bible method – “pray

without ceasing” (1 Thess 5: 17). This is now evident in their lives as members come to church for quiet prayer moments.

Evidence of Project Actualization

After implementation of the project it was evaluated. Since the project ended and evaluation was carried out in September 2016, the small group activities continued. The number of small groups at TAM Church has increased from five to fifteen. There is a regular Bible study going on and the spiritual life of the people has also increased.

The second Church (East End) has its groups (three in number) activities but has not increase rather the groups have about twenty prospects studying in their groups. Second, the church has been a house of prayer as attendance to prayer programs has increased to thirty percent (30%). Relationship has been enhanced.

The team that assisted the researcher in carrying out the evaluation is the district elder (Jonathan A. Leigh), TAM church elder (Wilphred S. Taylor), East End church elder (Mustapha Koroma), Youth leader (Bro. Robert Conteh) and the District Pastor (John T. Moiba). They also coordinated the formation of the small groups and the researcher did the analysis.

Summary

Chapter 1 of this project described the ministry context. In the FCD of the SDA Church, baptisms are often conducted but more of the new members are seen leaving the church unnoticed. This has created coldness in evangelistic activities and church attendance among members. In a bid to increase membership attendance, a strategy for membership nurture and retention would be used. This is stated in the statement of the problem and statement of the purpose. Also considered in this chapter

were the justification, delimitations, methodology of the study, expectations and definitions of terms.

Chapter 2 made use of the biblical and theological basis for membership nurture and retention and how to effectively embark on church attendance. The writings of Ellen G. White on the topic in question were also considered. This further established that nurture and retention are biblical for the church in this century.

Chapter 3 considered literature review. Books from Adventist authors, other Christian writers, articles and journals on membership nurture and retention were reviewed. These various views were to enhance church attendance.

Chapter 4 dealt with the ministry context study for both macro and micro and the strategy used for the project implementation. The macro included the districts in Sierra Leone and the Freetown environs while the micro included the central region of Freetown and the two local churches (TAM and East End). Questionnaires were developed and distributed and focus group discussions were conducted. The data gathered were used for the project intervention, implementation, evaluation and report.

Chapter 5 dealt with the project implementation strategy which included the preparation stage for the project, letter of approval granted by the Mission, activities carried out for the implementation which included seminars, focus group discussions and analysis of questionnaires. The intervention program for Muslim Background Converts (MBCs) was also carried out. These involved seminars on Fill-in gap friendship, visit and hospitality, relocation for security and empowerment project. The collection of data, analysis of findings, outcome of the project and post implementation stage were also carried out.

Chapter 6 had evaluation of the project, project goals and evidences of actualization of the project, lessons learned conclusion and recommendations to the higher organizations (the district, Sierra Leone Mission, West Africa Union Mission and the researcher).

Lessons Learned

1. That in the process of nurturing and retaining new converts in the church, a thorough Bible study program must be in place
2. Small group initiative is a must for every church to retain her new converts.
3. Regular visiting of newly baptized members gives confidence and as such retaining them is made obvious.
4. Members' involvement in church programs gives confidence and is appreciated.
5. The researcher learnt that small group brings members together and care is been shown to one another.
6. Prospects in the small groups and Bible study classes must not be rushed into baptism.
7. It is a painstaking venture that involves time, committed personnel, money and effort in the nurturing and retaining processes
8. The church should invest money on lay people to assist in Bible study and visitation.
9. The friendship program allows both old and new members to be involved in visiting and praying for one another.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project is to develop a model program for membership nurture and retention in the FCD of the SDA Church in Sierra Leone. In implementing this project two churches were selected in FCD. The researcher realized that members were living the church unnoticed, even though there have been series of revival and evangelistic programs. The biblical and theological foundation of this project is based on small group organizations. It all started in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, where God established the first small group on earth. It is God's

intended purpose for man to be in small groups for mutual coexistence. This practice was also carried out with the Israelites at the wilderness journey. Moses was asked by his father - in law, Jethro to break the numbers into small groups for better administration. They were also organized into households.

Moreover, the New Testament saw Jesus establishing small group of twelve disciples who were trained, equipped and empowered to carry on with the ministry after their leader must have left the scene. After the Pentecost, the church under the authority of the disciples flourished. They had Bible studies together; visiting and healing the sick many were converted and retained in the Christian church. Christian authors have also written extensively on the topic in a bid to show its relevance to the human society.

With this in mind, an intervention was designed as approaches to membership nurture and retention. The researcher evaluated the project and recommendations were made to the church and Mission.

In conclusion, the project was successful, and goals were met. The high loss of members found from the church statistics shows that more members are leaving the church unnoticed. And to address this challenge, the followings were evidenced:

1. There was no proper Bible study program conducted by the selected churches
2. There was no laid down visitation program for church members
3. There was no organized program for nurturing and retaining new members in the church.

The work of saving souls should not be left in the hands of pastors alone; the lay members are also needed. For this program to succeed, it needs the time and effort of the leadership of the church. By having well-structured programs and then involve the members, the goal of nurturing and retaining both new and old members will be realized. The members want to build positive relationship and this can only be done

when the church plan and execute programs with them. There should be an ongoing Bible study programs in the churches, regular visitation to both old and new members homes. For the small groups, it is not conclusive until members are coordinated and mobilized to enhance their spiritual life in the areas of church attendance, participate and support in evangelistic activities. Church administrators, Pastors, elders and departmental leaders are to be reminded of the gospel commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and become disciples to disciple others.

Recommendations

Membership nurture and retention is one of the major challenges for the church in present times. The researcher expects that this project will enhance the intended purpose of retaining new converts in the faith. I hope this program will inspire not only the members but the Mission to take active part in providing the needed materials for Bible study and small group activities. In the ministry of nurturing and retaining new members, the researcher will like to recommend the following as a guide in protecting membership loss.

1. Seminars on Bible study should be organized in churches for members
2. The church must initiate small group ministries
3. There should be an intentional visitation program for members
4. Friendship seminars must be included in church programs
5. In the SDA colleges, a curriculum for nurturing and retaining members must be included for anticipating ministers

In addition, the following recommendations are being made to the FCD. the Sierra Leone Mission, West Africa Union Mission and the researcher.

District

All the churches in the districts should form small groups, intensify visitation and conduct regular Bible studies for nurturing new members. The churches in the district should also: 1. Encourage new members to develop and maintain a close relationship with God. 2. Connect new members with other members and various ministries in the church. 3. Offer training and identify their spiritual gifts, then equip them to use those gifts. 4. Be their support, and address or make referrals for issues that may arise as they adjust to a new lifestyle. 5. Encourage involvement in ministry at home, church, workplace and community. Before a marriage is contracted there should be thorough marriage counseling at least three months.

Sierra Leone Mission

The Mission should endeavor to train more committed pastors who will stay in ministry and minister to the needs of church members. Family Life revival should be conducted in the churches by Family Life leaders every quarter. The Mission should mandate her churches to establish a New Member Ministry (NMM) committee for those who have a sincere love for people, witnessing and soul winning.

This project should be a guiding tool in the hands of the Personal Ministries, Sabbath School departments and ministers throughout the districts and local churches and endeavor to increase the percentage of nurturing and retaining new members. Also, nurture and retention programs should be included in the program of the church.

West Africa Union Mission

There should be an in depth program for MBCs whose lives are being threatened. Re – locating them to a safe zone where they will be comfortable and learn trade that will earn them their future. Funding should be sought for their upkeep and training.

The Researcher

This research work is not in itself a thoroughly completed work; there is more room for improvement in areas that are more sensitive in assisting the reigning elders and the leadership of the church.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE



**SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH**

SIERRA LEONE MISSION

P. O. Box 294, Freetown, Sierra Leone. Tel: +232-76-739-665/+ 232-30-694-672 – Email: misthersl@yahoo.com

February 10, 2015

The Chairman,
Executive Committee,
Sierra Leone Mission,
Seventh-day Adventist Church,
24 Savage Street,
Brookfields, Freetown,
Sierra Leone.

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION TO USE YOUR CHURCHES

I warmly greet you in the name of our saving Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

I hereby write to request your kind permission to use your Churches (Three Angels' Messages and East End Seventh-day Adventist Churches) for the purpose of my Dissertation Project. The topic I am writing on is: "Membership Nurture and Retention in the Freetown Central District of Seventh-day Adventist Church."

Thanks immensely for your usual cooperation.

Faithfully yours,

Michael S. Koroma

Cc: Executive Secretary – SLM
“ “ Treasurer – SLM
“ “ District Pastor – FCD
“ “ Church Elder – T.A.M. SDA Church
“ “ Church Elder – East End SDA Church



**SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH**

SIERRA LEONE MISSION

P. O. Box 294, Freetown, Sierra Leone. Tel: +232-33-997-341/+232-78-513-291 – Email: jomiobs@yahoo.com

April 15, 2015

Pastor Michael S. Koroma

8 The Maze

Off King Street

Wilberforce

Freetown

Dear Pastor Koroma,

RE: PERMISSION TO USE YOUR CHURCHES

I write on behalf of the Central District of SDA Church in Freetown, to grant you permission to carry out your project dissertation on Membership Nurture and Retention at the TAM and EAST END SDA Churches.

The success of your work is very paramount to us that will give you all the support and information needed to complete this exercise.

We pray that the good Lord will guide and strengthen you to accomplish your task.

Yours sincerely,

Pastor John T. Moiba (District Pastor)

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire to backsliding members

The main purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information from fifty backsliders who got baptized into the church and later left. Please tick appropriately.

If you wish kindly indicate your name and address -----

Gender : Male ----- Female -----

Level of Education: Primary -----

Secondary -----

College/University -----

Other (specify) -----

Specify the age group you belong: 12 – 20 -----

21 – 30 -----

31 – 40 -----

41 – 50 -----

51 – 60 -----

61 and above -----

Marital status: Single ----- Married ----- Separated ----- Divorced -----

Widow -----

Who invited you to the campaign?

A friend ----- A relative ----- A church member -----

No one -----

How many days did you attend the campaign? Less than one week -----

One week ----- Two weeks -----

Were you baptized after the campaign? Yes ----- No -----

Before you were baptized, did you take the baptismal vow?

Yes ----- No -----

Were the vows made clear to your understanding?

Yes ----- No -----

Were you presented a Bible after Baptism? Yes ----- No -----

Was the baptism out of your own decision? Yes ----- No -----

Were the church members friendly to you? Yes ----- No -----

For how long did you attend church after baptism? One week -----

Two weeks -----

One month -----

One year -----

Who visited you in your home/office? The Pastor -----

The Elder -----

Church members -----

No one -----

Was there any Problem with church members while attending church?

Yes ----- No -----

What made you to leave the church? Please explain : -----

Can it be possible again for you to start attending church?

Yes ----- No -----

Thank you so much and God bless you.

APPENDIX C

SEMINAR MATERIALS

Seminar for Elders, Church officers and members at the TAM SDA Church on May 16, 17 and June 13, 14 2015

TOPIC: CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

This seminar was for both churches selected for my project.

To Be a Christian leader is no small calling, whether you serve as church pastor or elder, a Christian leader in the secular world is under obligation to be a strong and faithful witness for Christ. Here are several Bible texts that should challenge you as you lead.

a. 1 Timothy 3: 2 – 7

6. This passage even though is directed to elders, it is not limited to that role only but also to mature Christian whose lifestyle is affected by his belief. An overseer or leader must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectful, hospitable, an able teacher not addicted to wine not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy, one who can manage his own household competently, having his children under control with all duty.

7. As a leader your duty is to your flock which is the church of the God. Lead by example and allow the Great Leader to be your guide.

b. Joshua 1: 8

8. Joshua the writer of the book said Instruction must not depart from your mouth, you are to recite it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. As Christian leaders God's word must be followed. Always instruct the members of the church in a God fearing way.

9.

c. Mark 9: 35

10. Christian leadership is servant hood. It is not the idea of the whole world. While they were sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be the first, He must be last of all and servant of all."

11. Church leaders are servant to God's flock and even your family.

d. John 3: 30

12. The words of John the Baptist must always be on our lips. The work of Christian leadership is always about Christ and not about us. The work of the Lord is about Christ and His Kingdom.

e. Philippians 2: 3

13. Christian leadership has no room for arrogance. Pride, arrogance are not for the people of God. Serve with humility and meekness.

f. Matt 12: 36

14. Christian leaders our work is connected to our words, we have a high level of accountability for our speech. "I tell you that on that Day of Judgment people will have to give an account for every careless word they speak." So as you lead God's

flock be aware of what you say to them. Please be friendly to your church members and every one you come in contact with because everyone is God's child.

15. 1 Cor 11:1

16. Imitate me, says Paul, as I imitate Christ. When we live like Paul, and others imitate our lives they would be imitating Christ. That is a lofty calling.

17. 2Cor 12: 9- 10

18. Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weakness, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weakness, insults catastrophes, persecution and in pressure because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong. We lead best not in strength but in our weakness.

19. Following Christ is expensive and costly. Christian leadership might infact bring victory in a way most leaders seldom consider persecution and death. Those who want to live a godly life in Christ you will be persecuted. Leaders/ Elders we need to confess and repent and allow the Master to lead you and be of use for Him and His church. Amen.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

20. Marriage is a sacred vow between a man and a woman. Marriage is in relation to God, Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. In a struggling marriage, people tend to focus on the wrong rather than listen to God and ask Him for His guidance.

21. Let us read the following texts and see what lessons we can deduce from them: a. Gen 2: 22- 24, Prov 5: 18- 19, Prov 12: 4, Prov 18: 22 Eph 5: 22- 23,, Matt 19: 4- 6.

22. Ellen G. White on marriage said, "Jesus did not enforce celibacy upon any class of men. He came not to destroy the sacred relationship of marriage, but to exalt it and restore it to its original sanctity. He looks with pleasure upon the family relationship where sacred and unselfish love bears away." Adventist Home, 121.

23. She went on to say "Christ ordained that men and women should be united in holy wedlock, to rear families, whose members crowned with honor should be recognized as members of the family above." Ministry of Healing, 356.

24. Couples and couples to be, marriage is a gift from God and we should honor it and live the life of hope and trust in Jesus.

25. Marriage is a way to remember the importance of the vows we take in order to stay engage with our faith and partner on a daily basis. In good and bad times use the Bible as you go throughout your marriage journey. The following will help you as leaders in your journey:

1. Remind yourself of the strength and power of marriage (Eccl 4: 12, Gen 1: 27, 28, Mark 10: 9,

2. Remember the power of patience and forgiveness (1Pt 4: 8, Eph 4: 2, 3, vand 32).

3. Do your best to resist life's temptations (1 Cor 10: 13, Heb 13: 4)

4. Trust in the Lord above all else (1Jn 4: 7- 8, Prov 3: 5- 6, Jos 1: 9, Rom 8: 28, Jer 29: 11).

PASTORAL CARE

26. The Christian leader is already a leader in his home and he should exhibit that leadership by caring for one another, such as the orphans, widows, handicapped, less privileged and those who are not of the same faith.

27. These texts will help as you lead the flock of God and great blessing will be accorded you and your family.

28. Acts 20: 28

29. 2Cor 1: 4

30. Rom 12: 4- 21
31. John 21: 15 – 17
32. 1Pt 5: 2,
33. James 5: 14- 20
34. 1Thess 2:11 -12
35. Eze 34: 2- 10
36. Titus 1: 5
37. Eph 4: 11- 16
38. 2Cor 12: 28
39. Jn 13: 34- 35
40. Matt 35: 40

41. The above mentioned texts were carefully read and discussed in a bid to see the need for pastoral care of the members. Participants learnt that visitation is not only meant for the elders and pastors but for the church as a whole.

VISITATION

42. Leaders of the Most High God should serve as role model by visiting and praying for their members. More so the new baptized ones who need the word of God and care for the less privileged, by so doing you are following the command of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in Matt 25: 35 – 37: “For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in. I was naked and clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me...” Visitation is necessary for leaders to our members for them to know that we care.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE VISITATION

1. Plan the visit with specific objectives and goals in mind. Why are you calling on this member or person? What do you wish to accomplish by this visit? Do you have as much information as possible about the family?
2. Schedule the visit
3. Be relaxed
4. Create an atmosphere of confidence
5. Listen emphatically
6. Conclude with a prayer

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST IN ISLAM

In Islam, Jesus is perceived as one of the prophets and ranks a great prophet who was born in a miraculous way, without a father. He performed miracles. But the question remains, how can a human being at the same time be God and how God can allow His prophet to die on the cross. To the Muslims, they feel horrified by every attempt to associate with God anything from the created order (human beings) the place beside God (shirk) or to assemble it with God (teshbih). Titles applied by Christians to Jesus (eg. Son of God) and to Mary (mother of God) sound blasphemous in their ears. In Islam realistic portrayal of the crucifixion of Jesus are offensive.

The Quran (Surah 42:11) affirms Allah as the creator of everything and does not subscribe Jesus as the Creator. Jesus to the Muslims was an outstanding prophet, just as “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah and among his offspring David, Solomon, Job, Joseph and Moses were rewarded for the good work they performed. Others like Zechariah, John and Elijah were righteous. Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and lot were given favor above all nations” (Surah 6: 84 – 87). Jesus, who was proclaimed by John the Baptist, was born by the Virgin Mary without a father as stated in Surah 19: 17 – 22 of the Quran. In this chapter of Surah 19: 17 – 22, the “us, we” articles are used consistently.

Again it is believed that Jesus preached pure monotheism and did perform miracles. The Jews tried to kill Jesus but could not, God saved Him by raising Him to Himself. It is being argued that Jesus did not die. “They certainly did not kill Him – no, Allah raised Him unto Himself and Allah is exalted in power, wise” (surah 4:157 – 158). In Islam, it is perceived that Jesus denies that He has called Himself God. Surah 5: 116 – 117 tell us that Jesus denies His divinity and also makes us to know He knows nothing of God.

The Quran calls Jesus a word from God and a word of God. Jesus is also a spirit of God but not God’s Son (surah 3:45, 4:171, 112, 5:72, 9:30 – 31). Even though the Quran accorded great dignity to the position of Jesus, His miraculous birth without a father, performed miracles, His titles as word of God and spirit of God, these are attributes accorded the prophet. “Before Allah, Jesus is like Adam: Allah created Him from the dust, then said to Him be, and He was” (surah 3:59). To the Muslims, “the creation of Adam is more miraculous than the conception of Jesus without a father.” All the titles given to Jesus indicate a prophet. “Mohammad to the Muslims is a greater prophet than Jesus since Mohammed is the Seal of the prophets (surah 33:44). Jesus is seen as the Seal of the saints.

In more recent publication about Jesus, Khalid presents “Him as a righteous man who suffered persecution (Kamil Khalid).”

Christian Perspectives

The New Testament studies show that Jesus was fully man. He was born and grew up like every other human being. He was baptized by John the Baptist, and this was a pivotal moment when through the Holy Spirit, God affirmed Him as His beloved Son (Matt 3:13 - 17, Mark 1:9 - 11, Luke 3:21 – 22). Jesus claimed to be more than all the prophets and teachers of the law by simply saying, “Truly I say unto you.” And He claimed God as His Father by distinguishing between your father and My Father. Human beings are the children of this Father. Jesus alone is the Son in an absolute sense. The disciples called Him the Son of God, and they prayed to Him and publicly confessed Him (Matt 16:16, Luke 1:32).

In the gospels there are frequent passages in which Jesus calls Himself the Son of God (Mark 14: 61 – 62). To call Jesus the Son of God was to make quite clear the claim that, He is unique, more than just a man. Christians insisted that this controversial, mocked, persecuted and executed Jesus is the Son of the living God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God became human. Jesus was truly a human being when He was on earth. He was born to a human mother, grew up and matures, learns a trade, suffers hunger and thirst, displays compassion and joy, anxiety and anger. He was a human being with body and soul. This is the belief in reality of the incarnation that justifies for Christians the artistic depiction of Jesus which is questions answerable by Muslims. Jesus Christ was both fully human and fully divine. “In response to questions from Muslims, about the divinity of Jesus, there should be no concealing of the fact that faith in Jesus as the incarnate Son of God is an essential part of the apostolic confession of faith. Only by the working of the Holy Spirit can we acknowledge and proclaim Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 12:13). It is of this fact that between the Christian doctrine and the incarnation and the statements of the Quran there are linkage which can appear significant to the Muslims:

Muslims believe that the word of God (Kalam Allah) is eternally in God (Kalam nafsi) while Christian believe that Jesus is the word of God (John 1:1 – 3). The Christian faith bears witness that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified and risen Lord is the final and perfect revelation of God in history.

Trinity

Monotheism is at the center of Islam faith. “He is Allah, the One and Only, Allah, the Eternal, Absolute, He begets not, nor is He begotten and there is none like Him” (Quran 112). Islam is deeply convinced that it is impossible to comprehend God in human words. The Quran understands the Christian God as the three in One as tritheism and refers to Christians taking Allah, Jesus and Mary as three deities – an approach which the Quranic Jesus Himself specifically condemns (surah 5:16). The Quran never makes reference to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the third person.

For the Quran, Christians and Jews are people of the Book (ahl – al – kitab) on the basis of the Quran it remains an open question whether Christians are to be considered monotheists (surah 2:62, 3:110 – 115, 4:55, 5: 69, 52) as unbelievers (kuffar: surah 5:17, 72 – 73, 9: 30) or as idolators (known as mushrikin: 5:72, 9:31). The Quran reproaches Christians for saying (Haletha) with reference to God (surah

THE BODY TEMPLE

1. How did God teach Israel the lessons of His presence with them? Ex 25:8
2. How fully are we to yield our bodies to God? Rom 12:1, Phil 2:12, 13
3. What admonition should be heeded concerning the care of the body and the maintenance of health? 1 Cor 3:16, 17, 3John 2
4. What must govern the child of God in all things? 1 Cor 9:25, 27
5. Will drunkard enter heaven? 1 Cor 6:10
6. What is in strong drink that ruins body and mind?
43. Deut 32:33
7. What should be our attitude toward all these things?
44. 1 Cor 10:31
8. What was the original diet of man?
45. Gen 1: 29, of animals? Gen 1: 30
9. How long did people live when they adhered to this diet?
46. Gen 5: 5, 8, 11, 14 17, 20
10. After sin, what was added to man’s diet?
47. Gen 3: 18, 9:3
11. What animals did God permit man to eat after vegetation was destroyed by the flood? Lev 11: 1 – 30, 44, 46, 47. No blood Gen 9:4, Lev 3: 17
12. What will God grant to all who obey? Ex 15: 26, Ps 103: 1 – 5

JUDGEMENT

Muslims believe that the present life is only a trial preparation for the next phase of life. It is a test for everyone for the life after death. It is believed by Muslims that a day will come when the entire world would be destroyed and the resurrected dead will be judged. It is known as the Day of Judgment. People will be rewarded on that day according to their beliefs and deeds. Those who die while believing that, “There is no true god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger (Prophet) of God” and are Muslims will be rewarded on that day and will be admitted to paradise forever as God has said: “And those who believe and do good deeds, they are dwellers of paradise, they dwell therein forever (Quran 2:82). But those who do not believe while living in God and Muhammad his messenger and are not Muslim will forever lose paradise and will be sent to hellfire (Quran 3:85).

Muslims believe the Day of Judgment will come. Those who believe in God, Muhammad, his prophet or his religion of Islam will be rewarded but those who disobeyed will be punished (Quran 51:56, 23:115,116). Muslims also believe the life hereafter is a real life. It is not only spiritual but also physical. They will live there with soul and bodies.

Muslims believe that there are records of the deeds for both believers and unbelievers. They are also convinced that those who will receive their records on their right hands will be saved but those who will receive it in their left hand will be thrown to hellfire. Paradise and hell to the Muslims are real places. God will reward the good deeds of the believer and send him or her to paradise where he or she will live to enjoy forever while unbeliever will be tortured, punished and spend the rest of his or her life in hell for ever.

Christian Perspective of the Day of Judgment

Christians too believe that our life on planet earth is a transient one. At the second coming of Jesus He will reward everyone according to his deeds (Matt 16:27 NKJV).

And the basis of the judgment is to judge the deeds of the dead (Rev 20:12).

Christians also believe there are records in heaven, records such as “Book of Remembrance of Good Deeds (Mal 3:16), Book of Iniquity (Jer 2:22), and the Book of Life (Rev 20:22). The judgment is for both believers and unbelievers (John 3:36). To the Christians both heaven and hell are real places; the good people will spend eternity with God in heaven while the evil ones will spend their doom in hell forever. However, if both religions are convinced of the Day of Judgment and are working towards eternity by preaching the End Time messages to the world about pending doom that is about to engulf the earth, I am of the opinion that if Christians befriend their Muslim brethren who have a clear teaching on the Day of Judgment, Muslims can be won to the glory of God.

APPENDIX D

SERMONS

SERMON 1

FEED MY SHEEP

John 21: 15 – 17

To feed means to eat, cater for, provide for, nurture, exist on or be sustained on. Just before Jesus left earth for heaven, He invested significant time in the apostles but more especially on Peter. He wanted him to recover from his sin the night he denied his Master three times. Christ intended for him to minister and lead. Jesus knew His time on earth was short, yet He asked Peter three times if he really loved Him. When Peter assured His Lord for his love, Christ called him to the natural responses, “Feed My Sheep.”

Love should motivate us to serve by nurturing others for His Kingdom. In the same vain the Father sent Jesus to save the lost sheep of Israel, Jesus called Peter to feed His Lambs. Peter was a man that speaks without fear, or thinking, he blows out of proportion. Peter was restless, boastful and self-confident in all that he does. He studied under the Great Teacher and Saviour of mankind, yet he could not fathom an iota of Jesus’ ministry.

However, Peter was excited at the first, second question but the third pained him. St Augustine says, “Love God and do as you please.” He did not say flout the Ten Commandments but to do as Jesus asked us o do. If you truly love God, you will with pleasure take care of His children. Jesus uses the word Agape – self- sacrifice and Peter uses the word philos- Friendship. Peter remembered denying Christ three times on the night of crucifixion. And now Christ required of his friendship three times. It was on that day Peter was re- instated into the ministry.

A STORY

In Communist China, Christianity was forbidden. So a pastor started a and organized one in China, witnessing for Christ. His members were zealous for the new gospel. One day two girls from the church were arrested by the Chinese government and locked up. Later the pastor too was arrested and locked up. The government told them that they are going to die for spreading these infectious doctrines. The day of their execution came and the government asked the pastor that they are going to kill him on one condition if he kills the two girls.

On that fateful day, they arraigned the girls and gave the pastor the gun to shoot them. No sooner the girls raised their heads, they saw the pastor with the gun about to release the trigger and they said, pastor, pastor. The pastor had decided to go ahead with his decision. But the girls said before you leave the trigger wait a minute, we are seeing the hand that baptized us, the mouth that preached to us is about to kill us, now pastor go ahead and accomplish your mission but do not go and hang yourself like Judas did, go and repent like Peter, a true repentance, so that we can meet in heaven where we meet to part no more. The pastor shot the girls and he too was shot by the government. The pastor who was supposed to feed his sheep killed them.

Do you feel the sanctifying power of sacred truth in heart and life and character? Have you the assurance that God, for the sake of His dear Son, has forgiven your sin? Are you striving to live with a conscience void of offence toward God and humanity? Do you often plead with God on behalf of your friends and neighbours? If you have made peace with God, and have placed all upon the altar, you may engage with profit in visiting, caring and feeding the sheep of the Lord.

John 21:15, Jesus says, feed My Sheep. Before Peter slipped, he had not the spirit of meekness required to feed the lambs, but after he became sensitive of his own weakness, he knew just how to teach the erring and fallen, he could come close to their side with tender sympathy and could help them. These lambs are the weak ones in our midst. Do your utmost to seek and save them. The work of restoration can never be thorough unless the roots of evil are reached. Again and again the shoots have been clipped, while the root of bitterness has been left to spring up and defile many. We need the light of divine presence so that our life will testify of God's greatness. May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless each one of you as you endeavor to nurture and keep His flock, in Jesus' name. Amen.

SERMON 2

WHO VISITS YOU AND WHOM DO YOU VISIT?

Matt 25:35 -36

Visitation is one of the core duty of a pastor and elders of our church. Visitation if well planned is an invaluable program that promotes and develops the welfare of the church members. It does not mean visiting the flock, the pastor or elder is on a distribution spree of food items or money but to pray and listen to the joys and sad tales of members. Pastor and elders must not make visitation an option but it should be a way of life in the ministry.

Our text for today reads..... "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Verse 36: Naked and ye clothe me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came in unto me." Brethren, the great final test is concerned with the extent to which the principles of true religion have been applied to daily living, particularly in relationship to the interest and needs of others.

James 1: 27 states and I read, pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, "to visit the fatherless, and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world." It is true that true religion point to the fact that the outward evidence naturally accompanies the true heart experience. In visiting one another, we should not be full with moral defilement within but a superior type of outward evidence of pure religion.

The church that wants to nurture her members must be hospitable and be ready to entertain visitors as well as her members.

True religion also teaches us to do everything as if we were in the presence of God. Pure religion and undefiled, mean unless the works are prompted by the right motives. The pastor and elder should be an example to all believers in practicing pure religion, thus revealing a heart filled with the love of God.

In Luke 1:68, even God the Father pays visit to His people in the time of joy and distress. As a church, we should visit the fatherless, orphans and widows and not to take advantage of them (Matt 23:14). Orphans and widows need the comfort and encouragement of interested friends, not merely financial support.

The world is synonymous with evil principles and practices that are contrary to the will of God. The true converted church member will avoid any thought or deed that allows the filth of the world to stain him. The spirit and practice of selfless service

had become so much a habit with “the righteous” that they responded automatically to the needs of their fellow men.

Finally, may we as church join hands with the divine Father to reach out to others by nurturing them in the fear and admonition of the Lord so that we will get ourselves ready when He comes to take us home. May God richly bless you as you do service for Him, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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