

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry  
Emphasis in Mission

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE  
KOFORIDUA CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH,  
GHANA

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Date completed: December 2016

### **Problem**

The dissertation examined the low level of membership retention in the Koforidua Central SDA Church. It was observed in recent times that people who leave the church after baptism are relatively more than those who remain.

### **Purpose**

The need to develop strategies to retain members in the Church is necessary because of the alarming rate of members leaving the Church. This is particularly true of new members after baptism. The purpose of this dissertation was to develop and implement effective strategies to keep members in the Church.

## **Method**

To be able to explore the subject thoroughly, the researcher used mixed method (quantitative - questionnaires and qualitative - focus groups) for the research process. Questionnaires were designed in English and Twi for respondents. Three focus groups involving: (i) Elders and Men (ii) Women's Ministries, and (iii) Adventist Youth Ministries were formed to discuss the problem and suggest solutions that can address the problem. The data gathered from the survey was used to design the intervention. A total of eight hybrids of sermons, seminars and discussions, and two activities to address the problem were facilitated by the researcher. The Participatory Evaluation Process (PEP) was utilized to engage the entire congregation for a candid and wholistic assessment.

## **Results**

The implementation of the intervention brought positive changes in the Koforidua Central SDA Church. Casual church members are now regular and punctual; some backsliders have renewed their covenant relations with God. Various departments in the church have seen improvement in attendance and punctuality. Church elders and leaders are more enthusiastic in executing their duties more diligently – visiting members, praying with them and attending to their needs. Some of the members who were at odds with others have allowed amicable settlements. Baseline data at the pre-intervention stage has shown a steady improvement. The introduction of praise worship coupled with songs from local composers has brought joy and heart-warming into the church life. Generally speaking, there is warmth and unity of purpose in the Church.

## **Conclusion**

The research conducted at the Koforidua Central SDA Church was successful. Pastors, elders and members alike showed interest and participated in the survey, intervention and evaluation of the programme. The evaluation of the programme showed positive impact. One of the interesting lessons learned in this dissertation is that the church members were not ignorant about the existing problem, neither were they totally unaware about measures to remedy the anomaly. The strategies developed were derived from a careful analysis of the data and the evaluation. The outstanding factors gathered from the research which can help to reduce incredible membership loss are that church leaders and members should show love, care, and understanding to newly baptized members.

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE  
KOFORIDUA CENTRAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, GHANA

A dissertation

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

by

Samuel Bonya Arloo

December 2016




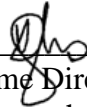
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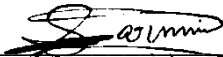
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This dissertation is dedicated to the East Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day  
Adventist Church, Koforidua Central, and the two Unions in Ghana,  
to my dear wife, Mrs. Sarah Arloo, and children  
who supported me to attain this achievement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| LIST OF TABLES .....                              | x  |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....                             | xi |
| CHAPTER   |    |
| 1. INTRODUCTION .....                             | 1  |
| Description of the Ministry Process .....         | 1  |
| Statement of the Problem .....                    | 2  |
| Statement of the Purpose .....                    | 2  |
| Justification .....                               | 3  |
| Delimitations .....                               | 3  |
| Description of the Dissertation Process .....     | 3  |
| Expectations .....                                | 3  |
| 2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR RETENTION .....        | 5  |
| Old Testament .....                               | 6  |
| The Choosiness of Israel .....                    | 6  |
| The Call of Abraham .....                         | 7  |
| Teaching from Generation to Generation .....      | 11 |
| Parenting in the Old Testament .....              | 13 |
| Worship: The Shema .....                          | 17 |
| Non-Jewish Converts .....                         | 21 |
| The Role of the Prophets .....                    | 28 |
| Isaiah .....                                      | 28 |
| Jeremiah .....                                    | 32 |
| Malachi .....                                     | 35 |
| Retention in the New Testament .....              | 39 |
| Jesus Christ's Model .....                        | 39 |
| John the Baptist's Model .....                    | 41 |
| The Pauline Model .....                           | 43 |
| The Writings of Ellen G. White .....              | 47 |
| New Converts as New Born Babes .....              | 47 |
| Converts from Other Churches .....                | 47 |
| Involving New Members in Church Activities .....  | 48 |
| Visiting New Members Often .....                  | 48 |
| S.D.A. Literature and Retaining New Members ..... | 48 |
| Teach Health Reform Message .....                 | 49 |
| Tithing for New Converts .....                    | 49 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 3. LITERATURE REVIEW .....                                  | 51  |
| The Problem of Retention .....                              | 51  |
| Biblical Basis for Church Membership Retention .....        | 52  |
| The Antediluvian Period .....                               | 54  |
| The Patriarchal Period.....                                 | 55  |
| The Mosaic Period .....                                     | 60  |
| The Early Disciples of Jesus Christ. ....                   | 62  |
| Judgment at the End of Time .....                           | 64  |
| What Motivates People to Become Church Members .....        | 66  |
| Secular Reasons .....                                       | 66  |
| Socio-Relational Reasons .....                              | 67  |
| Spiritual Reasons .....                                     | 68  |
| Reasons Why People Leave the Church .....                   | 69  |
| Summary .....   | 72  |
| What it Means to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ .....        | 73  |
| Who is a Disciple? .....                                    | 73  |
| Abiding in Jesus Christ .....                               | 73  |
| Bearing Much Fruit.....                                     | 74  |
| The Cost of Discipleship.....                               | 76  |
| The Demand.....   | 77  |
| The Grace.....  | 77  |
| The Promise. ....   | 78  |
| Measures to Retain Members.....                             | 79  |
| Summary .....   | 83  |
| 4. PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY TO INCREASE RETENTION ..... | 84  |
| Ministry Context .....                                      | 85  |
| Macro Context .....   | 85  |
| Description of New Juaben Municipal Area (NJMA) .....       | 85  |
| Socio-Political System .....                                | 87  |
| Historical Background .....                                 | 88  |
| Demography.....   | 90  |
| Economy and Agriculture. ....                               | 90  |
| Climate and Vegetation.....                                 | 92  |
| Topography and Drainage.....                                | 93  |
| Religion.....   | 94  |
| Micro Context .....   | 95  |
| Description of Koforidua .....                              | 95  |
| Historical Background .....                                 | 95  |
| Economic Activities.....                                    | 96  |
| Agriculture. ....   | 97  |
| Industry and Market.....                                    | 97  |
| Financial Services. ....                                    | 98  |
| Tourism. ....   | 98  |
| Hotels, Guest Houses and Restaurants.....                   | 98  |
| Education. ....   | 99  |
| Health.....   | 100 |
| History of the SDA Church.....                              | 101 |

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Adventism in Ghana .....   | 101     |
| Adventism in the Eastern Region .....                                | 102     |
| Adventism in Koforidua .....   | 102     |
| Landmarks of Adventism in Koforidua .....                            | 103     |
| Problem Statement of the Dissertation .....                          | 104     |
| Research Design.....   | 104     |
| Types of Research.....   | 105     |
| Mixed Method.....  | 105     |
| Quantitative Method .....  | 106     |
| Qualitative Method .....   | 106     |
| Rationale for Selection.....   | 107     |
| Appropriateness to this Study .....                                  | 107     |
| Population and Sample of Participants .....                          | 107     |
| Criteria for Sampling Procedures and Selection .....                 | 108     |
| Questionnaire Distribution.....                                      | 108     |
| Focus Groups .....   | 109     |
| Instrumentation .....  | 110     |
| Data Analysis .....  | 111     |
| Data Collection Procedures.....                                      | 112     |
| Presentation and Description of Findings .....                       | 112     |
| Questionnaire Findings .....   | 113     |
| Baptism. ....  | 113     |
| Spirituality of Members. ....  | 115     |
| Church Membership.....   | 118     |
| Church Welfare.....  | 122     |
| Church Leadership.....   | 125     |
| Reclaiming Backsliders .....   | 127     |
| Focus Groups Findings .....  | 130     |
| Focus Group Discussions for Church Elders. ....                      | 131     |
| Focus Group Discussions for Women’s Ministries<br>Members.....       | 133     |
| Focus Group Discussions for Adventist Youth Ministries<br>(AYM)..... | 135     |
| Presentation and Description of Findings .....                       | 138     |
| Designing of Intervention .....                                      | 138     |
| Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship .....                   | 139     |
| Socio-Economic Problems.....   | 144     |
| Organization of Diverse Social Programmes.....                       | 146     |
| Limitation.....  | 148     |
| Summary .....  | 149     |
| <br>5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION .....                                  | <br>152 |
| Spiritual, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship.....         | 154     |
| Socio-Economic Problems.....   | 154     |
| Organization of Diverse Social Programmes.....                       | 154     |
| Project Preparation.....   | 155     |
| Permissions .....  | 156     |
| East Ghana Conference (EGC) of SDA.....                              | 156     |
| Koforidua Central SDA Church.....                                    | 156     |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Material Development .....   | 157 |
| Questionnaire and Focus Groups Surveyed .....                          | 157 |
| Analysis of Data.....  | 158 |
| Implementation Stage .....   | 160 |
| Formation of Prayer Team .....   | 161 |
| Church Members Divided Under Six Elders .....                          | 162 |
| Spiritual Growth.....  | 164 |
| Conflict Management and Resolution .....                               | 169 |
| Why People Argue.....  | 169 |
| What the Parties Can Do During Conflict Resolution.....                | 170 |
| Healthy and Unhealthy Ways of Managing and Resolving<br>Conflicts..... | 171 |
| Interest Based Relational (IBR) Approach.....                          | 171 |
| Jesus Christ’s Teaching on Conflict Resolution.....                    | 176 |
| Divine Order of Marriage .....   | 178 |
| Man.....   | 179 |
| Leave.....   | 179 |
| Cleave.....  | 181 |
| Become One Flesh .....   | 181 |
| Transformations in the Mode of Worship.....                            | 182 |
| Church Building and Church Growth .....                                | 183 |
| The Place of Traditional Ghanaian Music in the SDA Church .....        | 184 |
| The Use of Musical Instruments in Worship.....                         | 186 |
| Dancing in the Church .....  | 189 |
| Opposing Reasons for Dancing in Church.....                            | 190 |
| The Evils of Dancing.....  | 192 |
| Supportive Reasons for Dancing in Church.....                          | 193 |
| Conclusion.....  | 194 |
| Important Assumptions .....  | 197 |
| Evaluation of the Project.....   | 197 |
| Reporting of the Project .....   | 203 |
| Summary .....  | 204 |
| <br>   |     |
| 6. SUMMARY, FINAL EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, AND<br>RECOMMENDATION .....  | 205 |
| Summary of the Dissertation .....                                      | 205 |
| Final Evaluation of the Project .....                                  | 207 |
| Lessons Learned.....   | 208 |
| Conclusion .....   | 209 |
| Recommendations.....   | 211 |
| Recommendations for Further Study .....                                | 213 |
| <br>   |     |
| APPENDIXES .....   | 215 |
| A. PERMISSION LETTERS AND ACCEPTANCE.....                              | 216 |
| B. QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH AND TWI.....                               | 221 |
| C. BASELINE RECORDS OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE .....                         | 227 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| D. FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ..... | 228 |
| E. PRAYER GROUP MEMBERS .....                          | 238 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY.....                                      | 239 |
| VITA.....  | 250 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table 1. Demographics of Koforidua Municipality..... | 90  |
| Table 2. Farmers by Age Range .....                  | 92  |
| Table 3. Baptism .....                               | 113 |
| Table 4. Spirituality of Members .....               | 117 |
| Table 5. Church Membership .....                     | 119 |
| Table 6. Church Welfare.....                         | 123 |
| Table 7. Church Leadership.....                      | 126 |
| Table 8. Programmes for Reclaiming Backsliders ..... | 128 |
| Table 9. Evaluation of Church Attendance.....        | 163 |

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Above all, the almighty God deserves praise adoration and thanks for giving me the strength, perseverance, health, and wisdom to come out with strategies that are helpful to increase membership retention in the church.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Since the year 2000 the Seventh- day Adventist (SDA) Church in the Koforidua municipality, has not been reaping large numbers of souls (in fifties and hundreds) as it used to. Similarly, it was rare then for members to leave the church as it is presently experienced. This has been the concern of many church leaders and administrators, and the burden of the researcher.

This dissertation project examined why many converts leave the Church shortly after baptism. Issues about discipleship and nurture were investigated and strategies developed to improve member retention. Biblical foundations were drawn from the Old and New Testaments, and from the writings of E.G. White about discipline and retaining Church members.

#### **Description of the Ministry Process**

The researcher since his employment to the gospel ministry in June 1995 after theological studies at Valley View University (VUU) in Ghana has been with the East Ghana Conference (EGC) of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. He has served as an Associate District Pastor, District Pastor, Departmental Director in various departments including Stewardship, Trust Services, Sabbath School, Personal Ministries, Family Ministries, Communications and Public Affairs & Religious Liberty, Executive Secretary, and the President (2013-present).

For these twenty-two (22) years, the researcher has noticed that there are many people who have once been in the SDA church but no longer worship with the church.

Recently baptisms recorded from the Wonders of the Past evangelistic campaigns led by Evangelist Jakovac from the USA with a team of twelve is an example of converts whom the church was unable to retain. In a town called Nankese (10 km from Koforidua), 112 converts were baptized to form a new church called Wonders of the Past S.D.A. Church. Lately, the remaining six members; have been added to the Nankese Central SDA Church. The New Life S.D.A. Church at Asamankese, Anomakojo, Mepom and Berekumanso are also samples of companies from the Wonders of the Past Evangelistic campaigns which are extinct. There are some other churches whose memberships have dropped than the initial membership. There is the need for a strategy to curb this downward trend of church membership retention.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since the inception of EGC, which was carved from the South Ghana Conference in the year 2000, a lot of public and other campaigns have been conducted. Lists of baptisms over this period exceed twice of the actual membership. Recently, West Central Africa Division (WAD), conducted membership audit between 2011 and 2013. The report of the Executive Secretary at the first quadrennial session showed a significant decline from 36,216 to 16,075.<sup>1</sup> This shows a clear evidence of lack of strategies to retain members after baptism.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop and implement and evaluate effective strategies to keep a greater percentage of members in the church after baptism.

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<sup>1</sup>East Ghana Conference of SDA Church, *Statistical Report*, First Quadrennial Session Held at the Multipurpose Camp Site (Akyem Kukurantumi, Ghana, April 16-23, 2013).

## **Justification**

The implementation and evaluation of this study and its positive impact would be a welcoming tool to address the mass membership drop after baptism. This will bring joy and satisfaction to preachers and church leaders.

## **Delimitations**

Although it is possible that this project could be essential material for the EGC as well as the worldwide church, the study will be limited to the Koforidua Central SDA Church. Occasionally, references may be cited outside the environs of Koforidua to establish a point. The time frame to complete this dissertation shall be December, 2016.

## **Description of the Dissertation Process**

To achieve an effective objective of this project, various procedures was followed. Chapter 1 looked at the introduction and the overview of the dissertation. In chapter 2, a theological foundation for retention was derived from both the Old and New Testament scriptures, the writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White and other authors. Chapter 3 looked at the literature review on what have others said about church membership retention. In chapter 4 the researcher chose the mixed method by designing questionnaire and formed three focus groups to explore and gather all necessary information for intervention of the project. Furthermore, chapter looked at topics that were beneficial for the programme implementation. The chapter six gave a summary of the whole dissertation.

## **Expectations**

The researcher hopes to achieve the following after the project has been implemented and evaluated.

1. The project will draw the attention of church leaders to the responsibility of the church in retaining converts for Jesus Christ. This dissertation will make church leaders and members feel the need to become sincere disciples of Christ so that they in turn can successfully lead others to Christ.
2. This dissertation will be a practical model, roadmap and spiritual formation for the leaders, families and the individual church members.
3. It is envisioned that members will not only be contributors or participants to church activities but will truly be each other's keeper within the church family and church leaders will create a good atmosphere for keeping and growing the membership.
4. Also, the journey through this in-ministry dissertation will be a learning and maturing experience for me, my family, the church and be of benefit to the community.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR RETENTION

Retention as applies in this project is the rooting of members both new and old in the faith. Jesus Christ describes retention as remaining in the faith by being in Christ. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch, cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (John 15:4). Saint Paul also gives a definition of how members can be rooted in the Church: "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Col 2:6,7).

In this chapter, the Biblical foundation for Church member retention would be established from both the Old and New Testament of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy writings of Mrs. Ellen Gould White (E.G. White) about retention of Church members. The Bible from start to finish is a missionary book. It is the story of God reaching into human history to reconcile a fallen humanity to Himself and to re-establish His reign overall creation. In this sense, God is a missionary God<sup>1</sup> who is interested in gaining, regaining and retaining people in His kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy, 2010), 3.

## Old Testament

In this section, the paper addresses how God chose Israel (Gen 12:1-3) and gave out His commandments to regain the world to Himself through Israel - the chosen people of God (Deut 10:12-22). God promises the righteous eternal life and eternal bliss (death) to the impenitent but counsel us to choose life (Deut 30:19).

### The Choosiness of Israel

The election of Israel was God's own prerogative and initiative. He chose Israel to carry out his purposes among the human race. Israel had no hand in God's intention but was chosen to do God's biddings as a privilege without an option.

Speaking about His election of Israel, the Bible records:

The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments. Deut 7:7-9.

The foundation of Israel's covenant relationship with God was His choosing, and election, of Israel. The word "choose" occurs thirty times in the book of Deuteronomy, more than any other book of the Bible. God chose Israel not because of their population or better than any other people, but simply because of His love and mercy. This theme is in consonance with Jesus' words in John 15:16, "You did not choose me but I chose you."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Dirk R. Buursman, *The NIV TOPICAL Study Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 195.

The people of Israel were the fewest of all nations. They could be counted only as a family but not as a nation. Earlier on, God prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land for four hundred years (Gen 15: 13-14), this was fulfilled when Joseph was sold out of hatred by his brothers, to some Ishmaelites traders from Median for twenty shekels of silver (Gen 37:28). The Ishmaelites also sold Joseph as a slave to Potiphar in Egypt; an officer and captain of the guard of Pharaoh (Gen 39:1). Joseph served as a servant (Gen 39:17). During his ministrations, he was charged of attempting rape by Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:13-17) and was imprisoned (Gen 39:20). By divine providence Joseph was released from prison and became next to Pharaoh (Gen 41:40-44). Sometime later, when the earth was plagued with famine (Gen 41:56) Jacob and his sons moved with their families to Egypt, where there was abundance of food (Gen 41:57), to stay with their relative Joseph (Gen 46: 1-27). However, because of divine selection God promised that they would be a great nation.

At the time of their exit from Egypt, they were a great force to reckon with. As God promised, the Bible describes the Israelites as the sand of the seashore (Gen 22:17). There were 600,000 men - above twenty years, excluding women and children who set off from Ramses in Egypt to travel to Succoth in Canaan (Exod 12: 37; Num 11: 21). It is amazing that at the time of Joseph's death, "all those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy" (Exod 1:5). Through the honesty and sincerity of Joseph; God prepared a people among the tribes and nations of the earth (Deut 4:20; 7:6).

### **The Call of Abraham**

The choice of Israel as a nation began with the call of Abraham. The Lord told Abram, to get out of his country, family and father's house; the city of Ur in the land

of Mesopotamia. God promised to make him a great nation and bless those who will bless him and curse those who will curse him. (Gen 12: 1-3). In the larger perspective, it is through Abraham that “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen 12:3). The word of God begins with a command - get thee out, continues with a promise - I will make you a great nation, and ends with a blessing - in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. The promises of God are fulfilled, and His blessings received only as His commands are obeyed.<sup>3</sup> The temptation and fall of the first couple (Gen 3) brought everything that God created and saw it was good (Gen 1) under a curse (Gen 3: 14-19). God’s call on Abram (meaning “exalted father”),<sup>4</sup> was to restore the brokenness and the curse pronounce on Adam and Eve.

Prior to the call of Abraham, God gave Adam and Eve another son in replacement of Abel called Seth (Gen 4:25) meaning “the appointed one.”<sup>5</sup> Seth’s birth was significant because it pointed to the appointed one who would be the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). Keil and Delitzsch agree the sons of God in Genesis 6:4 refers to the descendants of Seth who were obedient to God’s instructions, and daughters of men refer to the descendants of Cain who lived in disobedience against God.<sup>6</sup> Later, God chose Noah, a descendant of Seth; and a righteous man to save the human race when God punished the wicked people on earth through the flood (Gen 6: 5-8). In this episode, a remnant of eight people was conserved and survived from the antediluvian world (Gen 7:13). In this deluge, a remnant was preserved to perpetuate the human

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<sup>3</sup>SDABC, 4:293.

<sup>4</sup>Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 95/www.bible-truth.org/GEN 12.HTM.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary New Updated Edition on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. (Hendrickson Electronic Database, 1996).

race. Noah is worthy of emulation, for being the only one to save his family from a global destruction.

When God called Abraham, He spelt out His covenant with him. The document contains the promise to make Abraham a great nation (Gen 17:4,6); to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan (Gen 17:8); Abraham's descendants throughout their generations were to keep God's instructions (Gen 17:10); and that every male shall be circumcised in the flesh as a physical sign for an everlasting covenant (Gen 17:10).

Although tagged as the father of God's chosen people and all people on earth (Gen 12:3; 17:4), Abraham was entrapped by instances of fear, deception and disbelief. Forgetting about his covenant with God, and for fear of losing his life because of his beautiful wife Sarai (Gen 12:11), Abraham lied to deceive Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen 12: 11-16), and Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen 20:2). In both occurrences, God prevented the kings from having any conjugal affairs with Sarai (Gen 12: 17-20; Gen 20:3). Considering his age and that of his wife Sarai, he was caught with disbelief of having a child with Sarai and agreed with her to take Hagar; their Egyptian slave girl as wife (Gen 16:1-2). Nevertheless, Abraham was distinguished by exhibiting strong faith in God.

The test of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:1-2) is a hallmark that makes him unique among other Bible characters. When Abraham's faith in God was confirmed in the attempt of sacrificing his son Isaac (Gen 22:10), God affirmed His covenant relationship with Abraham by saying:

By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son* — blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven; ...and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” Gen 22:16- 18.

This faith Abraham exhibited is written for our good, it educates us on the lesson of confidence in the requirements of God, however close and cutting they may be; it trains children how to submit to their parents and God. By Abraham's obedience we are to understand that nothing is too costly that we cannot give to God.<sup>7</sup> This lesson of obedience is to descend through every generation so that the followers of God would understand that we receive heavenly blessing when we look every gift as the Lord's to use in His service<sup>8</sup>

The covenant relationship between God and Abraham and his descendants were to be maintained and pass on from one generation to another so that the word of God shall constantly be retained (Psa 13:12-14) until the coming of the promised Messiah (Gal. 4:4). God swearing by Himself is an affirmation of His immutability; He swears by Himself because there is no one higher than Himself to confer with (Isa 45:23; Jer. 22:5; 49:13).

The Sinai covenant was basically to establish personal relationship between God and Israel. Though they did not see His form, they could hear His voice from the mountain (Deut 4:13,14). The passage of Deuteronomy chapter 6 is a reminder of Exodus 20. The people who were eye witnesses to the commandments and the signs that followed (Exod 20:19) stood in for all Israelites afterwards, in all generations (Deut 6:6; Lev 23:41).

The word of God until this time has passed and preserved through (I) The Patriarchs: First with Adam and Eve (Gen 2:16-17; 3:15), Noah (Gen6:9-21), Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15; 17; 22:15-17), then Isaac (Gen 26:1-6) and Jacob (Gen

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<sup>7</sup>SDABC, 1, 1094.3.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. 1094.4.

28:10-21; 35-1-14). (ii) The Leadership of Moses. (iii) The Judges. (iv) The Kings and (v) The Priests and Prophets.

All of these agencies were the channels God used to keep and uphold His word - since His word is Himself (John 1:1, 14), and does not expire (The words of the Lord are flawless - Psalm 12:6). To maintain God's Word from any miscarry, it was handed down from generation to generation through God's own appointed bureaucracies to teach the people the way of salvation.

### **Teaching from Generation to Generation**

The term "Generation" has been explained in various meanings. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines generation as: The average span of time between the birth of parents and their offspring. Comparatively, the World Book Encyclopedia says - Generation is a term that refers to a particular group of animals or plants in a line of descent. Each generation in turn, produces offspring that make up another generation. Each human generation is considered to be about 25 years.<sup>9</sup>

The Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary in summary says: the word generation usually occurs when the Bible gives a genealogical or historical account of a family or tribe (Gen 17:7; Exod 1:6; Matt 1:17).<sup>10</sup> In the era of Abraham a generation was one hundred years. Israel was to be afflicted for four hundred years, as God told Abraham (Gen 15:13), and then in the fourth generation they shall return (Gen 15:16). One can notice that a specific time frame cannot be given to the span of a generation since the range of events used to calculate generations are not the same.

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<sup>9</sup>The World Book Encyclopedia, "G" Vol. 8, *Generation* (Chicago, IL: World Book, 1994), 83.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Nelson, Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, *Generation: PC Study Bible*, (Thomas Nelson, 1986).

The Minister's Bible captions Deuteronomy chapter six as, *The Great Commandment*<sup>11</sup> vital for human consideration. The children of Israel were near River Jordan and were not far from the borders of the Promised Land (Deut 6:3). Moses received instruction from the Lord (Deut 6:1) to disseminate to His people. The import of this assembly was that even though they were going to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of the land; Israel was going to live among nations whose cultural, social, economic and religious practices differ from that of the Israelites. As a result, they needed to be mindful of keeping, teaching and observing the commandments, statutes and judgments of God in order not to be polluted amidst idolatrous and polytheistic environment (Deut 6:1-2). The fear of God (Deut 6:2) in the heart (Deut 6:5) will be the most powerful principle of obedience.<sup>12</sup>

The Creator God asked from the people to attach the highest affection to Him wherever they be and whenever they live. In this publication of His law God calls Himself with the title, "The LORD your God."<sup>13</sup>

From one generation to another, the Israelites were to keep the knowledge gained (Deut 6:2) and pass it on by teaching them diligently to their offspring and the community to observe them (Deut 6:7). Since there was the possibility of forgetting what the Lord God had earlier commanded them to observe (Deut 6:10-19), He being

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<sup>11</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Bible* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015), 160.

<sup>12</sup>Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible Whole*, Vol. 5, *PC Study, Matthew to John*, (New York: Fleming H. Revel, 1935).

<sup>13</sup>Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator, Old Testament Volumes, Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Melville Home, Deut 6:1-9).

Omniscience saw the need of reiterating what He had instructed them already at Sinai (Deut 6: 10-25).

In Biblical faith, the remembrance of God's past mercies and delivering acts are fundamental. In the hour of prosperity men forget God and may even turn aside from allegiance to Yahweh. Two aspects of the importance of remembering are now taken up. In the first place, there is a negative statement: men are exhorted not to forget (Deut6:10-19). In the second place, Israel is charged to transmit to the children the great facts of the deliverance from Egypt.<sup>14</sup>

The Bible mentions some of the practices that should be carried down through the generations in the socio-religious culture of Israel.

### **Parenting in the Old Testament**

Parenting is a sacred responsibility (Prov. 19:18). The Torah includes numerous mitzvot (Jewish Laws) regarding parent-child interaction. Judaism sees parents and offspring as bound to each other not only for practical or humanistic reasons, but also as a way of honoring God. Christianity takes foundation of the scripture for child training and parenting, nonetheless, the scripture contains replicas of good and bad parenting which portrays the requisite roles parents must play in the upbringing of their children.

Examples of good parenting include: Abraham (Gen 18:19), Jacob (Gen 49), Joseph (Gen 48:9), Jochebed (Exod 2:9), and Manoah (Judges 13:8), Hannah (1Sam. 1:22), Job (1:5), Lois and Eunice (2Tim. 1:5). Examples of bad parenting include: Mother of Micah (Judges 17:1-4), Eli (1Sam. 3:11-14), Saul (1Sam. 28:7, 19), Athaliah (2Chron 21:4,6) and Herodias (Matt 14: 8-11).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction & Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 124.

<sup>15</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Torrey's New Topical Textbook, Parent*, PC Study formatted electronic database, BibleSoft, 2003.

The Thompson Chain - Reference Bible lists six special duties incumbent upon parents: (I) To Teach (Deut 6:7, 20; 21:19), (ii) To Train (Prov. 22:6), (iii) To Provide for, (iv) To Nurture, (Eph 6:4; Col. 3:21), (v) To Control (1Tim. 3:4; 12), and (vi) To show Love. The father of the prodigal son is an example of a loving father: But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was with filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him<sup>16</sup> (NIV).

Parenting to carry on etiquette and morality down the ages has almost been relegated in contemporary societies. It was for every parent in the Jewish society to let their families know how to live godly and moral lives in the society (Psalm1:1-2) most especially the social vices that attracts punishment. Below are some of the norms expected of every Jewish citizen.

a. Parents must circumcise their male children on the eight day after birth. (Gen 17:10- 14). In the theocratic nation of Israel, circumcision was a special badge. Slaves, bought or home-born must be circumcised (Gen 17:12-13), all foreigners must circumcise their males before they could enjoy the privileges of Jewish citizenship (Exod 12:48). Interestingly, Abraham was circumcised same day with Ishmael at ages 99 and 13 respectively.<sup>17</sup>(Gen 17:24-27).

b. Infanticide or Human Sacrifice (Lev 20:1). Abomination before the Lord.

c. Incest: A crime forbidden by the Levitical Law (Lev.18: 6-18).

d. Parents responsible for their children's education. (Lev 11:19-20).

e. First-born sons must be redeemed from the priesthood. (Exod 13: 2, 13)

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<sup>16</sup>Frank Charles Thompson, *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible: New International Version* (Indianapolis, IN: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Co., 1888), 1493.

<sup>17</sup>M.G. Easton, *Bible Dictionary, Circumcision*, P.C. Bible Study.

f. Insults to parents are subject to grave punishment. - by death (Lev 20:9).

g. There is longevity in honoring parents. (Exod 20:12; Lev 19:1-3; Deut 5:16)

h. A prostitute should not rise among your family members; it is a chahal; a life of shame for a Hebrew father see his daughter becoming a prostitute. (Lev 19:29).

I. Rape- Chazak: to seize; bind; restrain; conquer; force; or ravish. The penalty for this offense was severe (by death) when the act was committed against a betrothed woman. If the one involved is another man's wife or a virgin to be married, but consented, both the man and woman should be stoned to death (Deut 22:25-29).

j. Sabbath-Breaking (Exod 20: 8-11).

k. Unnatural Vice - Sodomy: Anal or oral copulation with a member of the same or opposite sex. Any of various forms of sexual intercourse held to be unnatural, particularly bestiality was punishable by death by the participants. (Gen 13:13; 19: 5, 7; Lev 18:22-23; 20:13).

l. False Witnessing - The Hebrew idiom is 'edh sheqer, - witness of a falsehood, or a lie. (Exod 20:16; Deut 19:16, 18; Prov. 6:19; 14:5; 25; 19:5,9). For the innocent to be protected against the lying accuser, a criminal was to be convicted only on the testimony of at least two or three witnesses, testifying to the same facts (Num 35:30). If someone testifies falsely, the person was to be punished by suffering the penalty which would have been inflicted on the one falsely accused. (Deut 19: 16-19).

m. Irreverence - Lack of respect for God or His natural representatives:

Parents, governmental officers or authorities. (Deut 17:12-13; Psa 94:4-7).<sup>18</sup>

Other socio-religious crimes include: Assassination (Deut 27:25), blasphemy (1 Kings 21 10,13), breach of covenant (Lev 23:28-29), breach of ritual (Lev 7:25-26), bribery (Exod 23:8), burglary (Josh. 7:25), disobedience (Gen 3; Eph 2:2), divination (Isa 8:19), evil speaking (Psa 140:11; Rom. 1:29-32), falsehood (Psa 7:14), false swearing (Zach. 5:4), homicide (Num 35: 6,12), idolatry (Hosea 8:5-6; Ezek.8:14), ill-treatment of parents (Exod 21:15,), injuries to a person (Lev 24:19; Deut 25:11-12), kidnapping and the like (I Tim.1:10), removing landmarks (Deut 19:14; 27:17; Prov. 22:28; Job. 24:2), robbery (Isa 10:2,3,13; Mal 3:8-9), seduction (2Kings 21:9), stealing (Exod 20:15) etc.<sup>19</sup>

Moses received instruction from the Lord (Deut 6:1) to disseminate to His people. The import of this assembly was that even though they were going to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of the land; Israel was going to live among nations whose cultural, social, economic and religious practices differ from that of the Israelites. As a result, they needed to be mindful of keeping and observing the commandments, statutes and judgments of God in order not to be polluted amidst idolatrous and polytheistic environment (Deut 6:1-2). In view of this, the commandments were reviewed (Deut 6).

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<sup>18</sup>Frank E. Hirsch, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, *Crimes* (Biblesoft, Electronic Database, 2003); Author and General Editor, James Orr. Accessed: June 23, 2016, [www. myjewishlearning.com/ article/jewish-parentchild-relationship/](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-parentchild-relationship/).

<sup>19</sup>Frank E. Hirsch, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

## **Worship: The Shema**

Is the Jewish confession of faith which begins, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” (Deut 6:4). The complete Shema is found in three passages from the Old Testament: Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21.<sup>20</sup> The Shema holds the place of one of the most important liturgical and creedal texts of ancient Israel and Judaism.<sup>21</sup> The Shema is a Biblical foundation for the fundamental role of contemporary Christians in parenting and worship. It is an epitome of home education and worship in a world of moral decadence and irreverence.

Practically, the shema is a prayer that serves as the focal point of the morning and evening Jewish prayer. It should be recited two times a day, whether or not one could worship with a congregation. The recitation should be done in a fitting place that expresses reverence.<sup>22</sup> The shema should be said more audibly than the rest of the Jewish prayers. It could be recited while standing or sitting. The Jews of Israel normally stand to show the shema’s importance and to demonstrate that reciting shema is an act of testifying in God.<sup>23</sup>

In essence, Israel’s identity begins with Yahweh’s identity: The LORD our God the LORD is one. Luke Dalach asserts that the Shema, in Deuteronomy 6:4-6, which is the foundation of Israel’s identity, sheds light on the role of the household in God’s mission. There is one creator of the universe who rules and regulates over every creature and His name is Yahweh. In this wise Israel’s response, should be

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<sup>20</sup>*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1986.

<sup>21</sup>Todd J. Murphy, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of Biblical Hebrew* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Shira Schoenberg, *Jewish Prayers: The Shema* (Jason Levine, Webmaster: American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2016). <https://search.yahoo.com/yhs/>.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

that of total love and commitment; as a unique people set aside by God to be priests of one true God<sup>24</sup> (Exod 19:5-6).

In his communiqué to his fellow Israelites, Moses urged his people to use every possible positive procedure to convey, converse and coach their descendants the explicit desire of God from His people Israel:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9).

The Shema is God's complete and comprehensive curriculum towards humanity. Every organization has a vision and a mission spelt out and well structured.<sup>25</sup> Prior to the entrance of sin, Adam and Eve were empowered stewardship over all creation. They had dominion over animal and plant life. After the transgression, the spirit of rebellion affected all creation. Human beings became powerless in the face of the elements: The beast, the forest, the grass of the field, even the air we breathe; all told the sad lesson of the knowledge of evil.<sup>26</sup>Yahweh's ultimate goal; which stems out of love; is to restore, redeem and retain the original

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<sup>24</sup>Luke Dalach, *House to House: A Case for Missional Attractional Families* (Fuller Theological Seminary, 2007), 10, 11.

<sup>25</sup>Emmanuel Harrison Takyi, "Shema: The Comprehensive Curriculum 1&2," (Class Lectures - Doctor of Ministry, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya; Babcock Campus, June 27 & 28, 2016).

<sup>26</sup>Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 26, 27.

state of creation. Love: the base of creation and of redemption is the basis of true education.<sup>27</sup>

The Shema is the Greatest Universal Call to the Creator God by Himself. The call to surrender to his counsels, and judgments.<sup>28</sup> A call that requires total obedience and exact reaction both spiritual and physical. “Shema Yisrael, YHWH, Elohai, YHWH aichod; that is, Hear O Israel: The LORD our God (God of Israel) *is* one God.”

This weighty text contains far more than a mere declaration of the unity of God as against polytheism; ...It asserts that the Lord God of Israel is absolutely God, and none other. He and He alone, is Jehovah (Yahweh) the absolute, uncaused God; the One who had, by His election of them, made Himself known to Israel.<sup>29</sup>

Spiritually (Deut 6:6), the Shema required the whole faculties and sensibilities of human beings - heart, soul and might, in a loving response to God. It calls for service to God and our fellow human beings. Physically (Deut 6:7-9), from time to time and events by events, the Hebrews were to rehearse and teach diligently the laws of God to their children and communities. Even though Israel was asked to keep the instructions of God in their heart, to be very sure of its remembrance they were obliged to do some tangible things that would make them double sure of honoring but not forgetting what the Lord God actually wants them to do. Thus - You shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deut 6: 8-9).

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<sup>27</sup>Emmanuel Harrison Takyi, “Shema: The Comprehensive Curriculum 1&2.”

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>A. Fuller, *Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Vol. 2-Exodus to Ruth; The Ages Digital Library Commentary* (WI: AGES Software Rio, Version 1.0, 2000).

The Jews later took these words literally and inherent by wearing phylacteries upon the head and the inside of the left arm.<sup>30</sup> Forgetting the spiritual imports of these precepts they used these things as other nations do superstitiously with amulets and charms. They thought, if they write these passages of Scripture on parchments, wrapped round their foreheads, tied to their arms and nailed to their gates and doorposts they would be prevented and delivered from every evil. Nowadays, many Christians keep the Bible at home thinking that it would prevent evil spirits. Some place it under their pillows or bedside to keep off spirits and ghosts in the night.<sup>31</sup>

In the nutshell, the Shema; one of the most important Jewish prayers is an affirmation of Judaism and an assertion of faith in one God. A Jew is obligated to recite Shema in the morning and the evening. It is normally recited (Deut 6:4-9) while standing to show its importance and to demonstrate that saying Shema is an act of testifying the omnipotence of God above all other deities. The comprehensive three-part Shema prayer included Deuteronomy 11:13-29 and Numbers 15:37-41.

The Shema; also, labeled as the Universal Call was echoed by the patriarchs; re-echoed by the prophets; summarized in the book of the wise man - Solomon (Prov 19:23; Eccl 12:13,14); demonstrated and authenticated by Jesus Christ (Matt 5:17-20; 19:17; 28:19,20), followed up in the mission and ministry of the disciples (Acts 11:26); and trumpeted with angelic urgency as the sole eschatological criterion for sainthood<sup>32</sup> (Rev 14:6-12). The Shema was used as a medium to preserve God's

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<sup>30</sup>"Bind Them" [Deut 6: 8,9], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (SDABC), rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1978), 974, 975.

<sup>31</sup>Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 2005)/ Biblesoft Electronic Database.

<sup>32</sup>Emmanuel Harrison Takyi, "Shema: The Comprehensive Curriculum 1&2."

commandments and retain His faithful and obedient people. Now, a look at how Non-Jewish Converts were added to the chosen people of God.

### **Non-Jewish Converts**

Through the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord God gives great encouragement to strangers who were willing to associate themselves with the covenant. The non-Jewish aspiring converts were not to hesitate in “joining” themselves to the Lord God. Yahweh assures other nations of the blessings of the covenant, stating that they would receive equal treatment in the hands of Yahweh. In this message to the Prophet Isaiah, God pronounces a high blame against the watchmen of Israel, which were careless, disloyal, blind and lack divine wisdom and understanding in God’s mission and ministry to each and every person on the face of the earth.<sup>33</sup> A look at the message given to Isaiah regarding non-Jewish converts:

Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, The LORD will surely exclude me from his people. And let not any eunuch complain, I am only a dry tree. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant — these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house, will be called a house of prayer for all nations. The Sovereign LORD declares — he who gathers the exiles of Israel. (Isa 56: 3, 6-8)

Conversion to Judaism is an official act undertaken by a non-Jewish person who wishes to be accepted as a full member of a Jewish community. The conversion

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<sup>33</sup>Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Whole Bible Commentary*, Vol. 4 (NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1935).

comprises series of religious acts and studies, including an expression of association with the Jewish people.<sup>34</sup>

Some Bible scholars have argued for or against Israel's attitude towards the privilege to evangelize the world - being the selected of God. Some assert that there are no explicit instructions on the part of Israel to evangelize the world in the O T as it is in the great commission in the New Testament. The argument expands to the fact that Abraham, Israel and others were only passive witnesses for God but not really engaged in mission.<sup>35</sup> David J. Bosch wittily argues that if there is a missionary in the OT it is God Himself who brings the nations to Jerusalem to worship Him there together with His covenant.<sup>36</sup>

Responding to this claim one must notice that the style of writing in the OT is different from that of our day. The OT is that of a storybook with a meta-narrative on salvation. There are stories which expresses (Seth-Gen 4:26; Enoch- Gen 5:24 Noah- Gen 6:5, 6, 11-13) explicit statements that uncover the mission of God's people.<sup>37</sup> God has always been accomplishing His work through human agencies.<sup>38</sup> God's mission is doing all things possible to convey salvation to the world.<sup>39</sup> His universal

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<sup>34</sup>Lawrence J. Epstein, [www.google.com.ng/search?q=the+jewsdealings+with+non+Israelites+converts](http://www.google.com.ng/search?q=the+jewsdealings+with+non+Israelites+converts), accessed: June 28, 2016.

<sup>35</sup>Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVaristy, 2004).

<sup>36</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology and Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 1719.

<sup>37</sup>Jiri Moskala, *The Perspective Message of God's People in the Old Testament: Perspective Digest* 15:2 (Berrien Springs, MI: 2010), 4-8.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>John A. McIntosh, "Missio Dei," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, A. Scott Moreau, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 631, 632.

motive is really the “basis for the missionary message of the OT.”<sup>40</sup> God has a mission and the followers and the believers in Him are to participate in it. The book of Psalm records numerous calls for missionary activities (Psa 105: 1, 2; 119:46; 126:2; 145:11, 12; 57:9; 108:3).

From creation till date no generation can make a claim that the word of God was not given out in that era for mission and ministry. Hence God’s figurative language exposes the blind watchmen and shepherds of Israel as irresponsible leaders who are mainly concerned about themselves but not the sheep. If God had not put people in charge of His work, how then can He denounce and accuse them of irresponsibility? Through the prophet Isaiah God laments over His appointed leaders.

All you beasts of the field, come to devour, all you beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory. “Come,” one says, “I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant.” Isa 56:9-12.

Like Israel of old, mission and ministry in contemporary times have not been carried out well by the carriers of God’s salvific and everlasting message. Those placed in position of trust act against the explicit word of God (Isa 56:11).

The Jews allow non-Jewish converts into Judaism but does not encourage it. It is not prohibited for one to convert into the Jewish religion per-se, but it is not required, encouraged or aimed at either.<sup>41</sup> The Webster Dictionary explains a Jew as someone whose religion is Judaism; a descendant from the Jewish people, or who

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<sup>40</sup>Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 17.

<sup>41</sup>Alon Shalev, “Why are the Jews not Evangelistic?” [www.quora.com/Why-are-Jews-not-evangelistic](http://www.quora.com/Why-are-Jews-not-evangelistic), accessed: July 1, 2016.

participates in the Jewish culture surrounding Judaism. The Jewish status of a person in Israel is considered a matter of “nationality.”<sup>42</sup> The Jewish religion is highly meticulous - it is conceived and meant to be distinctive to a certain people.<sup>43</sup> They do not aspire for the whole world to become Jewish nor does it condemn those who are not Jewish.<sup>44</sup> The traditional position is for the convert to express strong and persuasive commitment to the Jewish culture in order to be allowed to convert. For this rationale, not only is conversion not encouraged, but those who desire to convert are often discouraged.<sup>45</sup>

The uniqueness of the Jews not to convert to other religions of other nations is originally founded on the first two commandments of the Decalogue:

You shall have no other gods before Me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Exodus 20:3-6.

The Jews were going to settle in a polytheistic land with people who were imbued with worshipping images. In no time, they may begin to offer sacrifices to such gods. The belief in the existence of Yahweh as the sole creator of all that exists;

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<sup>42</sup>Emily Harris, “What Makes One Qualifies as a Jew,” [www.google.com.ng/search?q=what+make+one+qualifies+as+aJew](http://www.google.com.ng/search?q=what+make+one+qualifies+as+aJew). Accessed: July 1, 2016.

<sup>43</sup>James Parkes, “A History of the Jewish People,” [www.questia.com/library/11716](http://www.questia.com/library/11716), accessed: July 1, 2016.

<sup>44</sup>Hillel Gray, Scholar of Ethics and Religion, Miami Univ. in Ohio, with specialty in Jewish History, [/www.quora.com/profile/Hillel-Graham](http://www.quora.com/profile/Hillel-Graham), accessed: July 1, 2016.

<sup>45</sup>Hillel Gray, [www.quora.com/why-are-Jews-not-Evangelistic](http://www.quora.com/why-are-Jews-not-Evangelistic), accessed July 1, 2016.

that He decides the course and the events of the world; and that He alone deserves worshipping is the foundation of Judaism.<sup>46</sup>

After Israel, had experienced more than three years of drought under King Ahab and his idolatrous wife Jezebel, God arranged a contest between His prophet Elijah (Yahweh is God), and the prophets of Baal [450] and Asherah [400] (1 Kgs 18:19). Elijah challenged the people by saying, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God follow Him, but if Baal, follow him. (1Kings 18:21). The people remained non-committed at that instance. At the end of the contest God emerged victorious. (Verses 38, 39), the Baal and the Asherah prophets were put to death, as commanded by Yahweh (Exod 22:20). When the LORD God was appeased, He ended the drought and sent rain upon the Land (1Kings 18:45). This lesson was to reveal to both Jewish and non-Jewish nations the greatness of Yahweh.

According to the halakhah (Jewish Law), when someone decides to be a convert of Judaism, the one must learn Jewish Laws and customs and observe them. There are at least ten conversion processes to follow when one decides to accept Judaism.

1. Considering Judaism. The first step is to explore Judaism by discussing the subject with friends and colleagues and taking out books and videos on Judaism.

2. Finding a Rabbi. This part of the process can be difficult for several reasons. Obviously, individual rabbis differ. Some devote more time than others to conversion candidates. Some adhere to an ancient tradition of turning away a

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<sup>46</sup>Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993) /Electronic Database, Biblesoft, 2006.

candidate three times to test the candidate's sincerity. The Rabbis are Judaism's doorkeepers or gatekeepers.<sup>47</sup> They decide who can or cannot enter into Judaism.

3. Learning Judaism. A study of the Hebrew language, beliefs and religious practices such as prayer services, the history and culture of the Jewish people, the Jewish home, the Jewish holidays and life cycle are required.

4. The Religious Court. Known as the *Bet Din* is an interview prior to the official acceptance to Judaism. The panel often consists of three people; at least one of them must be a rabbi. The questions cover Jewish religion and culture.

5. Circumcision. Referred to as the *brit milah*, is required of male converts before one is accepted into Judaism (Gen 17:10-13).

6. Immersion. Orthodox and Conservative rabbis require both male and female conversion candidates to immerse themselves in a ritual bath called a mikveh. The mikveh can be any body of natural water, though the term usually refers to a specific pool that is built for the purposes of ritual purification. Blessings are recited and the person goes bends into the water and comes out.

7. The Offering. In ancient times, conversion candidates brought sacrifices or offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem. Currently, the rabbis mention it to the candidates to take the opportunity in honoring this act by donating to the poor fund.

8. Choosing a name. After the Bet Din (public examination), the signing of an oath, and immersion, a Hebrew name (such as Abraham, Jacob, David, Sarah or Ruth) is chosen. The naming ceremony includes a blessing.

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<sup>47</sup>James W. Zackrison, *From Spectators to Disciples: A Biblical Strategy for Church Growth* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 1997), 187.

9. The Public Ceremony. This ceremony usually involves the convert standing in front of the congregation and giving a speech, most typically about the reasons for converting and the lessons learned through the conversion experience.

10. A Special Case - Conversion of Minors. In families with a non-Jewish mother and a Jewish father, Orthodox and Conservative Judaism (unlike the reform rabbis who only require a naming ceremony) do not regard such a child as legally Jewish. Such children are required to have the mikveh (ritual bath or immersion) for a female minor, and a circumcision and mikveh for a male minor.<sup>48</sup>

It was a custom for native Israelites to participate in national celebrations such as the Passover, depicting their identity as God's chosen people. However, there was a provision for non-Israelites who have accepted Jewish beliefs and norms to have the same opportunity. "...One law shall be for the native-born and the stranger who dwell among you. Exod 12: 43-45, 48. The book of Numbers 9:14 reiterate the equal right given to non-Israelites who have proselyte into Judaism.

To sum up, conversion in the OT was through marriage, spiritual bath or immersion and circumcision. Conversion in Christianity compared to Judaism in the OT is not cumbersome. It is mainly through baptism. It is evident that even though Judaism was passive in the universal call to the worship of Yahweh, His attitude and rebuke towards the supposed spiritual leaders (Isa 56:9-12) demands God's widespread response to His call. Next is a look at the role of the prophets in their mission and ministry to help the people retain under the control of God.

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<sup>48</sup> Rabbi Celso Cukierkom, Conversion to Judaism  
[http://www.convert.org/Conversion\\_Process.html](http://www.convert.org/Conversion_Process.html), accessed: March 15, 2016.

## The Role of the Prophets

The Hebrew word for prophet is *Nabi*; means a person who acts as an organ of divine communication with men, especially with regard to the future.<sup>49</sup> At Horeb, God promised Moses of a Prophet that would be among the people, “ I would raise up a prophet like you from among their brethren and I would put My words in His mouth, and he shall speak, to them all that I command Him (Deut 18:18). God sent prophets throughout history to direct and counsel His people. Between Moses and Malachi, the OT Scripture records on the number of prophets about 48 males, 7 females and 1 gentile.<sup>50</sup> Even though many prophets were recorded in the Bible who worked locally among the people, the singular nature of the reference, found in Deuteronomy 18:15,18 uttered by God and Moses points to Christ as the true Prophet that should come into the world<sup>51</sup> (John 6:14). This study considers the ministries of two Major Prophets (Isa and Jeremiah) and one Minor Prophet (Malachi) before the coming of the Messiah.

**Isaiah.** Hebrew: *Yeshaya*, Greek: *Esaias* means - The Lord Saves. The subject matter of the book is God Himself, who initiates all things for His own sake. The message to the people centers on oracles of judgment and salvation (Isa 63:1-6). Isaiah present the messianic promises to a rebel people by giving them an invitation to abundant life (Isa 55:1-13) and gives assurance to non-Israelites that they can belong

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<sup>49</sup>John McClintock and James Strong, *McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 12 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1981).

<sup>50</sup>Tracey R. Rich, *Judaism 101: Prophets and Prophecy*, [www.jewfaq.org/prophet.htm](http://www.jewfaq.org/prophet.htm), accessed: March 15, 2016,

<sup>51</sup>*SDABC* 1, 1017-1019.

to universal people of God (Isa 56:1-8).<sup>52</sup> While worshipping in the temple as a priest, Isaiah was called to the prophetic ministry (Isa 6).

In the introduction to his call (Chapters 1-5), Isaiah spells out that the reason of his call was basically the disobedience of the people. God complains through the prophet Isaiah, “Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me (Isa 1:2). The fundamental theme of disobedience (Isa 1:2-4; 15-16, 19-20; 2:5-9; 3:8-9) is placed between the brackets of hope and no hope. On one hand Yahweh has good news of salvation for His people (Isa 1:26-28; 2:2-4; 4:2-6), but on the other, sin must be judged (Isa 1:5-6, 24-25; 2:10-11; 3:11).<sup>53</sup>

Almost throughout the prophecies of Isaiah, he describes the problem between God and His people as lack of integrity on the part of His people: “No one calls for justice, nor does anyone plead for truth, they trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity” (Isa 59:4). The prophet was given the responsibility of telling the people their sins. A message startling in its plainness and force,<sup>54</sup> “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isa 58:1). The people took “delight” (Isa 58:2) and approaching God and lodging their complaints: Why have we

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<sup>52</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Bible* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015), 588.

<sup>53</sup>Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 199), 15.

<sup>54</sup>*SDABC* 4, 1149.3.

fasted...and you have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls and You take no notice? (Isa 58:3).

The book of Isaiah explains that there is no limitation on the part of God to care for the desires of human beings, because, "...the Lords hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear but the iniquities of the people have hidden His face, so that He will not hear" (Isa 59:1). The distance and silence were created by the sins of the people. The problem is not that God cannot hear, but the reality is that He will not hear because they have walked and stayed away from God and yet they sought His blessings. He had actually seen and heard their cries and petitions but as they continue to live contrary to the will of God, He told them frankly - "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isa I:15). It is not the numerous prayers that matters. Rather the submission of the heart and the direction of the feet towards God or not is the most important.

Isaiah further identifies the sins of the people as removers of peace and justice from the land: their hands are defiled with blood, lips spoken lies, hatch vipers' eggs and weave spiders web, feet run to evil, haste to shed innocent blood, make themselves crooked paths and whoever is trapped into it would know no peace (Isa 59:3-8).

In the parable of Jehovah's disappointing vineyard (Isa 5:1-7), God did all He could for the welfare of His people, consistently with His justice and goodness. He is amazed of the unnatural fruit of so well-cared a vineyard,<sup>55</sup> therefore decides to abandon it to face destructive creatures. The parable of the vineyard portrays a divine

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<sup>55</sup>Jemieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Isaiah 5:1-7.

idea of a protective self-contained nature comparative to the Garden of Eden at its original state when Adam and Eve were asked to take care of the garden (Gen 2:15). The same idea was projected by Christ when He cautioned his followers to remain in Him to be able to bear much fruits (John 15:1-17).

Fortunately, the people realize their frailty without God's protection and resorted to heart-searching confessions: For our transgressions are multiplied before You and our sins testify against us; For our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities we know them (Isa 59:9-15). Seeing their repentance (Isa 59:16) God put on the garments of vengeance and fought for His people (Isa 59:17), and promised of the coming of a permanent Redeemer (Isa 59:20, 21).

Nearly one-third of the book of Isaiah contains prophecies of Christ. He would be born of a virgin and be called Immanuel (Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10), an eternal government will be upon his shoulder and He would be called the Prince of Peace (Isa 9: 6-7). The New Testament quotes Isaiah more than all the other prophets together<sup>56</sup> Jewish tradition had it that the Prophet Isaiah was sawn into two by King Manasseh. This seems to be alluded to in Hebrews 11:37.<sup>57</sup> An affirmation to this fact states: Isaiah who was allowed by the Lord to see amazing things was sawn asunder, because he sincerely reprimanded the sins of the Jewish nation.<sup>58</sup> In spite of the wickedness inflicted on God's appointed servants, He continued to seek after the salvation of human beings. The lesson to learn is that even though God does not relent in calling His people from wandering, He does not compromise with those who continue to

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<sup>56</sup>Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*.

<sup>57</sup>Jim Haeffele, "Life Hope & Truth," <http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/prophets/prophets-of-the-bible/isaiah-the-prophet>, accessed: July 8, 2016.

<sup>58</sup>*SDABC* 4, 1137.1.

disobey. Another prophet of Yahweh who went through similar ordeals was the Prophet Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah.** Hebrew: *Jirmejahu* means God's exaltation. Jeremiah was set aside by God before birth to take a message to the nations. He was called by God to the prophetic office while young (Jer 1:6). In an attempt to reject the call God expressed His omniscience to him (... before I formed you I knew you...Jer. 1:1-10). He lived with his father Hilkiyah - a Levitical Priest in Anathoth (about 3km from Jerusalem). It was definitely through Jeremiah's childhood training for holy services that God began grooming him for his future role as a prophet. Jeremiah began his ministry in the 13th year of King Josiah (Jer 1:2; 25:3). He worked under five kings: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. After the fall of Jerusalem, he prophesied in Egypt for several years, his work extended over 50 years. Initially, he lived in Anathoth, and put in his appearance publicly in Jerusalem only on the occasion of the great festivals; later he lived in Jerusalem, and was there during the dreadful times of the siege and the destruction of the city.<sup>59</sup> In a preview, Jeremiah's messages were (i) against Judah and Jerusalem (Jer 1:1-25:38), (ii) autobiographical accounts and salvation announcements (Jer 26: 1-45:5), (iii) messages against pagan nations (Jer 46: 1-51:64), (iv) the fall of Jerusalem. God's commission to Jeremiah was thus: "Behold I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant (Jer 1:9-10). Jeremiah speaks about God's judgment, infidelity against the covenant, and sin in totality and God's desire to make a new

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<sup>59</sup>Conrad Von Orelli, "Jeremiah," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, completely rev. and reset ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979-1988).

covenant with a restored people. Jeremiah's ministry was met with series of oppositions. The most prominent among them was Hananiah; a prophet whose name means - Jehovah is gracious.

Jeremiah's divine message and enactment of the "Potter and the Clay" (Jer 18) and that of the "Broken Flask" (Jer 19) were rejected by the people: And they said, that is hopeless! So, we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart (Jer.18:12). Jeremiah's message made him unpopular yet he could not restrain from proclaiming the word of God (Jer 20:7-10). The prophets message of doom to Jerusalem ignited the fury of Pashur - the priest and the Chief governor of the temple, so he struck Jeremiah and put him in stocks overnight (Jer 20:2). Unrelentingly, Jeremiah avowed the Babylonian captivity which would include Pashur, his household and all his false prophet friends (Jer 29:6). Also in Jeremiah 38, under the conspiracy of Pashur and the command of King Zedekiah, Jeremiah was lowered to sink into a well of miry clay. However, with the intervention of Ebed-Melech; an Ethiopian eunuch he was released (Jer 38:7-13). Yet, after his release, Jeremiah affirmed the coming doom when King Zedekiah consulted him secretly.

Like Isaiah (1:3), who says "even the animals-the donkey and the ox know their owner and appreciate his care for them, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still don't care" (Isa 1:3 TLB), Jeremiah also compares the appreciation of animals to human beings "even the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtledove, the swift and the swallow observe the time of their coming. But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD (Jer 8:7)

Notwithstanding the numerous hardships faced by Jeremiah and the gross disobedience towards Yahweh, the Messianic thought of Jeremiah linked the

Righteous Branch, a descendant of David (Jer 33:14-18), with the peace and prosperity which God would give to the repentant nation (Jer 33:8-26), reflect a returned Israelite community establishing itself in Palestine again.<sup>60</sup>

The book of Jeremiah portrays God's persistent willingness to have his people return to Him, even in gross defiance and apostasy. It paints the picture that so far as there is life, divine grace is available for those who would show remorse of their ungodly deeds. All who receive the messages that God sends to purify and cleanse from habits of disobedience will receive divine help to correct their evil course of action.<sup>61</sup>

Both God and Jeremiah expressed sorrow over the impending Babylonian onslaught. Had they listened to the warnings from God through Jeremiah, and had it not been the part played by the false prophets, Israel could have been saved from the calamities which they had the opportunities to avoid. The divine pleadings have been: Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? (Jer 8:22); is not the Lord in Zion, is not her King in her? (Jer 8:19). Israel is compared to a lamb led to the slaughter (Jer.13:20-27) and a remorse that comes too late (Jer 15:10-21).

Jeremiah is commonly referred to as the "weeping prophet" based on his wish to have a "fountain of tears" with which he would weep for his own nation (Jer 9:1). What makes Jeremiah different from the other prophets is that he carried the emotional pain of what was about to occur to his people personal and was empathetic. Like Jeremiah, another prophet that was called to the prophetic ministry was Malachi.

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<sup>60</sup> R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah & Lamentations an Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 199), 15.

<sup>61</sup>SDABC 4, 1158.10.

**Malachi.** Hebrew: *Mal'akhi*. The Seventh-day Adventist *Minister's Bible* explains Malachi as "My messenger" or "Angel of Yahweh" Because his name does not occur elsewhere in the Bible, some scholars doubt whether Malachi is intended to be the personal name of the prophet. Some traditions ascribe the book to Ezra, Zerubbabel or Nehemiah. Certain scholars, on the basis of the similarity of the title in Malachi 1:1 to Zechariah 9:1; 12:1, declare it to be anonymous.<sup>62</sup> Secondly, it is suggested that the syllable *-yah* be added to the name to read *Mal'akhiah*, - "messenger of Yahweh"<sup>63</sup>

The Prophet Malachi reprimands the spiritual deafness of the postexilic community (Mal 2:8) urging them to be submissive and loyal to Yahweh's covenant. At the time of Malachi, the coming of Elijah and the great day of the Lord were highly expected. Malachi presents his message in a chain of "disputation speeches"<sup>64</sup> He makes a statement then expresses a supposed audience refutation in the form of a question, and follows up by offering support to the original declaration<sup>65</sup> (Mal 1:7). Then book aims at addressing the religious lax and social inequalities. On one hand, the charges were raised against the priests (Mal 1:6-2:9), and on the other hand, against the people (Mal 2:10-4:3). The SDA Minister's Bible classifies the Book of Malachi into seven categories:

*Israel the Beloved of God.* (Mal 1:2-5). The passage projects Israel as a privilege people. The Prophet Malachi shows that Yahweh still loves Israel, the reason is that their portion in the Lord stands in contrast to Edom. Israel was

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<sup>62</sup>George L. Robinson, "Malachi" *ISBE*.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Bible*, 835.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*

disciplined for a while; Edom was permanently condemned. Edom lacked repentance and planned to progress without the divine hand of Yahweh. They said among themselves, even though we have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. And the Lord had answered, they may build, but I will throw down (Mal 1:4). This insolent spirit and attitude of the Edomites attests to God's election of Israel when He stated: Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet Jacob I loved; but Esau I hated. (Mal 1:3).

***Polluted Offerings from Corrupt Priest.*** (Malachi 1:6-2:9) Malachi denounces the priests, the Levites who have become neglectful of their sacred office and indifferent to the holy law, and unmindful of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. They are bold enough to sacrifice blemish animals (1:8). The lips of the priests which ought to keep knowledge had departed from the way and caused many to stumble at the law (1:7-9). If Christians accept God as Father and Master, and see themselves as his children and servants, then it requires them to fear and honor Him more than all earthly authorities.

***Treachery of Idolatry and Infidelity (Malachi 2:10-16).*** Malachi addresses how important God deems family life to retain godly living among His people throughout the ages. It begins with - Have we not all one father; Has not one God created us; Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of our fathers? (Mal 2:10). The people are rebuked for literally putting away their wives in order to marry foreign women (verse 15). Marriages of such kind are both idolatry and violation of Yahweh's intention to retain to Himself a "godly seed." God explicitly states that He hates divorce (Mal 2:16). The covenant between God and Judah was profaned by Judah by marrying daughters of foreign gods (Mal 2:11,15). Another thing Malachi mentions is that the adulterous men go

to offer their sacrifices in their sins, which is against the desire of God and the groans of their repudiated wives (Mal 2:13).

***The Coming Messenger (Mal 3:1-7).*** Malachi 3:1 gives a clear picture of a forerunner. It states: Behold I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. The coming messenger has its fulfillment in John the Baptist whose behaviour was like Elijah (Luke 1:17). The figurative Elijah was revealed by Jesus Christ when He said to His audience, “Elijah has come already and the people did not know” (Matt 17:12). Some of the retributive events that were to take place at the coming of the Messiah include (1) judgment on the people who live contrary to Yahweh’s expectation (Mal 3:5) and (2) God would act as a refiner and a purifier of silver on the Levites whose performances had turned from God’s acts of mercy to selfish ambitions (Mal 3:2-4).

***Robbing God (Malachi 3:8-15).*** God calls for a return of unfaithfulness to loyalty. The famine (Mal 3:11) that hit the nation demonstrated the justice of God. Because He is unswerving in His judgment, He could not change (Mal 3:6) until the people turned to Him and tithed (Num 18:21; Lev 27:30) what He had given as a blessing (Mal 3:8). When they return to God, He would be merciful and give them the promised blessings (Mal 3: 10-12). Robbing God is in twofold - denying God of one’s material possessions to advance God’s work, and denying oneself from the blessings of God. The people were insensitive to their spiritual blindness when they asked, “In what way have we robbed you?” (Mal 3:8).

***Complain of the People (Malachi 3:13-18).*** The people observed that God did not act against those whose social and spiritual lives were in contrast to Him. So, they perceived that those who denied the divine claims of God appeared to be the happiest and most successful, yet they continue to succeed in life; “...For those who

do wickedness are raised up; they even tempt God and go free” (Mal 3:15). In their humanly thinking it is “useless” to serve God faithfully. The reason for their complaint is, what profit is that we have kept His ordinance and have walked as mourners before the Lord of host (Mal 3:14).

However, some of them who revere God did not follow the complainers but rather spoke with each other, and the omnipresent God heard and recorded their names in His book of remembrance (Mal 3:16). God promised the righteous to make them His jewels of honor. They would be witnesses to the judgment on those who rightly serve the Lord and those who do not (Mal 3:17-18).

***The Great Day of God.*** Three issues are identified in this concluding chapter - Malachi 4:1-6. (a) A contrast between the judgment of the wicked and the righteous (b) The indispensability of the law of God given to Moses at Horeb (c) The appearance of Elijah before the great day of the Lord.

This section of the paper (Retention in the OT) has discussed how Yahweh designed to keep His words to retain His covenant people and the world at large through the choosiness of Israel, the call of Abraham, and the given of the Law at Sinai. The Lord God instructed them on how to keep the Law and how to hand it down the generations in parenting and worship. In the Pentateuch (Exod 12:43-49) and through the prophets (Isa 56:1-8) non-Israelites were to be accepted and retained among the people of God. Though Yahweh takes the initiative in calling all people to righteousness, He has promised to restore and to retain the repentant (Jer 15:19; Mal. 3:7) but the impenitent would be destroyed at the judgment day (Mal 4:1). What does the New Testament also treat the subject of discipling and nurturing to retain the righteousness of God among people.

## **Retention in the New Testament**

The OT presents a centripetal missionary movement where the nations are expected to come from elsewhere to a centralized worship in Zion, whereas missionary drive in the NT; as prophesied in the OT (Isa 2:3; Micah 4:2) is centrifugal in nature - God's people would be sent out to the nations to witness.<sup>66</sup> This part of the essay would consider how Jesus Christ, John the baptist and the Apostle Paul ministered to retain members in the Church.

### **Jesus Christ's Model**

Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of the Messianic Prophecies in the OT (Gen 3:15 seed of the woman; Isaiah 7:14 virgin birth; Isaiah 9:1-2 His ministry; Isaiah 53:12 die with transgressors; Hosea 6:2 His resurrection). Jesus used a lot of strategies to disciple, nurture and maintain His followers. He is the model of outreach ministry (centrifugal) which was different from the centripetal where the nations occasionally come to Jerusalem. To begin with, Jesus Christ called the twelve disciples to train them and send them out for ministry (Mark 3:13-19). His first public address (Matthew 5-7) is normally referred to as the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon contains the central tenets of Christian discipleship.<sup>67</sup> It includes the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer. Chapter 5:48 is the focal point of the sermon which states: Be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect. Christ affirmed the validity of the Mosaic Law (Matt 5 17-20) He taught that murder and adultery begins

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<sup>66</sup>Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Mission Strategy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1995), 21.

<sup>67</sup>Carl G. Vaught, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Theological Interpretation* (SUNY Press, 2001) 7-10.

from the heart. Almost all the tit-for-tat principles in the Mosaic Law was taught differently by Jesus Christ.

To be able to retain them to spread the gospel abroad, He had to make them act and perceive as Himself; types of the antitype; true certified copies of the original. They were witnesses to His miraculous healing of diseases and exorcisms (Mark 1:21-45). He spoke with authority to even change what the people use to believe - "You have heard that it was said...but I tell you (Matt 5: 21-22; 27-28; 31-32; 33-34; 38-39; 43-44). He told parables to establish a point (Luke 15). He created experience by sending the disciples out for ministry after teaching them (Luke 9:1-6, 10). Christ practiced what He preached. He taught His disciples not to weary in prayer and He made prayer His constant practice. These methods helped Christ to have a large followers and hearers in His time.

The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit would be the power that would help the disciple to witness not in Jerusalem alone but Judea, Samaria and to the utter ends of the world (Acts 1:8). This errand would definitely bring along the other sheep which are not of the fold (John 10:16). One of the practical lessons Christ addressed in His ministry about membership retention is, the True Vine (John 15:1-5), the branches that can bear fruits must remain in the vine. Christ's prayer to the Father for the disciples was that even though they are in the world they would be sanctified and retained in the faith and not be of the world (John 17:14-18).

Jesus Christ's model of discipleship, nurture and retention is captured between His resurrection and ascension. This could be considered as the most vital message of Christ - the Great Commission (Matt.28:18-20). Assuring them of the ultimate authority to back them in centrifugal ministry, Jesus asked them to do four things:

“go” “make disciples” “baptize” and “teach” to enable them to carry out the gospel message, prepare and retain people who would be ready to be in His kingdom.

1. “Go.” (Matt 28:18) The disciples are to apply the Centrifugal Missionary Movement to towns and nations to let everyone hear about the salvation message.
2. “Make.” (Matt 28:18) Discipleship is a discipline which should be learned and practiced by the adherents of Jesus Christ.
3. “Baptize” (Matt 28:18) Converts are to be baptized to show public confession of their faith. Nowadays there are many forms of baptisms. Jesus Christ is our model of worship and practice so if He was baptized by immersion, we cannot do otherwise (John 3:13-17).
4. “Teach”. (Matt 28:19) The disciples are to teach the world all that Christ commanded them.

The four vital areas Christ’s instructed His disciples is widely used in recent times to conduct outreach programmes. It has been tested and proven as very effective for soul winning. The next Bible character to consider is John the Baptist.

### **John the Baptist’s Model**

Known in ancient Greek as Ioannes (h)ovaptistes and in the in the Qu’ran as Yahya.<sup>68</sup> John used baptism as the central theme of his ministry.<sup>69</sup> Some scholars believe that Jesus Christ was a follower or disciple of John,<sup>70</sup> and many NT accounts

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<sup>68</sup>Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historic Study* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2006)

<sup>69</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, “Sacrament” Online:  
<http://www.britanica.com/EBchecked/topic/515366/sacrament>, accessed: July 14, 2016.

<sup>70</sup>E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press), 91.

report that some of Christ's early disciples were previous disciples of John. This is confirmed by the Jewish historian - Josephus.<sup>71</sup>

The fundamental note of John the Baptist's message was repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah (Matt 3:1-3), John referred to himself as "the voice of one calling in the desert to prepare the way for the Lord (Matt 3:3a). By this John implicitly describes himself as the Prophet Elijah prophesied in the OT (Mal 4:5-6; Isaiah 40:3). However, when messengers were sent from Jerusalem to inquire whether he was the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet, John answered no to all their queries. During the baptism of Jesus, he pointed to Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

As the Angel Gabriel proclaimed to Elizabeth, (Luke I: 13-17) John resembled Elijah in the boldness he used to minister. Elijah confronted King Ahab concerning Naboth's vineyard (I Kings 21:17-24); John the Baptist confronted King Herod concerning his illicit behaviour with Herodias (Matt 14:1-12). John's manner of life and general appearance were similar (2 Kings 1:8; Matt 3:4). John's method of ministry can be classified into three: Boldness, humility and reliance on God.

1. Boldness. When the people, including many of the Pharisees and Sadducees responded to John's call for repentance, he addressed them, "... You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath...the ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt 3:7,10). John also walked to King Herod and reprimanded him about his immoral acts with his own brother Philip's wife - Herodias (Luke 3:19).

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<sup>71</sup>Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2.

2. Humility. People thought John the Baptist was the promised Messiah. He was so unselfish, humble and selfless. He did not seek to worldly honor or dignity. He did not desire honors that were not for him.<sup>72</sup> He told his audience he does not deserve to untie the sandals of the one who comes after him, and He is not the Messiah (John 1:24-27). Although John was a senior cousin to Jesus, he willingly submitted attention to Jesus, saying, He must increase, and I decrease (John 3:30). At Jordan, John saw in Jesus a sinless being whom he does not deserve to baptize but when Jesus expressed the necessity, John consented (Matt 3:13-17).

3. Reliance on God. John came from priestly parents. His father Zachariah was a priest and his mother Elizabeth belonged to the daughters of Aaron. (Luke 1:5-6). He continued his life as a Nazirite as directed by the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:13-15). During the training of his disciples he included forms of prayer (Luke 11:1) and fasted often (Matt 9:14). In the spirit of Elijah, John was able to lead many people to repentance through baptism (Luke 1:7). The next Bible character to consider is Saint Paul.

### **The Pauline Model**

Saul of Tarsus was born a Jew, circumcised on the eighth day. He belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law he was a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5) His Hebrew name was Saul. His father was a Roman citizen. This made Paul inherited Roman citizenship so he had the Latin name Paul.<sup>73</sup> As a Jew brought up in Tarsus in Roman Province Paul could speak Hebrew and

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<sup>72</sup>*SDABC* 5:1119.6.

<sup>73</sup>Catholic Answers Staff, "Why did God Change Saul's Name to Paul," [www.catholic.com/quickquestions/why-did-god-change-sauls-name-to-paul](http://www.catholic.com/quickquestions/why-did-god-change-sauls-name-to-paul), accessed: July 15, 2016.

Aramaic. And as a scholar in the Greco-Roman civilization who studied under Gamaliel, he could also speak Latin and Greek (Acts 21:37-40; 22:1-3). No wonder when Paul was addressing the problem of barbaric speaking in tongues said, “I thank God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (1 Cor 14:18-19). Paul’s multilingual privilege was a tool for success in winning many souls in his ministry.

Prior to his conversion near Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) Paul was one of the most determined haters of the gospel, a mighty instrument of Satan.<sup>74</sup> A gallant won from the camp of the enemy to the side of Jesus Christ.

Most scholars would vie for Paul as the greatest missionary ever lived. He planted many churches and wrote a major portion of the NT. Missiologists argue whether Paul had a *modus operandi* (strategy) for his missionary activities. Michael Green states: it would be a serious mistake to think that Paul drew a plan for the spread of Christianity. It must have been to a large extent haphazard and spontaneous.<sup>75</sup> Roger Hedlund supports: Paul’s plans were flexible and program open, so that he was able to move as the Spirit wants him to.<sup>76</sup>

Factors that aided Paul’s successes were: (i) The good Roman roads, (ii) the enactment of the *Pax Romana* - Roman Peace; (iii) the use of the Greek language for

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<sup>74</sup>SDABC 6:1057.

<sup>75</sup>Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 256.

<sup>76</sup>Roger F. Hedlund, *The Missions of the Church in the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 215.

trade throughout the Empire; and (iv) the synagogues build by the Jews in Diaspora<sup>77</sup>

Strategically, what helped Paul foremost was the divine selection of a territory. He was to preach to the Gentiles (Rom 15:19-20). He made church planting a priority because of the presence of the Jewish Synagogues. Also, Paul did not leave the Churches leaderless,<sup>78</sup> he and Barnabas did mentoring by “appointing elders for them in each church and with prayer and fasting committed them to the Lord, in whom they had much trust” (Acts 14:23). He visited the Churches (Acts 14:27) through the missionary journeys. He concentrated his ministry at where the people were receptive and could achieve good results (Acts 18:6). Paul did a lot of baptisms (Acts 9:18; 16:33). He usually had an evangelistic team ministry which comprise both male and female (Rom 16:1,7; Col 4:9-10).

A quite number of factors contributed to the success of Paul missionary activities. First, Paul was convinced that God had made him an apostle to the gentiles and claims such in his writings (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, 15). Second, Paul devotes himself in accomplishing the will of God (Phil. 1:21-23). Third, Paul relied on the Holy Spirit to carry out his missionary labors (1 Cor 2:4-5), and for guidance (Acts 16). Fourth, through divine assistance Paul performed miracles (Acts 19:12; 20:10).

Many Bible students have in one way or the other developed Paul’s strategy of mission. This paper recommends Kane’s nine principles in Paul’s methods of missionary approach.

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<sup>77</sup>John Mark Terry & J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 55

<sup>78</sup> John Mark Terry & J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions*.

1. Paul maintained close contact with his home church. (Acts 13:1-6; 14:27).
2. Paul gave attention to his work mainly in four Roman provinces (Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia).
3. Paul centered his missionary activities and Church Planting efforts on urban areas. His team planted model churches through which the gospel could be carried to the nearby towns and villages. Ephesus is an example of this practice (Acts 19:1, 10).
4. Paul normally starts with the existed local Jewish temples. (Acts 13:5; 14:1).
5. Paul preferred working at places where the people gave him audience and could yield fruits for his labor (Acts 18: 6).
6. Paul's baptism to converts required faith in Christ. His team did not require rigid rules before baptism, a case in point is the Philippian Jailer and his household (Acts 16:33).
7. Paul and his team stayed long enough at one place to nurture and ensure retention of members before they leave. He remained Ephesus for three months, and one year six months at Corinth (Acts 19:8; 19:11). He also gave attention to Church leadership (1Tim. 3:1-13).
8. Paul used a team ministry. Team work gives better security and better results in missionary endeavors; especially where it includes traveling and long periods.
9. Paul, although did not alter the gospel or the commandments, he became all things to be able to serve all people (1Cor.9:19-23). Paul was flexible in

communicating the gospel. He contextualized to suit the different cultures he evangelized.<sup>79</sup>

In summation, Paul's gospel is unique: That is human beings are to be reconciled to God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; Eph 2:8-9; 1Tim. 2:3-4). The study will now consider E.G. White's writings on nurture and retention of members.

### **The Writings of Ellen G. White**

Like Jesus Christ and Paul, Ellen Gould White (E.G. White) had much concern with the retention of new converts. Below are some of the strategies suggested by E.G. White for the integration and retention of converts into active participation in the life of the community of believers.

#### **New Converts as New Born Babes**

Regarding new converts E.G. White says A unique task has been placed upon the Church to attend to the converts who have followed sacred light; and should the members overlook this obligation, they will be disloyal to the trust which the Lord has given them.<sup>80</sup>

#### **Converts from Other Churches**

New converts from other Churches should be tactfully and tenderly dealt with. It is the older members' duty to devise strategies to provide support for some of them

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<sup>79</sup>Herbert J. Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976), 57-58.

<sup>80</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2000), 351.

who have circumspectly leave their churches for the sake of the truth and withdrawn from the pastoral care which they were accustomed to.<sup>81</sup>

### **Involving New Members in Church Activities**

Teach new converts by engaging them in church activities that their interest and love for God will increase and not wane. Let them feel rooted in the Church themselves. Their areas of interest and talents should be harnessed to add flavor to worship and Church growth. This will help the individual to get closer to God.<sup>82</sup>

### **Teaching New Converts to Study the Scriptures.**

New converts should be made to know that it is only through earnest study of the Bible that abiding knowledge in God could be gained. Truly, those who receive the Adventist message have not been diligent learners of the scriptures in their former Churches. Mostly the people expect the ministers to tell them what the scriptures expect them to do.<sup>83</sup>

### **Visiting New Members Often**

One field of labor halfway done and left prematurely by the commissioners of God who are the preachers and trustees of His word make the angels weep. Be sure all are soaked in the truth, grounded in the faith and are settled in mind before leaving for somewhere else.<sup>84</sup>

### **S.D.A. Literature and Retaining New Members**

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<sup>81</sup> White, *Evangelism*, 351.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 356, 357.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>84</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2000), 256.

In Patriarchs and Prophets, Daniel and Revelation, Desire of Ages and Great Controversy, there are valuable directives. People who become familiar with the lessons they contain will have the ability to discover the plain, straight route mapped for them. These books should be considered as of unique importance, and all efforts must be made to get them for the new members.<sup>85</sup>

### **Teach Health Reform Message**

The values of health reform are established in God's Word. The good news of health is to be steadfastly connected with the dissemination of the Word. God has devised that the restoring power of health reform will be a part of the concluding efforts to declare the gospel message.<sup>86</sup> We have to be practical in our work. We must know that human beings have bodies and souls as well to save... God wants us to follow principles of health and life. He holds us accountable to properly take care of our bodies so that they may be kept in health.<sup>87</sup>

### **Tithing for New Converts**

Every converted soul must have insight regarding tithes and offerings. Everything people enjoy come from God's great farm and He is happy that His children benefit from His goods; however, He require that everyone who has made covenant with God should support the missionary work that would bring souls to the Lord's vineyard.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Ellen G. White, *Letter 229*, 1903.

<sup>86</sup>Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mount View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 259.

<sup>87</sup>Ellen G. White, *Letter 123*, 1903.

<sup>88</sup>Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 123*, 1898.

Ellen G. White encourages the Church to use social gatherings as a means of retention. There are nearly 300 references in her writings about social meetings. She not only wrote, but gave counsel on how social gathering should be conducted. Russel Burrill says: The almost 300 references in E.G. White writings give some picture of life in the Adventist Church which makes them unique wherever they are.<sup>89</sup>

In summary chapter two - discusses retention in the OT, NT, and the Writings of Ellen G. White. In the OT God chose Israel through the call of Abraham and gave them His commandments through Moses. Israel was to remain in covenant relationship with God throughout the generations. From Genesis to Malachi God used His agencies to keep the people unto Himself. The prominent among them were the prophets. The worship and services pointed to a prophet whom God told Moses about. Evangelism in the OT was centripetal, that is, people seeking for God came from the nations to Zion. All the worship and the prophesies pointed to Jesus Christ, and at the fullness of time (Gal.4:4) Christ condescended to fulfil His mission.

The NT era took the centrifugal approach of evangelization. Many people contributed to the spreading of the gospel. This project selected the ministration of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God; John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ; and Paul, the Divine Convert as models for preaching, nurturing and retaining people in the NT period. In chapter three the project will look at the literature review of authors who have written about the problems associated with retention and their subsequent solutions.

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<sup>89</sup>Russell C. Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 1998), 186.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature that deal with issues associated with church membership retention. This section of the dissertation would consider headings like: The Problem of Retention, What Make People Become Church Members, What Make People Leave the Church, How to Make Members Disciples, and Measures to Retain Members.

During the last quinquennium of the Ghana Union Conference (2010-2015), the Koforidua town and her environments which forms part of the East Ghana Conference experienced massive loss of church membership. The executive secretary's report for the first quadrennial session (May 2009 - April 2013) on membership loss (36,216 to 16,075) of 20,141 was startling news to the delegates.

Due to the importance and concern attached to membership retention, many churchmen and Bible scholars have written on the issue from various backgrounds. There is the need to review relevant literature on the subject to seek for information and knowledge, and be able to address this anomaly.

#### **The Problem of Retention**

The verb of the word retention (being the noun) is retain, and it is synonymous to words like: Preserve, protect, maintain, withhold, conserve, rooted, keep, sustain, shield, remain, etc. The word retention is explained as: the act of retaining or state of being retained (Concise Oxford Dictionary); the act of keeping someone or something (Merriam-Webster Dictionary); to keep possession, to continue to hold or have

(Random House Dictionary). Though the meaning of retention is the act or state of retaining (people or things), this essay focuses rather on the difficulty in retaining people under the regulation and ruling of God.

### **Biblical Basis for Church Membership Retention**

Even though the word retention cannot be found in the Bible, it is applied in the dictionary meaning to imply keeping of Church members as “the people of God” (Judges 20:2; Psalm 47:9) which signifies the distinctive link that exists between Yahweh and His people.<sup>1</sup> Theologically or Biblically, retention means the keeping or retaining converts in the Church. The predicament with Church membership retention is not a new crisis in the Church; it predates to the Bible records of the creation of the planet earth. Philip Richard and Leslie Francis comment: The problem of Church member retention has existed since the earliest days of the Christian Church.<sup>2</sup> Joel D. Heck adds his voice to Philip and Francis when he states: Member retention is not a new problem within the church, and the role that the church play in nurturing its members in order to retain them is not a new issue either.<sup>3</sup> By explaining that God is a missionary God, Craig Ott and Stephen Strauss precisely express: The Bible from beginning to ending is a missionary book, for it is a story from God Himself reaching into human history to reconcile a fallen and disloyal humanity to Himself and to re-

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "The People of God in the Old Testament," in *Message Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology - 2. (Silver Spring, MD: 20904, 2013), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Richter and Leslie J. Francis, *Gone but Not Forgotten* (London: Darton, 1999), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Joel D. Heck, *New Member Assimilation* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1984), 7.

establish His reign over all creation.<sup>4</sup> In a similar way John R.W. Stott writes: The first and greatest missionary in the OT is God.<sup>5</sup> From the Biblical eras to date retaining members under theocratic preferences have normally been a great challenge. Records from the OT times, NT times and Post NT times testify to this claim.

Examples from the OT about the problem of retention cite in this dissertation include: (i) The antediluvian Period (ii) The Patriarchal Period and (iii) The Mosaic Period. Examples cited from the NT are (i) The Early Disciples of Jesus Christ. After the entrance of sin, God sends His messengers and ambassadors and ultimately His Son as agents of the salvation story. The deliverance messages that should pave way for salvation will eventually reach out to embrace persons of every nation, people, tribe and tongue. Initially, God sends angels and prophets, and later forms a people, the nation Israel, to be sent and live as a witness to His righteousness and glory among the nations.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless God's agents did not have it easy with the very people whom they had come to present the salvation story. Many are those who rebut the messengers. A lot more who were chosen as the people of God apostatized.

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<sup>4</sup> Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical, Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 3

<sup>5</sup> John R.W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1975)

<sup>6</sup> Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical, Developments, and Contemporary Issues*, 3.

## The Antediluvian Period

The problem of Church membership retention starts with the creation narrative where God's people consisted of only Adam and Eve. They lived under a pure expression of God's love and kindness. This initial system crumpled when the first couple disobeyed and rejected God as the core of their lives and sought their own independent well-being. And God was left without a people on Earth.<sup>7</sup> The tragedy strikes, in Michael Lawrence's statement: Incredibly, Adam and Eve shows rebellion to the One who gave them Paradise. In judgment and mercy, God removes them from the perfection of His presence in the Garden of Eden into a world that is now cursed and fallen.<sup>8</sup> The reformation of God's people commences through divine initiative, offering humanity a way out of their predicament- a return to God through the Seed of the woman (Gen 3:16, Gal 3:16).<sup>9</sup> Since then, God has had a people in successive generations unified in their worship and submission to His caring will in a sinful atmosphere.<sup>10</sup>

The line of faith conserved in Genesis chapter five begins with the list of the posterity of Adam and ends with Noah. The catalogue contains the names, ages and deaths of Adam and his successors. Here the effect of God's pronouncement on Adam for dust you are, and in dust you shall return (Gen 3:19) was fulfilled. Two people stand out differently from the descendants of Adam - Enoch and Noah. "And Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him" (Gen 5:24). The communion

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<sup>7</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "The People of God in the Old Testament," in *Message Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, 1.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossby, 2010), 117.

<sup>9</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "The People of God in the Old Testament," 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 2.

Enoch had with God was so deep that his name did not appear in the death register, God took him to Heaven. At the close of the catalogue of faith (Gen 6:29) the Bible records: Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. The emphasis is on Noah's close fellowship with God. So, Noah like Enoch walked with God.<sup>11</sup>

Enoch and Noah's experience implies that not all were part of God's people. There was an open profession of loyalty to God on the part of one group, as there was of contempt and disobedience on the part of the other.<sup>12</sup> In due course, the two factions intermarried (Gen 6:2) so the community of faith was corrupted. As the cycle continued, things go from bad to worse.<sup>13</sup> Eventually, God brought upon the antediluvian world a judgment in the form of flood. Of the dense inhabitants in the then world; before the deluge; just eight people believed and obeyed God's pleadings through Noah, and only eight people were retained from the world-wide destruction through the flood.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Patriarchal Period**

In this section, the problem of retention is focused on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The people of these cities and their immediate neighbors chose to live contrary to God's natural order of marriage but delved into same-sex relationships. The Bible reports an experience of a new call which Donald Senior and

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<sup>11</sup> Gerhard Pfandl, "The People of God in the Old Testament," 2.

<sup>12</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup>Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry*, 117.

<sup>14</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 102.

Carroll Stuhlmueller interpret as a “radical breakthrough.” (Gen12: 1-2). God’s call on the patriarch away “from your country and kindred” to be the father of a distinctive, elect people was done to show the positive contributions from secular backgrounds and pre-existing “pagan” religions. Implying that religion is never a pure establishment by God, but a synthesis of the best under a new inspiration from God.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that religious practices and even the view of God’s unique presence in certain locations developed within the culture and politics of a local vicinity. In spite of the fact that Canaanite’s worship in many respects differed from the worship of Yahweh. Abraham was able to make a breakthrough with ethical and moral values and the God of ancestors appeared to Abraham at Canaanite holy places<sup>16</sup> (Gen 12:7; 17:1; 18:1).

In relation to salvation, as Angel Manuel Rodriguez conveyed - God’s call to Abraham was not limited to the family of Abraham, but through him God was dealing with people on the global level, expressing hope that those from other nations would subsequently be regarded among God’s people<sup>17</sup> (Gen 12:3; Psalm 22:27; Isa 2:1-4). Timothy C. Tennent counteracts the misconception that the OT is somehow thinly particularistic revealing a God who bestows favoritism to the nation Israel and disdains all other nations; and that it is only in the NT that a loving and compassionate God for all nations is discovered. This notion, Tennent continues, shows a deficient perception of God in the OT. Rather, God’s election of Israel should be considered as

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<sup>15</sup>Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 17, 18.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, *Message Mission and Unity of the Church*, 6.

a means by which God fulfils His ultimate purpose to bless nations globally.<sup>18</sup> Greg Beale adds his view to Tennent and Rodriguez who declare God's universal glory, strength and dominion among all nations; by stating that, "Even the temple of the Jews, the most probable visible sign of God's presence among Israel, was called a house of prayer for all nations."<sup>19</sup> One can conclude that the knowledge of God's universal dominion is portrayed physically and spiritually or explicitly and implicitly among the nations (1 Chron 16:24; Psalm 96:3).

In their perspectives, Ott and Tennent believe that all people over the world had knowledge about God and knew He reigns over all the nations, He is to be feared above all gods, and is to be worshipped in the beauty of holiness (1Chron. 16: 23-31). They also infer from the Scriptures that, Gentiles, will come to pray in the temple, and that answered prayers would further cause the nations to fear God (Isa 56:7).<sup>20</sup>

In his article: "Men in the Hands of an Angry God?" Efe M. Ehiogae discusses how God could no longer forbear the wickedness of the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah but to send retribution on the iniquitous cities by destroying them with fire.<sup>21</sup> The Bible describes the "outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah as so great and their sin so grievous" (Gen 19:13). The Lord was furious against the antediluvians for "marrying the daughters of men." Sodom and Gomorrah degenerated in immorality; they made no distinction between the sexes. Men took their fellow men for marriage

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<sup>18</sup>Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Acad. & Professional, 2010), 112.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. 114.

<sup>20</sup>Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission*: p.11.

<sup>21</sup>Efe M. Ehiogae, "Men in the Hands of an Angry God?" in *Contemporary Christianity: Practice, Relevance and Responses*, ed. Emmanuel Orihentare Eregare (Lagos, Nigeria: Freedom Network Press, 2016), 213.

and women did the same. The apex of their evil was when the gay activists were bent on having sex with unknown celestial visitors<sup>22</sup> but rejected the offer of two virgin ladies (Gen 19:5, 8).

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah attests to the fact that every nation, tribe, tongue and people are duty-bound and accountable to God. The instance of Sodom and Gomorrah is drawn from pre-Israelite and pre-Mosaic days when the commandments of God had not been written nor given.<sup>23</sup> Prior to the ruin of the two great cities; Sodom and Gomorrah; Abraham pleaded with the visitors who had declared their intentions to Abraham (Gen 18:17-21). Reducing the numbers from fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and ten, Abraham intercedes and agrees with his guests that if ten people could be found in Sodom and Gomorrah they would be spared from the Lord's decision to annihilate the two cities (Gen 18:23-32). As Noah and his family were spared from the antediluvian world, so was the privilege offered to Lot and his family. (Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain).

The ark was to represent as a place of protection and refuge; those who slighted the provision died unnecessarily.<sup>24</sup> Grace was given to both families of Noah and Lot, however there was a demand of obedience from God. Noah's family was to enter into the ark (Gen 7:7), and Lot's family was required to move straight but "not to look behind" (Gen 19:17). Unlike Noah and his relatives who were all saved, Lot's

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>23</sup>Donald Snr. and Carroll Stuhmuller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 74.

<sup>24</sup>Efe M. Ehiogae, "Men in the Hands of an Angry God?" 212.

daughters and sons-in-law (Gen 19:14) and his wife who looked back and became a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26) needlessly lost the opportunity of God's grace.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; two great cities; occurred in the time of Abraham, the sins of the inhabitants of these cities were so horrible that mercy ceased to plead with these atrocious inhabitants, all were destroyed save Lot and two of his daughters.<sup>25</sup> Describing the predicament of Lot, the messenger of the Lord laments:

Lot went into Sodom rich; he left with nothing, led by an angel's hand, while messengers of wrath waited to pour forth the fiery blasts that were to consume the inhabitants of that highly favored city and blot out its entrancing beauty, making bleak and bare a place that God had once made very beautiful.<sup>26</sup>

The messenger of the Lord continuing in another narration about the plight of Lot and his family in Sodom says:

Lot chose Sodom as a place of residence because he looked more to the temporal advantages he would gain than to the moral influences that would surround himself and his family. What did he gain so far as the things of this world are concerned? His possessions were destroyed, part of his children perished in the destruction of that wicked city, his wife was turned to a pillar of salt by the way, and he himself was saved "so as by fire."<sup>27</sup>

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah chose to live lives that deviated from the natural mating order for both men and animals. Yet they chose to live contrary to divine and natural sexual orders. The estimated population of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time of the destruction was between 600-1200.<sup>28</sup> People on the earth were not

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<sup>25</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2000), 431.

<sup>26</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*. 7:89.

<sup>27</sup>Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, 419.

<sup>28</sup>H. Daily, "New Perspectives Affirming the Biblical Genesis Record, the Creation Account," <http://www.accuracyingenesis.com/>, accessed: July 15, 2016.

counted in billions like today, but it is sad to note that only three people escaped the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah.

### **The Mosaic Period**

Regarding retention under Mosaic Period, the dissertation considers the initial number of people who took the journey from Ramses in Egypt and entered Succoth in Canaan. In their stay at Egypt the Israelites were severely oppressed. Israelites' God manifested His power of redemption through the ten plagues for Pharaoh and his countrymen to acknowledge that Yahweh is the supreme God over everyone under the sun (Exod 7-11). The special covenant relationship between God and Israel was made with a conditional clause. "If you would obey My voice and keep My covenant" (Exod 19: 4-5), requiring Israel's obedience to the covenant.<sup>29</sup> The mighty hand of God was seen and felt by both the Egyptians and the Israelites before the Israelites' exit to begin the journey to Canaan. God described to His people, Israel about how He would deliver them from the bondage of Egypt:

I will lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them. Exod 7:4-5. (ASV).

The Septuagint records that there were 600,000 foot men, aside women and children who journeyed from Ramses to Succoth (Exod 12:37). The first census that was taken at Sinai (that is twenty years and above to the retirement age of fifty [Num 4:3, Job 8:57] or sixty [Lev 27:7]) were 603,550. But if all the women, children and older people over fifty (or sixty) are included, the number of Israelites who left Egypt

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<sup>29</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, *Message Mission and Unity of the Church*, 8.

must have numbered about (2,500,000) two and a half million.<sup>30</sup> The next census after Sinai was taken before crossing the River Jordan stood at 601,730.<sup>31</sup>

Even though dates, figures and places are essential to historical facts and chronology, R. Alan Cole, in his deliberations thinks critical facts and figures of the Exodus is neither one of dogmatic assertions, nor of orthodoxy and conservatism, but of accepted historicity where evidence is minimal. Providentially, the story of the Exodus, according to Cole, does not affect the theology of the book.<sup>32</sup> Cole's counsel is important because, in his search scholars and theologians differ in the dates and chronology of the Exodus account. Another intricate issue is that Egyptian monarchs were not given to recording defeats and disasters and as a result gives no record about the event of the Exodus. The quietness of Egyptian history means there is lack of external check-point for comparative analysis.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, if external evidence outside the Bible, especially Egyptian history does not give credence to the Exodus account, the analysis needed in this search concerns much on how the people of God are retained by being obedient and faithful to God.

During the wilderness journey, the Israelites caused a lot of grief to Yahweh whom they covenanted with. Between Ramses and Succoth, the people severally murmured against Moses and God. God's judgment on Israel was threefold: First, Israel would wander for forty years, one year for each day the spies used to explore

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<sup>30</sup>David Sielaff, "The Population at the Exodus," <http://www.askelm.com/secrets/sec107.htm>, accessed: August 13, 2016.

<sup>31</sup>Steve Rudd, "Biblical Archeology," <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-population-of-jews-hebrews.htm>, accessed August 13, 2016.

<sup>32</sup>R. Alan Cole, *The Date of the Exodus*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England: 1973), 40.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.* 41.

the land, being God's side of the breach of promise (Exod 14:34). Second, the older generation, twenty years and above would die and not enter Canaan, except for Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:35). Third, the ten unbelieving spies died by delivering discouraging report (Num 14:36-38). The Jews lamented against Moses and God that they wanted to die in the wilderness; they had complained that their children would die in Canaan; but God declared rather that their children would live in Canaan and the adults would die in the wilderness. God passed judgment out of their own mouths.<sup>34</sup>

In consequence of their violation of the covenant between Israel and God, God withheld the promised covenant blessing which He conferred on Israel by their continuous disobedience. The almighty God gave positive evidence that He rules in the Heavens, and rebellion was punished with death. Only two of those as adults left Egypt saw the Promised Land. The wanderings of the people were extended until the rest were buried in the wilderness.<sup>35</sup> Bible historical facts attest that, over male 2,500,000 people who set off from Egypt to Canaan, only two were able to reach Canaan.

### **The Early Disciples of Jesus Christ.**

Jesus Christ gained many followers at the early stages of His ministry. This may be as a result of His messages, the many miracles and healing. In one instance Jesus fed 5,000 men besides women and children (Matt 14: 21), In another occasion, He fed 4,000 men besides women and children (Matt 15:39). The followers welcomed

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<sup>34</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Num. 14: 26-38. [www.biblesoft.com](http://www.biblesoft.com), accessed October 3, 2016.

<sup>35</sup>The Study Bible, *Wanderings through Satan's Efforts* (Harrah, OK: Academy Enterprises, 1993), 180.

His miracle-working power; and were eager to be released from sickness and affliction but they cared not for the mysterious spiritual realm He spoke about. If He would not use His power and influence to free them from the Romans, they would not have anything to do with Him.<sup>36</sup> The figurative words - eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Jesus (Matt 6:53-58) in the synagogue at Capernaum was offensive to His hearers (Matt 6:61). Again, Jesus Christ pointed it out that those who have spiritual discernment would receive life but those who have not profits nothing (Matt 6:63).

The target of mission is getting people out of worldliness into the kingdom of God. Missionary strategies which main purpose is not preaching of the good news of salvation are no different from that of the business world.<sup>37</sup> Christ missionary strategy is a total ministry and a key to true success. He desired their good, showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me."<sup>38</sup> Though Jesus Christ gained many followers, when the core issues about the kingdom of God were laid bare to them many returned and never followed Him again (John 6:66).

No Gospel speaks of Jesus Christ as the one sent by the Father as frequently as John. The Gospel of John primarily focuses on the mission of Jesus: He is the one who came down from Heaven, and ascends again; the one Sent who is in absolute reliance and compliance to His sender, and fulfils the purpose for which the Father

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<sup>36</sup>Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2000), 391.

<sup>37</sup>John Mark Terry & J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction*, 48.

<sup>38</sup>Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 143.

sent Him.<sup>39</sup> There are people who do not want to abide by the real practical truths in the Word of God. In John's Gospel, there were many who seemed to be disciples of Jesus Christ, but when the plain truth was presented to them, were displeased and walked no more with Him.<sup>40</sup> Jesus Christ had told them plainly, "There are many who believe not" He continues, "No one can come unto Me unless it has been granted by My Father" (John 6: 65).

After many of the disciples have deserted Jesus Christ, He turned to the twelve whom He selected and inquired, "Do you also want to go away?" Peter's answer on behalf of the twelve supposes they have come to believe and know that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God who has the Words of eternal life, and for that matter they have no one else to go (John 6: 67-69). As He witnesses most of His disciples departing from Him, the Life and the Light of men. The realization that His care was unacknowledged, even His love unreciprocated, His compassion slighted, His salvation unwanted, filled Him with grief that was beyond words. Truly, it was such progressions that made Him a man of sorrows and acquainted with anguish.<sup>41</sup> As the testing truth presented by Jesus Christ detracted many of His followers, so it is of these days. People desire flowery messages than that which leads to eternal life.

### **Judgment at the End of Time**

The Bible pictures the final end of time as when the millennium shall end and the ultimate destiny of everyone who passed through the Planet Earth shall be

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<sup>39</sup>Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 2001), 70.

<sup>40</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2000), 6:133.

<sup>41</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 393.

decided. The parables Christ narrated at the close of His ministry lay emphasis on the importance of keeping vigilance as faithful servants because of the uncertainty of His coming (Matt 24:43-51: the day and hour unknown; Matt 25:1-13: the parable of the ten virgins). Illustrating that Jesus Christ would reward the righteous and punish or deny the wicked to enter into eternal life.<sup>42</sup> There shall not be a middle lane between salvation and damnation. The subject matter of judgment and hell feature notably in Jesus Christ's public discourse (Matt 5: 29-30; 10: 28; 23:23; 9: 43; Mark 9:45; Luke 10:15). He was not hesitant when He severally warned that those who reject his saving grace would end up in hell fire.<sup>43</sup>

The character of the individual sealed by Christ and His angels shall be the deciding factor. The final day of the history of humanity will a period for separating wheat from chaff (Matt 13:24-30); for separating sheep from goat (Matt 25:31-46). The criterion of judgment would not be based on ethnic lines; it would be fair. Humanity is judged by how it has responded to God's offer of Grace in Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup>

The book of Revelation records that those who would be destroyed by the lake of fire are many as the "sand of the sea" (Rev 20: 8). That means something beyond computation. The crowd is composed of all the unrepentant from the beginning of the

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<sup>42</sup>Clinton Wahlen and Gerhard Pfandl, "Mission in the New Testament," in *Message Mission and Unity of the Church*, ed. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology - 2. (Silver Spring, MD: 20904, 2013), 87, 88.

<sup>43</sup>Efe M. Ehiogae, "Men in the Hands of an Angry God?" 219.

<sup>44</sup>Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, 325,326.

world.<sup>45</sup> At the time here specified, the righteous of the world are an insignificant number; but the hosts of the wicked would be countless.<sup>46</sup>

The analysis made by the various authors indicate that at the time of the judgment, those who would be destroyed by the lake of fire for following the deceptions of Satan would be as countless as the “Sand of the sea.”

### **What Motivates People to Become Church Members**

The reasons that motivates people to attend Church are various and sometimes bizarre.<sup>47</sup> Although, there are numerous reasons for people going to church, Donald A. McGavran categorizes the reason behind people’s church membership into three factors: Secular, socio-relational, and spiritual.<sup>48</sup>

#### **Secular Reasons**

The secular motivation for church attendance crops up from the intrinsic or biological needs of human beings such as - hunger, sex, thirst and pain.<sup>49</sup> Some people are motivated to stay on in the Church as a result of the social services provided by the Church. Some join the Church to network for their businesses or look for a spouse. Others find themselves in the Church to seek God’s healing for a hurt or

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<sup>45</sup>"Sand of the sea" [Rev. 20:8], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Rev. ed., ed. by Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 7:882.

<sup>46</sup>James Burton Coffman, "Commentary on Revelation 20:8" *Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament* (Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas: 1999), <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/revelation-20.html>, accessed: October 10, 2016.

<sup>47</sup>Ralph F. Wilson, <pastor@joyfulheart.com>, accessed: October 11, 2016.

<sup>48</sup>Donald A. MaGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 3rd. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 126.

<sup>49</sup>Richard C. Teevan and Barry D. Smith, *Motivation* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), 3.

pain like loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of health through sickness or accident or loss of hope.

### **Socio-Relational Reasons**

In his search on youth and church membership, Roger L. Dudley identifies fellowship, friendship, relationships and of course children of Adventist upbringing as the most common reasons that motivate the youth for staying in the Church.<sup>50</sup> A large number of responses from young adults, Roger discovers, appreciate the fellowship of like-minded people. They enjoy sharing basic life views and are able to relate to each other well. Some who felt being outcast outside the Church, now feel being accepted, belonging and involving. Also, the reason the youth appreciate friendship and fellowship is that they trust they are together in a safe and warm atmosphere of love and acceptance. Furthermore, the youth who were brought up in the Church and its Schools are ingrained in the culture of Adventism.<sup>51</sup>

From the various comments and analysis, it is clear that the youth in the Church need spiritual support, fellowship, and relationship with others of similar goals, values, and belief systems. Most of Adventist youth adhere to the teachings of the Adventist heritage. They believe in the doctrines. However, what cause the difference in membership retention have mostly been lack cordial interactions, fellowship, and atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, care, and love.<sup>52</sup> If Churches

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<sup>50</sup>Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10- year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: 2000), 117, 118.

<sup>51</sup>Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church*, 118.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 119.

can help the youth to experience warm fellowship, friendship, and affable relationships. It would be a great blessing.

### **Spiritual Reasons**

Many people go to Church in order to know God and to have a deeper relationship with Him. People go to Church because they are searching for God, and there is no other context to seek for Him than the Church. Blaise Pascal, the French philosopher succinctly put it, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in every man that only God can fill.” It is the prerogative of every person to fill this important link of faith that shapes the individual from who the one is, to whom the person can become. In his quest to know God, Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until we find our rest in You.”<sup>53</sup> The intuitive knowledge about God, the Supreme Being is innate in every person. The soul that seeks for God becomes refreshed and renewed when the seeker begins to know and observe the truths about God.

In a research conducted by Gallup on Reasons Why People Attend Church, the highest option among other (13) reasons was - “For spiritual growth and God’s guidance.” In another search on, “Top 6 Things that Keep the Formerly Unchurched Active in the Church,” by Thom Rainer, the first three listed were: Ministry Involvement, Bible Study, and Obedience to God.<sup>54</sup> The findings conclusively attest people’s desire to have more knowledge about God, be obedient to Him and get involved in Church ministries. The good news is that many people are in the Church

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<sup>53</sup>“The Christian Post,” <http://www.christianpost.com>, accessed: October 12, 2016.

<sup>54</sup>Kent Shaffer, “Top Reasons for Church Attendance,” <http://churchrelevance.com/qa-top-reasons-for-church-attendance/>, accessed: October 12, 2016.

because they want to live sacred, moral and ethical lives. They regard attending Church services as the core of their quest to become in tune with God.

Another vital reason why people go to Church is to have salvation at the close of the world's history. There is a part of people living in the world to undertake if they so desire to be saved (Phil. 2:12). Although men do not obtain heaven by themselves; they do not find it accidentally, or without any intention or endeavors of their own. God, in his word, has directed humans to seek their salvation as they would hope to obtain it. There is a race that is set before them, which they must run, and in that race come off victors, in order to their winning the prize.<sup>55</sup> Having explored some of the reasons that motivate people to become Church members, the study would now consider Why People Leave the Church.

### **Reasons Why People Leave the Church**

The mind bothering question, “Why are members leaving the Church?” raises numerous issues which are critical to the growth and development as well as health and life of the Church. The study would look at some reasons cited by researchers and churchmen about the reasons why people leave the Church.

In his *7 Disappointing Reasons People Leave the Church*, Ron Edmondson, Senior Pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky shares the following founded reasons:

**Burn out** - These people came out of the gate too strong in the church. They showed up, got excited, and signed up for everything. They got so busy doing church they failed to enjoy being the church.

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<sup>55</sup>Jonathan Edwards, “The Manner in Which Salvation of the Soul is to be Sought,” <http://www.jonathan-edwards.org/Seeking.html>, accessed: October 12, 2016.

**Injury** - These people felt injured by the deeds and pronouncement of Church leaders and members whom they thought should have been loving, but rather found some as cruel and vindictive. These people experienced some of those people, and they couldn't move past it.

**Distractions** - These people got distracted by seemingly good things. Busy for Church activities but not committed to Christ. Over time, their lifestyle of attending becomes the habit of not attending.

**Life change** – These people had a lifestyle change, such as divorce or re-marriage, or they move to a new community and never re-connect with a church.

**Mistakes** - These people messed up! They made a mistake that may be public, or at least they feel that it will be known. Many times, when a person feels that way it is more of perception than reality, but the way a person feels about them may determine whether or not to remain committed to church.

**Power struggle** – These people had an agenda. They were pursuing an issue or a position and when their demands and desires were not met, and unable to overpower the system, they left.

**Lack of connection** – These people never connected with others on a deeper level. As a result, they never felt really a “part” of the church.<sup>56</sup>

Factually, it is the active Church members' obligation to help people to become and remain disciples of Christ. Having knowledge on why they leave the Church is a step into solving the problem. Some of the reasons are uncontrollable,

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<sup>56</sup>Ron Edmondson, “7 Disappointing Reasons People Leave the Church,” <http://www.biblestudytools.com/blogs/ron-edmondson/7-disappointing-reasons-people-leave-the-church.html>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

based on the individual's decision. Nevertheless, when the Church gets to know the grounds for which people leave the Church, the better they can address the issues.

James E. White, in his book, *Facts and Trends, Rise of the "Understanding and Reaching the Religiously Unaffiliated."* He examines the challenges of people who are apathetic to the Church and seemingly adamant by the Bible messages. The following are some of his findings:

1. The Church is too narrow-minded and unbending on moral issues.
2. The Church is more interested in buttressing the institution of the Church rather than fulfilling the mission of Church.
3. The Church has isolated itself from the real lives of people and is, therefore, disconnected from the reality of life.
4. The Church is anti-intellectual, rejecting the claims of science and modernity.
5. The Church is obsolete in its methodologies, methodologies that were effective in times but are no longer essential and effective. For instance how Church services and weddings were conducted.<sup>57</sup> The above is a summation of a tall list of misgivings and criticisms of former and returnee members against the Church which must be given attention anyway. Nonetheless, White, from a different angle worries about why the church is mostly the one under attack and criticism rather than the motives of the uncommitted, unbelieving, and former members. In a careful observation, White put forward an alternative list of answers to the question - "Why

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<sup>57</sup>James E. White, "9 Reasons People Leave the Church When the Church Isn't to Blame," <http://www.christianpost.com/news/9-reasons-people-leave-the-church-when-the-church-isnt-to-blame-141969>, accessed: October 12, 2016.

are people leaving the Church?” This may explain the indifference some people have on the Church, the policies, leadership and the Gospel she proclaims:

1. People leave the Church because the gospel way is truly narrow (Matt.7:13-14). People deem it a difficult task to discipline themselves to enter through the narrow gate.

2. People leave the Church because of the demands of holy living (1Pet. 1:16).

3. People leave the Church because they are not rooted and grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt 13:21).

4. People leave the Church because the Church resists the desire for the individual to practice a smorgasbord belief system - picking and choosing things they like about Christianity and rejecting truths about Christianity that may be less-desirable. They build a personal theology that is more individualistic than biblical. Hence, refuse to endure sound doctrine (2Tim. 4:3-4).

5. Finally, people leave the Church because they are not fully converted. They need to have conscious living towards the graciousness of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:12). Genuine salvation presupposes many of the aforementioned points.<sup>58</sup>

## **Summary**

Whereas the Church is not fully guiltless in terms of the many reasons people leave the Church, nonetheless it should be noted that those who leave the Church bear with them an immense degree of unfaithfulness and guilt in this issue. We should not be astonished when people leave the Church. The Gospel aims at directing the self from sin to Christ. This requires a life of commitment and dedication that can endure

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<sup>58</sup>James E. White, “9 Reasons People Leave the Church When the Church Isn’t to Blame,” accessed: October 13, 2016.

the challenges of living a holy life in a sinful world, and the imperfect nature of a Church.

Most people do not become disciples of Jesus when they receive baptism into the church as members. After discussing why people leave the Church, there is the need then to discuss what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

### **What it Means to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ**

Under this theme, the dissertation would look at the following sub-topics- “Who is a Disciple,” “Abiding in Jesus Christ,” “Bearing Much Fruit,” and “The Cost of Discipleship.”

#### **Who is a Disciple?**

A disciple is someone who accepts and helps to spread the teachings of a famous person (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) From the standpoint of the Bible, disciples refer to the followers of Jesus Christ who were sent out to propagate His teachings (Matt 28:19-20). A disciple simply means a constant and unwavering allegiance to the teachings and practices of one chosen as a master or lord, and further desires to lead others to the beliefs of his master.

#### **Abiding in Jesus Christ**

When the individual is actively and personally united to Jesus Christ by faith (John 15:4-5). Faith is rooted and manifest in the activity of God. It is God the Father who as the Divine Gardener grafts the individual into Christ (Rom.11:17, 23-24) by His Word. Abiding involves the followers’ response to the teaching of Jesus Christ. Paul echoes the idea of abiding in Jesus Christ by saying, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). The phrase “abiding in Christ” pictures an intimate, close union, and not just a superficial acquaintance. In John 15:4-7, Jesus Christ tells

His disciples that having salvation is essential, using the picture of branches united to a vine. Without that vital union with Christ which salvation provides, there can be no life and no productivity.<sup>59</sup> Abiding in Jesus Christ means allowing the Word of God to occupy one's thought, guide the will and transform the affections.

Abiding in Christ, in the mind of Sinclair Ferguson, is when our bond to Christ is closely linked to what we do with our Bibles! Then, of course, as Christ's Word dwells in us and the Spirit fills us, we will begin to pray in a way consistent with the will of God and discover the truth of our Lord's often misapplied promise: "You will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7b).<sup>60</sup>

As Christians, hence disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called, as part of the abiding process, to surrender to God's pruning tools in the providences by which He prunes all vices, that we might remain in Christ more wholeheartedly, and become partakers of the divine nature. The Christian who abides and remain in Jesus Christ produces much of the fruit of the Spirit.

### **Bearing Much Fruit**

Bearing much fruit is a daily experience manifested not only at Church but also in the home, at our job places, our neighborhood and wherever Christians find themselves. Without a vital link with Jesus Christ, it is rare to bear fruit of righteousness (John 15:5). It is only when members become active in transforming their character and reproducing others to become disciples that fruit bearing is

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<sup>59</sup>"World Bible School," <https://gotquestions.org/abide-in-Christ.html>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

<sup>60</sup>Sinclair Ferguson, "What Does it Mean to Abide in Christ," <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-does-it-mean-abide-christ/>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

fulfilled.<sup>61</sup> The product of an apple seed is another apple tree. The fruit of a disciple is another disciple. Eddie Gibson emphasizes this principle when he discusses regeneration and sanctification as element of the entire procedure.<sup>62</sup> The principle of fruit bearing is often used in Scripture. Jesus told the story of a sower who went out to sow seed. The seed fell on different kinds of ground. Some of the ground was hard and rocky. Another ground was fine, but thorns choked out the seed. However, there was a portion that was fertile, and the seed took root. Jesus said that this was a picture of the different people who hear the gospel. The fertile ground represents those who are true believers and their growth bear much fruit (Luke 8:4-15).

Greg Laurie in “How Do We Bear Fruit?” says, Spiritual fruit will show itself in our lives as a change in our character and outlook. As we spend time with Jesus and get to know Him better, His thoughts will become our thoughts. His purpose will become our purpose. We will become like Jesus.<sup>63</sup> The Apostle Paul gives a clear depiction of a standard Christian whose lives are characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. Paul enumerates the virtues of a fruit bearing Christian in his letter to the Galatians - 5:22-23 as: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Just as fruit bearing is visible on its tree, so shall the deeds of the Christian manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

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<sup>61</sup>James A. Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board*, The Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Oshawa, Ontario, Canada: Maracle Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>62</sup>Eddie Gibbs, *I Believe in Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981)

<sup>63</sup>Greg Laurie, “Fruit of the Spirit,” <http://www.jesus.org/following-jesus/fruit-of-the-spirit/how-do-we-bear-spiritual-fruit.html>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

During the ordination service of Glen Bloomstrom, Pastor John Piper presented a sermon captioned, “I Chose You to Bear Fruit” from John 15:16a - You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. The summary of Pastor John Piper’s sermon reads:

One day Jesus Christ spoke these words to the eleven and to you, then; he laid himself down on the cross and bought you with his blood. You are now his fruit and his fruit-bearer. The only fruit that will ever endure to eternal life is the fruit which grows out of the cross. “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:23, 24). We are Christ’s fruit because he died for us. We are his fruit-bearers if we are willing to take up our cross and die with him. Never forget the setting of your text, Glen. It is no accident that when Jesus had commanded you to go and bear fruit, he went and died. Your call and your ministry must always stand in the shadow of the cross of Christ. The only fruit that will last is the fruit that grows on the cross.<sup>64</sup>

Pastor Piper’s admonition to the ordinands and the congregation is very essential in the sense that Jesus Christ does not pull anybody into His service by lashing and screaming nor with bit and bridle, He chose all from the foundation of the world. Whoever shall respond to the call to discipleship must do so graciously with commitment and service. This shall ultimately enable the Christian to bear much fruit.

### **The Cost of Discipleship**

In Luke 14:26-27, 33 Jesus Christ says “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. In continuation, He said, “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

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<sup>64</sup>John Piper, “I Chose You to Bear Fruit,” <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/i-chose-you-to-bear-fruit>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

Discipleship is a call to be with, know and enjoy the Master. This means, the call to Biblical discipleship presupposes salvation. Implying that a person has accepted Christ as Lord and Savior and continues to believe in Him. Factually, discipleship is also a summons to follow Jesus and this is, most times, a challenging issue. He requires an exclusive, entire, and unwavering obedience to Himself. This is where His summons to discipleship is so radically different from other philosophers like Plato who emphasized the freedom of the student from the teacher or even the Jewish religious leaders who focused more on the Torah and steered their disciples away from themselves. Jesus, on the other hand, pointed people to Himself and calls them to drastic loyalty. Jesus' call to discipleship is a call to Christlikeness which includes at least three related facts: the demand; the promise; and the grace.<sup>65</sup>

**The Demand.** Jesus Christ's call to discipleship is a total surrender of oneself, extending into every facet of our lives. It involves giving Him preeminence over the closest of our human relationships and over the needs we have for our lives. It involves becoming His servant in the world and giving one's life to that end. Paradoxically we give up that which we cannot keep to gain that which we cannot lose. If not, we lose all in the end (Matt 16:25). The cross was an instrument of death and well known to the Jews. The suffering was intolerable. But Jesus says we are to take it up and follow him. This will, involve complete self-denial.<sup>66</sup>

**The Grace.** The order of Jesus Christ's call to discipleship is unfeasible for any human being, unaided, to fulfil. Christians must have resources to accomplish this kind of life. Those resources come from Jesus Christ and are promised to His

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<sup>65</sup>Greg Herrick, <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-understanding-meaning-term-disciple>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

followers who abide in Him.<sup>67</sup> He assured His disciples that even though He was departing from the world, He would continue to carry on His life and ministry through the disciples (John 15:16). As a result of His gracious empowerment, the life of Jesus Christ would be lived by His disciples (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14) through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9; 1Cor 3:16).

**The Promise.** The call to discipleship is not without its struggles, affliction, and complexities. But it is not without its promises either. In Mark 10:28-31 Jesus Christ reminds the inquiring disciples that there is a reward for following him. He did not rebuke Peter for his implied question, “What then will be for us, for leaving all to follow You?” but rather addresses it with a three-fold promise: Assuredly I say to you - those who leave family, friends, etc. for Jesus and the gospel will not fail to receive (1) a hundredfold of what was lost; (2) suffer persecutions; and (3) have eternal life in the age to come. The point in time for the giving of reward and persecution is in the hands of the Lord.<sup>68</sup> Just as Jesus Christ called His disciples to follow Him, likewise He calls Christians these days to follow Him along the path of discipleship. Christians are to respond to the call wholeheartedly and walk with Him intimately. Eventually, Jesus Christ promises His followers of eternal life.

The above discussions have thrown light on the expectations of a true disciple - what is required, God’s graciousness to His people, and the promise of eternal life.

The next deliberation is about measures to retain members.

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<sup>67</sup>Greg Laurie, “How Do We Bear Spiritual Fruit?” <http://www.jesus.org/following-jesus/fruit-of-the-spirit/how-do-we-bear-spiritual-fruit.html>, accessed Oct 17, 2017.

<sup>68</sup>Eugene Petersen, *The Contemplative Pastor* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 25.

## Measures to Retain Members

The efforts made by the Church to fulfil the Great Commission by Jesus Christ to evangelize the world and win souls into the Kingdom of God is often challenged by the constant exodus of converts out of the church. Loss of members also causes membership records to have more members than the actual.<sup>69</sup> This is a major challenge almost every local congregation faces. “A series of outreach events,” says Mashudu Ravhengani, “is not enough to keep new members coming to Church. Rather, the initiatives should focus on transforming the life and the conduct of the local congregation.”<sup>70</sup>

The Adventist News Network (ANN), the official news service of the Seventh-day world church, reported that annually close to 28 percent Adventist leave the church. In a related story,<sup>71</sup> ANN reported that number of people baptized between 2000 and 2005 was more than 5 million; however, the church lost nearly 1.4 million. The story cited a lot of church leaders’ suggestions on addressing the challenge. One suggested a shift in focus from converting to retaining new believers. Some also recommended that the Church should think about forming a new ministry designed to connect with former Adventists.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Yoseph Nyambega Otieno, "New Member Retention for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Makoko, Tanzania" (Berrien Spring, MI: Doctor of Ministry Thesis, Adventist Theological Seminary, 2014).

<sup>70</sup>Mashudu Ravhengani, “Effective New Members Retention Strategy Must go Beyond Programs,”<https://news.adventist.org/en/all-commentaries/commentary/go/-/effective-new-members-retention-strategy-must-go-beyond-programs/>, accessed: October 17, 2016.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

The issue about church membership retention is a major concern for the church. Church administrators, evangelists, elders, and almost all members whom the growth of the church matters have suggested or written proposals as well as dissertations on the problem. As the apostle Paul puts it, “Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ” (1Cor. 11:1). Newly baptized converts, like infants learn from what they observe more than what they have been taught. A model local congregation of Christian virtues will retain more converts than another that spends much time in teaching and preaching virtue but practices vice. This study considers the study of two researchers: Mashudu Ravhengani and Alan F. Harre on church membership retention strategies.

Mashudu Ravhengani thinks membership retention strategies should involve both new and old members of the church. He suggests the following measures:

1. Befriend both new and old members. We cannot make friends with new members if we are not already friends among ourselves.
2. Show them love. You cannot give what you do not have - if the congregation is polluted with strife and hatred, that’s all they can offer.
3. Involve them in church ministries. We cannot get new converts involved unless the old members are already involved.
4. Visit them, but do not forget to visit the old members whose Christian maturity is just like the new converts.
5. Disciple them, but let the entire congregation know and appreciate the concept of discipleship.
6. Expect high Christian standards of living within and without the church from both old members and new converts.<sup>73</sup>

Christians must exemplify godly living in the communities they find themselves, so that people will desire them and want to live the same. Ellen G. White says, “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our

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<sup>73</sup>Mashudu Ravhengani, “Effective New Members Retention Strategy Must go Beyond Programs,” <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-commentaries/commentary/go/-/effective-new-members-retention-strategy-must-go-beyond-programs/>, accessed: October 17, 2016.

needs.”<sup>74</sup> Without such revival and reformation among the Christian community most of the Church’s evangelistic efforts will be fruitless because the church continues to bring converts into a contaminated congregation.

Alan F. Harre, writing about ways to create a caring congregational fellowship, states the following procedures concerning church membership retention:

1. Retention through Careful Initial Assimilation. Most members can be retained only if they can be helped to be more than members in name alone. Without assimilation, the congregation will find that its open doors only lead to back doors through which new members quickly exit.
2. Retention through Improved Worship Experiences. Since boring or uninspiring worship is often cited as a reason for dropping out of church, issues about worship are essential to consider. “Worship” as Rauff considers, “ought to be fun, exciting, lifting, and positive.” He continues that “Liturgical worship can possess these qualities if the one leading understands the nature of worship and avoids the rut of deadening routine.”<sup>75</sup>
3. Retention through Improved Preaching. Good sermons need to convey God’s amazing plan of liberating people from feelings of guilt and insecurity and must present realistic suggestions about how God’s people must respond to God’s good news. Preachers need to help their listeners see Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind.
4. Retention through Ministry to Young Adults. Congregations that are serious about stemming the tide of backdoor losses must address the staggering losses

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<sup>74</sup>Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887.

<sup>75</sup>Edward A. Rauff, *Why People Join the Church* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 20.

from among young adult members. “The absence of young people,” in the estimation of Dudley, “is the cause of declining church membership.”<sup>76</sup>

5. Retention through Conflict Resolution. Unresolved conflicts play a role in the reasons people leave the church. In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus Christ outlines how to regain a fellow believer who has offended another. Conflicts among members of the Christian faith must not remain unsettled. “For evils we might have checked” E.G. White explains, “we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.”<sup>77</sup> In Acts 15, James the apostle, presiding over the council of Jerusalem, resolved the conflict between the Gentile and Jewish believers in the church at Antioch.

6. Retention through Effective Pastoral Care. The ministry style of pastors is very vital to check inactive members. Pastors are effective if they attempt to meet the needs of their members and the community. Generally, pastors are likely to be very effective when they are able to serve in congregations and live in communities which most closely match their capabilities, interests, opinions and values. “Pastors with good personal abilities, who create strong relationships” Arrais admonishes, “succeed almost everywhere they go.”<sup>78</sup>

Pastors who lack these skill struggle, even though they received similar

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<sup>76</sup>Carl S. Dudley, *Where Have All Our People Gone?* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 42.

<sup>77</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*. 441.

<sup>78</sup>Jonas Arrais, *Wanted: A Good Pastor, the Characteristics, Skills, and Attitudes Every Effective Church Leader Needs* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2001), 51,

training as their colleagues. A good pastor can maintain his flock through effective pastoral care.<sup>79</sup>

In His teachings on the reward for the righteous people in Matthew 25: 31-46, Jesus Christ emphasized on the meritorious reward that will be accorded the righteous people who showed concern and compassion for the hungry, thirsty, stranger (verse 35), and visited the sick and those in prison (verse 36). These acts of charity, Jesus Christ will commend as deeds done for Him. Right at the judgment seat the saints are pronounce with prize par excellent which they will submissively disclaim. If church members embark on such activities, many people will be regained who on the other hand might lose both their temporal and eternal life. It is well for Christians to note that Jesus Christ keeps record of all acts of support to fellow human beings, whatever little it might be He esteems as assistance given unto Himself. In this narration, Jesus Christ assures the righteous that any demonstration of faith compassion and care, will translate into Jesus Christ Himself protecting and rewarding them.

### **Summary**

In summary, church membership retention has been a great problem for people who are supposed to serve God faithfully. From the beginning of the History of the world to our contemporary time, membership retention has been a challenge for Churchmen who stand in the stead of God to gather people to deny themselves of worldliness and live to the standards of the principles of God. It is possible to live a godly live when the person meditates on the loving kindness of God through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ at the cross.

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<sup>79</sup>Allan F. Harre, *Close the Back Door: Ways to Create a Caring Congregational Fellowship* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1984), 29-50.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT CONTEXT AND STRATEGY TO INCREASE RETENTION

The intent for designing this project is to develop a strategy to address the problem of church membership retention, to reduce the alarming rate of membership loss in Koforidua and her environs (New Juaben Municipal Assembly) of the East Ghana Conference (EGC) of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Ghana. Information gathered from the biblical foundation and review of literature provide insights to deal with the problem of church membership loses. To develop a strategy, the researcher used questionnaires and focus groups discussions to obtain grass root information from members.

In context, this section of the project looks at a brief background of the people of Koforidua in New Juaben, considering, the socio-political, historical, demographical, economical and agricultural, climate and vegetation, topography and drainage, religious, and cultural backgrounds. It addresses the history of the church in Koforidua, its membership retention, describes the project context of Koforidua, and presents a program design. From the findings of the questionnaires and focus groups discussions, a project strategy is designed for implementation, evaluation and monitoring. The project strategy will be useful in some other geographical settings.

## **Ministry Context**

This part of the paper looks at a brief description of the local and historical settings of New Juaben Municipal Assembly (NJMA) - the macro context; where the township of Koforidua - the micro context is located. It describes the environment in which the Church operates. The New Juaben people are migrants from the Juaben people of the Ashanti Region in Ghana. The project site, Koforidua, like the Ashanti's in Ghana belongs to the Akan dominated areas where Adventism thrives. Koforidua is one of the headquarters of the twelve fields of the SGUC.

## **Macro Context**

### **Description of New Juaben Municipal Area (NJMA)**

The New Juaben Municipality is one of the districts in the Eastern Region of Ghana and was established in 1988 by the Legislative Instrument (LI) 1426. The Municipality lies between longitudes 1030' West and 0030 East and latitudes 60 and 70 North. The Municipality shares common boundaries with East-Akim Municipal to the North-East, Akwapim North District to the East and South and Suhum-Krabo-Coaltar District to the East. It covers a land area of 159 square kilometers representing approximately 0.6 percent of the total surface area of the Eastern Region. It has 52 major communities with Koforidua as its capital.<sup>1</sup>

The NJMA is one of the twenty-one (21) districts of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The twenty-one districts which comprise of the New Juaben Municipality are:

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<sup>1</sup>Philomena Nyarko, "Government Statistician, 2014," [www.statsghana.gov.gh](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh), accessed: October 27, 2016.

- |                        |                     |                          |
|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Abotanso            | 8. Dansuagya        | 15. KorleNkwanta         |
| 2. Adom Ponsu Boampong | 9. Dansu Dam Site   | 16. Mpaem                |
| 3. Akwadum             | 10. Effiduase       | 17. Nyerede Okper        |
| 4. Effiduasi           | 11. Jumapo          | 18. Nyerede Trom         |
| 5. Asikasu Asuogya     | 12. Ketenkye        | 19. Oyoko                |
| 6. Asokore             | 13. Kofikrom        | 20. Srodae               |
| 7. Betom               | 14. Koforidua - Ada | 21. Suahyen <sup>2</sup> |

NJMA has an annual rainfall ranging from 50-120 inches, and a temperature of between 20-32 degrees Celsius.

The Koforidua city is both the capital of NJMA and the entire Eastern Region. The Municipality covers an estimated area of 110 square kilometers constituting 0.57% of the total land area of the Eastern Region. A predominant natural feature in Koforidua is the ‘ObuoTabri’ Mountain, which is considered sacred by the indigenes. Nearby is the Akosombo Dam on the Volta Lake - the world’s largest man-made lake. Waterfalls in the area such as Akaa and Boti Falls and the Umbrella Rock attract tourists to New-Juaben Municipality and Eastern Region.

The natural rock which has been affectionately dubbed - “The Umbrella Rocks” looks exactly like an open umbrella, and has been in existence since the beginning of time. Atop the umbrella showcases a mixture of massive green forest surrounded by one of the world’s most beautiful falls - Two streams of water flow over the 33-meter cliff of the falls. One has to descend 250 steps to reach down to the falls. The indigenous people see the falls as a sacred place – the left fall is a female and the right is a male. They meet at midstream to produce one of the purest, whitest and elegant stream of water the world has ever provided. Coupled with the umbrella rock is the triplet palm tree, which is indeed one of the wonders of the world. The

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<sup>2</sup>Enoch Darfah Frimpong, “Koforidua: Historically Clean and Serene Commercial Capital,” <http://www.graphic.com.gh/news/politics/koforidua-historically-clean-and-serene-commercial-capital.html>, accessed: October 27, 2016.

Umbrella Rock, as the name means, is a rock found at the site of the Boti Falls in Yilo Krobo District, Ghana. Even though the pivot on which the top rock lies on might seem small, it is very strong and firmly balanced and there is no fear of top rock falling down. Yearly, many Tourists - within and outside Ghana make it to the Boti Falls to have a feel of nature.<sup>3</sup>

### **Socio-Political System**

The New Juaben Municipal Assembly has a distinct political and administrative system. The Municipality is made up of eighty-two (82) Assembly members, fifty-four (54) elected, thirty-five (35) Government appointees, Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) and two Members of Parliament (MPs). There are two constituencies namely- New Juaben South and New Juaben North. The sub-district structures in the Municipality consist of thirteen (13) Zonal Councils and eighty-six (86) Unit Committees. The political head is the MCE and the Municipal Coordinating Director (MCD) is responsible for the day- to-day administration of the Assembly. The figure below shows the political map of the New Juaben Municipal Assembly.<sup>4</sup>

The New Juaben Municipality is heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity. The dominating tribes are the Akans and Ga-Adangbes. The Ewes migrating from the Volta Region in Ghana and people belonging to ethnic groups of the north also form significant proportions of the population in the Municipality. With the Akans, there is a fair blend of Asantes, Kwahus and Akims with a substantial number of Akwapims. The Municipality is mainly Christian, constituting a population of 82.8 percent;

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<sup>3</sup> Abdullah Jalil, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcBsPWQWf7w>, accessed: October 27, 2016.

<sup>4</sup>Philomena Nyarko, "District Analytical Report," [http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010\\_District\\_Report/Eastern/NEW%](http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010_District_Report/Eastern/NEW%20), accessed: October 27, 2017.

Moslems constitute 6.1 percent, and the traditional believers are 2.4 percent. These religious denominations have had a key influence on the distribution of information and constitute a significant force in mobilizing the people towards developmental activities. The majority of the populations in the Municipality are Ghanaians, other nationals account for only 2.5 percent of the Municipality's Population.

About 4.3% of the population in the New Juaben Municipality has one type of disability or the other. The majority of Persons with Disability (PWDs) have visual impairment, followed by physically disability and emotional disorders. There are slightly more females with mobility impairment (physical) than males. Slightly higher percentage of females (4.7%) has disabilities than males (3.9%). The housing stock of New Juaben Municipality is 22,619 representing 5.2 percent of the total number of houses in the Eastern region. The average number of households per house is two and population per house is eight. Compound houses constitute more than two thirds (68.5%) of houses in the Municipality with separate houses making 16.2 percent. The majority (43%) of dwelling units in the Municipality are owned by other private individuals with a little over one third (34.4%) by household member.<sup>5</sup>

### **Historical Background**

The breakup of the smooth and brotherly co-operation between Juaben and Kumasi in the Ashanti Region by the civil wars of 1832 and 1875 culminated into the formation of the present state of New Juaben. The New Juaben State as presently constituted comprises eight distinct communities: Koforidua, Suhyen, Jumapo, Oyoko, Asokore, Effiduase, Ada and Akwadum. The formation of the New Juaben

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<sup>5</sup>Kwabena Okyere Kusi, "People Living with Disabilities," <https://www.newsghana.com.gh/pwds-encouraged-to-have-self-belief/>, accessed: October 27, 2016.

State is as a result of migration of the people of Juaben (Old Juaben in the Asante Region) to their current settlement in the Eastern Region called “Akwantukese” simply meaning the Great Voyage. This voyage resulted in the formation of the New Juaben State.

The history of the New Juaben State is a complex story of a people who had to migrate from their traditional homes in Asante in the 1870s and resettled in the then British protectorate of Akyem Abuakwa. Their choice of Akyem Abuakwa as a destination was by design rather than by accident. In the 1830s, the Juaben under their great leader, King Kwasi Boateng, had sojourned at Kyebi in self-imposed exile and savored the lavish hospitality of the Akyems.

The founding of the New Juaben State in the Eastern Region of Ghana is a consequence of two civil wars within 43 years (1832 and 1875) between Kumasi and Juaben, two of the most prosperous states in the Asante Union which led to the historic exodus of the Juabens and their allies to the then British protectorate in the Eastern Region and the subsequent establishment of the New Juaben State since 1878. The current royal king of the New Juaben Municipality is Daasebre Emeritus Oti Boateng. Daasebre is a member of the Yiadom-Hwedie royal family of Asante Juaben in the Ashanti Region and New Juaben in the Eastern Region. He was enstooled in 1992 to succeed his blood brother, the late Kwaku Boateng II. Daasebre Emeritus Oti Boateng has made impressive impact on the social and economic conditions of the Traditional Area. He is concerned about the role of traditional rulers and is committed to the preservation of traditional values and practices.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Daasebre Oti Boateng, <http://akwantukese.wixsite.com/akwantukese/our-history>, accessed: October 28, 2016.

**Demography.** The year 2000 Population and Housing Census put the population of the Municipality at 136,768 with a growth rate of 2.6% with female population constituting 51.5% and 48.5% for males. The population density is 684 persons per square kilometre. Koforidua, the regional and municipal capital, has over 65% of the entire population of the district. The remaining 52 settlements have smaller population sizes which do not normally measure up to the population thresholds required for the provision of essential socio-economic services.

The municipality has a dependency ratio of 64.7 which implies that there are about 65 persons in the dependent age for every 100 persons in the working age group. This is compared with the regional dependency figure of 90.7. The age structure of the district shows a relatively large proportion of children and a small proportion of older persons, i.e. 65+ years. The age and sex distribution of the municipal population is shown in Table 1 below.

*Table 1. Demographics of Koforidua Municipality*

| District   | Under 15 |        | 15 – 64 |        | 65+  |        |
|------------|----------|--------|---------|--------|------|--------|
|            | Male     | Female | Male    | Female | Male | Female |
| New Juaben | 35.4     | 34.0   | 60.6    | 60.8   | 4.0  | 5.2    |

*Source:* Age and sex distribution of Koforidua Municipality.

The proportion of the urban population in the Municipality is 88.4%. The rural-urban split, however, is 15.7% rural and 84.3% urban.<sup>7</sup>

**Economy and Agriculture.** The Municipality has a high proportion of self-employed individual businesses. The percentage of workers in the employee category

<sup>7</sup> Philomina Nyarko, Statistical Services, “Age and Sex Composition of Population,” [http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page\\_id=1524](http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page_id=1524), accessed: November 1, 2016.

is 27.9% which is the highest in the region. A huge proportion of the employed population is engaged in the public service, industrial, and education sectors. About 29.3% of workers are engaged in commerce while 28.6% are in production, transport and equipment operation.

Industrial activities of Koforidua include textiles, crafts, soap, carpentry and joinery, traditional medicine, pottery and ceramics, the municipality is notable for the production of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Koforidua's favorable weather conditions, as well as suitable soil types, are good for the production of food and cash crops. The crops include: cassava, kola, maize, plantain, cocoa, yam, citrus, palm oil, kenneleaf oil, tomatoes, onions, black pepper, mushrooms and spices.

It is estimated that 26.1% of the economically active population are engaged in the agricultural sector. These are catered for by thirty-four (34) agriculture extension officers who live among the farming communities at Suhyen, Akwadum, Oyoko, Jumapo, Asikasu, Korle-Nkwanta, Nyamekrom, Asokore and Effiduase. The ratio of Extension Officers to farmers is 1:800. The adoption of scientific farm practices is high among literate farmers and has resulted in increased yield per acre. Nyankoma, Suhyen and Bonya are noted for the production of maize while cassava is cultivated in large quantities at Nyamekrom, Nyankoma and Akwadum. Plantain farming is concentrated in Jumapo, Asikasu and Akwadum. Among the major produce are cassava, maize, cocoyam, plantain, vegetables, oil palm, cocoa, kola and citrus. A recent Agricultural Sample Survey of 10,775 farmers showed the following age ranges engaged in Agriculture.

Table 2. Farmers by Age Range

| AGE RANGE | PERCENTAGE% |
|-----------|-------------|
| 15-19     | 2           |
| 20-29     | 15          |
| 30-39     | 26          |
| 40-49     | 24          |
| 59-59     | 18          |
| 60+       | 15          |

Source: Ministry of Food and Agriculture, November 2016.

The table shows that farming is still not attractive to the youth who form the majority of the economically active population. Farm sizes in the municipality are relatively small ranging between 1 and 2 hectares. The land tenure systems currently in operation are the Owner Occupancy and Shared Tenancy (where the land owner leases the land to the farmer and the proceeds shared between them. Mostly in the ration of 2:1. The farmer takes 2/3 portion of the farm produce and the land owner takes 1/3).<sup>8</sup>

**Climate and Vegetation.** The Municipality falls within the semi-deciduous rain forest climatic zone with a bi-modal rainy season of between 1200mm and 1700mm reaching its maximum during the two peak periods of May/June and September/October. The dry season is relatively short and is experienced between November and February. Humidity and temperatures are generally high ranging between 20°C and 32°C. The mild temperatures have a significant bearing in making the municipality a major tourist destination. The vegetation is characterized by tall trees with evergreen undergrowth and rich in economic trees including

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<sup>8</sup> Philomina Nyarko, Statistical Services, “Age and Sex Composition of Population,” [http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page\\_id=1524](http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page_id=1524), accessed: November 1, 2016.

*Chlorohoraexcelsa* (Odum), *Ceibapentandra* (Onyina), *Antarisafricana* (Kyenkyen), *Triplochintonscleroxylon* (Wawa). These species greatly support lumbering and estate development activities. Scattered patches of secondary or broken forest are also present. Lumbering, farming, and building activities have however contributed to the degradation of the original vegetation.<sup>9</sup>

**Topography and Drainage.** The underlying rock formation is mainly metamorphic which is known as the Akwapim/Togo rocks. This is part of the Akwapim ranges that stretch across the north-eastern portion of the municipality. The rock formation has significantly contributed to the growth of the quarry industry serving as a great potential for the production of chippings for road construction. The municipal area is drained largely by the Densu River and its tributaries, the Bompon, Obopakko and Afena which serve as the main source of drinking water. The Densu River is dammed at a location close to Koforidua where the water is treated and distributed to the municipality. The Densu River Basin is located in the south-eastern part of Ghana with a total land area of about 2,488 sq. km. and spanning 12 districts including New Juaben. There are over 200 settlements along the basin with a population density of 150-200 persons per km. The river is one of the most exploited in Ghana and provides for domestic water supply, industrial and agricultural purposes. The effects of destruction of the surrounding environment of the river basin is however impacting negatively on the sustainability of this natural resource and causing perennial water shortages particularly in the dry season.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Philomina Nyarko, Statistical Services, “Age and Sex Composition of Population,” [http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page\\_id=1524](http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page_id=1524), accessed: November 1, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Philomina Nyarko, Statistical Services, “Age and Sex Composition of Population,” [http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page\\_id=1524](http://mofa.gov.gh/site/?page_id=1524), accessed: November 1, 2016.

**Religion.** The New Juaben municipality is heterogeneous in religion, but predominantly Christians constitute a population of 82.8%, Moslems 6.1% and traditional believers 2.4%. Prior to the proliferation of Pentecostalism and Charismatism, the dominant Protestant Churches were the Presbyterians and the Methodists. Catholics ranked next. With the influx of the miracle oriented churches, the mainline churches have generally experienced massive reduction in membership. The Protestant Churches constitute 26% of the population, while the Pentecostal/Charismatics constitute 34%.<sup>11</sup> These religious institutions have had a major influence on the dissemination of information and constitute a significant force in mobilizing the people towards developmental activities such as the National Clean-up Campaign Exercise.<sup>12</sup>

**Culture.** Akwantukese Festival is a festival celebrated by the people of New Juaben traditional area in the Eastern Region of Ghana. It is celebrated to mark the epic journey of the people from Juaben in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The Chiefs and people of New Juaben Traditional Area celebrate this festival in the first week of November each year. It is a period of consecration of black stools, invocation of the blessing of ancestral spirits and show of appreciation to the gods for their guidance. A colorful durbar of chiefs is held to climax the celebrations. Some important royal personalities, and divisional chiefs such as the Mmorontuohene and the Krontihene, gather initially at the Palace of the Ruler of New Juaben before they move on to

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<sup>11</sup>New Juaben Municipal, "Religious Affiliation," [https://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/eastern.asp?menu\\_id2=14](https://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/eastern.asp?menu_id2=14), accessed: November 1, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> New Juaben Municipal, "Religious Affiliation," [https://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/eastern.asp?menu\\_id2=14](https://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/eastern.asp?menu_id2=14), accessed: November 1, 2016.

Benkumhene then to Nifahene of New Juaben, to form a royal entourage, and from there proceed to the durbar grounds.<sup>13</sup>

## **Micro Context**

### **Description of Koforidua**

This part of the dissertation, will describe the immediate environment where the SDA Central Church in Koforidua is located. There will be a brief look at the population and road networks, history, economic activities (such as agriculture, industry/markets, financial services), tourism, hotels, guest houses and restaurants, education and health facilities.

### **Population and Road Networks**

Koforidua, serves as the commercial center for the Eastern Region of Ghana and the New Juaben Municipal Assembly. One can get into Koforidua through four main routes: (i) Accra through Aburi, (ii) Kumasi and Nkawkaw through Bunso, (iii) Suhum through Nankese, and (iv) Akosombo through Nkurakan. Getting to Koforidua is about two-hour drive from Accra and four-hour drive from Kumasi. The population of Koforidua is estimated at 230,000. It is a highly multi-ethnic, heterogeneous community.

### **Historical Background**

Koforidua, the capital of the Eastern Region in Ghana is popularly known as K-dua, is also known by the youth as “Kof Town” and the ladies are affectionately referred to as “Koforidua Flowers.” Etymologically, Oral tradition has it that Koforidua owes its name to an **Akan** man, Kofi Ofori, from Asante, who built his hut

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<sup>13</sup>Ghana Expeditions, [http://www.ghanaexpeditions.com/regions/highlight\\_detail.asp?rdid=217](http://www.ghanaexpeditions.com/regions/highlight_detail.asp?rdid=217), accessed: November 1, 2016.

under a huge mahogany tree. This tree provided shelter for weary farmers who were returning from their farms after a hard day's work. Overtime it became common for the farmers to say that they were going to rest under Kofi Ofori's tree. In **Akan**, the word for tree is "dua." An amalgamation of Kofi Ofori's name and tree, therefore become "Koforidua."

The Asante's were noted for having wars against other tribes in the nation and with the white men. The name Asante means - created because of war. It is derived from two local words, "osa" - meaning war, and "nti" meaning because of. The plural of "osa" is "asa." Consequently, any member from this coalition states became known as, Osa-nti-ni or Osantini while two or more members are referred to as, Asa-nti-fo or Asantifo in allusion to those who had come together because of war.<sup>14</sup>

### **Economic Activities**

The economy of New Juaben includes: agriculture, industry, financial service markets, tourism, and other attractions such as health, education, and hotels/guests houses. The Koforidua area is 75.5% economically active and 24.5% economically inactive. The percentages unemployed are 8.1% for males and 8.7% for females. The economically inactive population is made up largely of students 35.6% and homemakers (24.8%). The proportion of male students is larger than that of female students, while the proportion of female homemakers is higher than male homemakers.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Daasebre Oti Boateng, Omanhene of New Juaben Municipal Assembly, "The Uniqueness and Oneness of the Yiadom-Hwedie Royal Family," *AKWANTUKESE* (Kanda, Accra: Combert Impressions, 2008), 22.

<sup>15</sup>New Juaben Municipal [https://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/eastern.asp?menu\\_id2=14](https://www.modernghana.com/GhanaHome/regions/eastern.asp?menu_id2=14), accessed: November 3, 2016.

**Agriculture.** Koforidua's favorable weather conditions, as well as suitable soil types, constitute a recipe for the production of food and cash crops. Agricultural crops include: cassava, kola, maize, plantain, cocoa, yam, cocoyam, citrus, palm oil, kennele oil, tomatoes, onions, black pepper, mushrooms and vegetables. Agriculture is mostly embarked on in the small settlements and the periphery of Koforidua. Livestock production is also predominant in the area. Animals reared include sheep, goats, cattle, pigs, poultry, grasscutter, rabbits, and snails. There is potential for fish farming, mushroom, and beekeeping.

**Industry and Market.** Koforidua is endowed with many industrial activities, which are mostly medium and small scale. These include a lot of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, crafts, soap making, carpentry and joinery, traditional medicine, palm and kennele oil production. There is one large private industry called the Intravenous Infusion Limited, which produces infusions and drugs, serving national and regional markets. Koforidua features an integrated market system, which is the fulcrum of economic activity in the area

There is a clay deposit at Jumapo for the production of pottery and ceramics. Sand and stone winning are scattered in the area. Sand and stone chippings and quarrying are extracted for housing development and road construction. Aside small/satellite markets found at some communities and busy roads, Koforidua Township has seven different markets. They are: "Kwasea Guaso," "Gua Ketewa," Agatha Market, Zongo Market, and two Beads Markets - one at the Jackson's Park and the other at the Jubilee Park, and the Central Market which is the oldest and the

biggest among the markets in Koforidua. There are also hawkers who walk from place to place and around cars to sell their goods.<sup>16</sup>

**Financial Services.** There are several banking and non-banking financial institutions. There are commercial, foreign, and rural banks. There are also micro finance and those who operates with the susu system. About 80 percent of these financial institutions are located in Koforidua. Furthermore, Koforidua has reputable foreign exchange (forex) bureaus.

**Tourism.** Koforidua and her immediate environs has an enviable potential that predisposes the area to tourism development and attractions. These potentials include physical, historical, and cultural sites. The scenic landscape, multi-ethnic character manifesting in the exotic cultures, and the sub-urban characteristics of many of the settlements, make the area a favorable destination for adventure - seeking and exploratory tourists. The following attractions have been unveiled: Weaving industry, historical places, agro-tourism, Akwadum Mpaem forest, Akyekyeso Crocodile Sanctuary, Kentekiren Waterfalls, Omanhene's Palace, Obuotabiri Mountain and Shrine, large markets, art and crafts, cathedrals and mosques. There are also festivals and other socio-cultural events.<sup>17</sup>

**Hotels, Guest Houses and Restaurants.** New Juaben has about 30 standardized hotels ranging from 5-star to budget (inexpensive), hotels and many guest houses. The hotels include: Royal Plaza, Capital View, New Capital View, St. James, Mac Dic, Oyinka, Kobs, Partners May, Eastland, Two Streams, and the recent

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<sup>16</sup>Daasebre Oti Boateng, Omanhene of New Juaben Municipal Assembly, "The Uniqueness and Oneness of the Yiadom-Hwedie Royal Family," *AKWANTUKESE* (Kanda, Accra: Combert Impressions, 2008), 13.

<sup>17</sup> Daasebre Oti Boateng, "AKWANTUKESE."

Eastern Premier Hotel, commissioned on Friday October 14, 2016. It is rated 4.5-star hotel.<sup>18</sup> The best place to eat, as in restaurant, is called Linda Dor. currently the biggest and the most renowned restaurant in Koforidua, followed by O-Green restaurant which basically serves workers at the Koforidua Ministries. Other restaurants that could be assessed in the area are; Leesco (SIC building), Sophisticat (GNAT Hall), Havilla (Oteng House) and Chris Cafe (SSNIT Building). There are a lot of food restaurants that serve local foods such as ‘fufu’ with light soup or palm nut soup with ‘kokonte’ and various bush meat.

**Education.** The Educational statistics per the 2010 governmental statistics and census include Pre-Schools, Primary, Junior High Schools (JHS), Senior High Schools (SHS), Technical and Vocational Schools, Colleges of Education and Tertiary Institutions. The following shows the breakdown of the various levels of education in the Municipality.

(i) Pre-School. The New Juaben Municipality has 50 public and 78 private Pre-schools (KG) making a total of 128 schools. Enrolment in public Pre-schools is 4,664 and private 7,826 making a total enrolment of 12,490. The pupil teacher ratio for public schools is 1:28 while that of private is 1:22. 94 percent of the teachers are untrained in the private schools while in the public schools, 10 percent is untrained.

(ii) Primary School. There is a total of 143 Primary Schools in the New Juaben Municipality made up of 66 public and 77 private schools. In 2009/2010, the total enrolment was 23,803 pupils, made up of 11,749 boys and 12,054 girls. The total in public was 16,799 and private 7,004. The pupil-teacher ratio for public is 1:30 and

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<sup>18</sup>“Hotels in New Juaben Municipality,” [https://web.facebook.com/officialkasoagh/?\\_rdr](https://web.facebook.com/officialkasoagh/?_rdr), accessed: November 3, 2016.

private 1:27. All teachers in public schools are trained. Meanwhile, 78 percent of teachers found in the private schools are untrained.

(iv) Junior High School. The Municipality has a total of 107 JHS made up of 56 public and 51 private. The total enrolment is 10,686 made up of 5,326 boys and 5,356 girls. The public has a total of 8,324 made up of 4,216 boys and 4,108 girls. The private has a total of 2,358 comprising 1,110 boys and 1,248 girls. The pupil-teacher ratio for public is 1:20 and private 1:14.

(v) Senior High School. There are 6 public SHS and 6 private ones making a total of 12. The public SHS has a total enrolment of 9,549 made up of 6,667 boys and 2,882 girls. The private SHS also has a total enrolment of 1,971 comprising 751 boys and 1,220 girls. The Municipality has one model school - Oyoko Methodist Senior High School.

(vi) Technical School. The Municipality has one public Technical school. There is a total of 789 on roll. There are 4 other private vocational schools in the municipality and one private technical school.

(vii) College of Education. There is a College of Education (formerly known as Teacher Training College) which has a total enrolment of 814. The male students are 541 and female 273. The College of Education in Koforidua is a unit institution founded by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

(viii) Tertiary Education. The Municipality has one public Polytechnic and one Accredited Private University called the All Nations University.

(ix) Special School. There is one special school i.e. Unit School for the Deaf. It caters for children with special needs; mentally retarded, deaf and dumb.

**Health.** Koforidua has a Regional Hospital and two Mission Hospitals - Saint Joseph's Hospital and the Ghana Adventist Health Services (GAHS) Hospital

belonging to the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church respectively. It also has 2 Health Centers, 11 private Clinics, 3 private Maternity Homes, 10 RCH Centers, 80 TBAs, 15 CHPS and 70 Chemical Shops. The Municipality has seen a remarkable improvement in most of the key indicators of the various health delivery programmes within the past 5 years. Significant among these are the Disease Control and Surveillance program, Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), Safe Motherhood, School Health Services, Nutrition Activities and HIV/AIDS programs.<sup>19</sup>

### **History of the SDA Church**

For a brief history of the SDA Church, there will be a reflection on how the Church after her organization in 1863 reached Ghana after twenty-five years, in 1888. The Church's presence in the Eastern Region was first seen at Osiem, forty-five kilometers from Koforidua in 1931, and finally reached Koforidua in 1935 by F. L. Stokes, who was posted from Agona Asante as a missionary by J. Clifford - head of the SDA Church in Ghana at that time. The landmarks of Adventism in Koforidua will also be considered.

### **Adventism in Ghana**

A recorded version of the origins of the SDA Church in Ghana has it that, twenty-five years after the SDA Church was organized in the United States of America (1863), one Francis I. U. Dolphijn, a confirmed Methodist in good standing

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<sup>19</sup> Philomina Nyarko, "The Composite Budget of New Juaben Municipal Assembly," [www.mofep.gov.gh/.../files/budget/2015/Composite/ER/New/](http://www.mofep.gov.gh/.../files/budget/2015/Composite/ER/New/), accessed: November 4, 2016.

at Apam became converted after reading an Adventists tract washed ashore by the sea in 1888.<sup>20</sup>

### **Adventism in the Eastern Region**

Adventism came to Koforidua through a town called Osiem in the Akyem Abuakwa area. In November 1931, Samuel Yaw Appiah Dankwa read a copy of the book, *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White. As a person with great influence, he started observing the Sabbath with his friends like Daniel Nkrumah, Charles K. Boadu and their families.<sup>21</sup> The first well-structured and fully recognized SDA Mission Hospital was founded in 1955 and sited at Atibie in the Kwahu area. Unfortunately, in 1973 the Ghana government nationalized this medical facility and operated as a Government Hospital in 1973.<sup>22</sup> It is now the Kwahu District Hospital, which also runs a Nursing Training College.

### **Adventism in Koforidua**

Clifford, the then head of the SDA Church in Ghana, sent F.L. Stokes from Agona to Koforidua in 1935. Koforidua became the third major Adventist base in Ghana besides Agona and Bekwae. It was from Koforidua that the Adventist message spread to many areas of Accra and Nsawam. Nana Charles Ababio, Krontihene of

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<sup>20</sup>Seventh-day Adventist Church, *125 Years of Touching Lives: Proclaiming and living the Christian Life* (Accra, Ghana: The Advent Press), 20.

<sup>21</sup>Kofi Owusu-Mensa, *Ghana Seventh-day Adventism: A History* (Accra, Ghana: The Advent Press, 2005), 208.

<sup>22</sup>Seventh-day Adventist Church, *125 Years of Touching Lives*, 22.

Asokore was the first convert of Stokes. This missionary, Stokes concentrated his effort on setting up Administrative structure at Asokore.<sup>23</sup>

### **Landmarks of Adventism in Koforidua**

With the help of Nana Ababio, Stokes secured a piece of land and built a church house (1937) for the converts and moved from Nana Ababio's house where they temporarily worshipped.<sup>24</sup> Stokes also initiated the Advent Press at Asokore (1938), later, the Press was moved to Bekwae, taken again to Nigeria before it finally settled in Accra.

The first SDA Teacher Training College (now College of Education) in Ghana started in Bekwae Asante, but it was later moved to Asokore-Koforidua on October 26, 1962. The Church also has one Senior High School and seven Basic Schools. There is a hospital located at Nsukwao-Koforidua which ranks second to the regional hospital in OPD attendance.

The Church in Koforidua is divided into three districts with 39 fellowship centers: Koforidua district with 15 fellowship centers, Effiduase with 15 fellowship centers, and Asokore with 9 fellowship centers.

The East Ghana Conference office is located at SSNIT flats on the Accra-Bunso bypass through Koforidua Polytechnic. For church growth and expansion, the Church in East Ghana saw the need to split into three administrative centers, thus, create two other Administrative Units at Nkawkaw and Asamankese on January 2, 2014. At a meeting held at the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) in October 2016, the two other Administrative Units were granted Conference status.

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<sup>23</sup>Kofi Owusu-Mensa, 210, 211.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## **Problem Statement of the Dissertation**

As presented in chapter one, in recent times, efforts in evangelism have not been yielding large numbers of souls, not more than one hundred souls per campaign. Also, it was uncommon for SDA Church members to leave the Church as it is being experienced these days. On average, in out every four homes in Koforidua and New Juaben Municipality there is a member or former Adventist.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike certain parts of Ghana described as resistant to evangelism such as the Northern, Volta and the Afram Plains, the problem of Koforidua does not lie in bringing in new members, the problem is how to retain church members after baptism. Obviously either the clergy and the laity lack effective methods to help new members stay on in the church, or the existing strategies have become ineffective and irrelevant.

The biblical foundation for retention analyzed suggests that the problem of retention has been in existence for quite some time. The literature reviewed gives suggestions on how to reduce membership loss and increase membership retention. Considering the problem stated and the lack of measures to address the problem, there is the need to research and design a contemporary strategy to increase the retention of church members.

## **Research Design**

Research design is the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring to effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the plan for the collection,

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<sup>25</sup>Henry Nana Nyarko, "Personal Ministries Department," Survey Conducted to Reclaim Backsliders, Central SDA Church, Koforidua, 2nd Quarter 2016.

measurement, and analysis of data.<sup>26</sup> Cultural research aids in developing meaningful strategies. Though it may not entirely prevent all problems from occurring, nonetheless, refraining from taking necessary steps to develop a better perception of the people is a positive guarantee for inaccuracies that could have been avoided.<sup>27</sup> In the Bible God commanded that the Israelites research the inhabitants of Canaan to have valid information in order to develop effective military techniques before they attempt to engage in a battle (Numbers 13: 17-20).<sup>28</sup> To arrive at realistic objectives, the mixed method analyses is used to arrive at the intended goals to increase retention of church membership.

### **Types of Research**

#### **Mixed Method**

In order for any research group or individual to progress from the theoretical development of its goals, it must choose the method(s) to be used must be chosen. John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne remarked, “without methods actions cannot be obtained, and without action steps, strategies will not be accomplished.”<sup>29</sup> This research used the mixed method: quantitative method using questionnaire and qualitative method using focus group discussions.

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<sup>26</sup>De Vaus, D. A. *Research Design in Social Research* (London: SAGE, 2001), <http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/researchdesigns>, accessed June 10, 2016,

<sup>27</sup>John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, *Developing a Strategy for Missions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academics, 2013), 157.

<sup>28</sup>John D. Robb, *Focus! The Power of People Group Thinking* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994), 31.

<sup>29</sup>John Mark Terry and J. D. Payne, 157.

## **Quantitative Method**

The benefits of quantitative research method comprise objectivity in analyzing a situation, use of statistics to understand a large number of parameters, fast data collection and analysis, and assurance when making future plans. However, quantitative research requires a large sample of the population for accurate results.<sup>30</sup> The advantages of Qualitative Research are also stated below.

## **Qualitative Method**

Qualitative method is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an in-depth understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected by pre-determined quotas. The focus group discussion otherwise referred to as “People Group Thinking”<sup>31</sup> is cost effective. “It costs low to have a group to give a serious thought to an issue. It has flexibility and high face validity. It provides insight into a real-life situation in capturing the reality from the group in the actual community.”<sup>32</sup> The mixed method is a good combination in gathering data for effective analysis.

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<sup>30</sup>Libweb, “Quantitative Research,” [http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page\\_45.htm](http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page_45.htm), accessed: November 7, 2016.

<sup>31</sup>John D. Robb, *Focus! The Power of People Group Thinking*, 3.

<sup>32</sup>P. A. Twumasi, *Social Research in Rural Communities* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 2005), 65.

### **Rationale for Selection**

The rationale for selecting the mixed method is to explore and employ the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The mixed method stands advantageous when one needs to use one method (quantitative) to inform another method (qualitative). By mixing both qualitative and quantitative research and data, the investigator gains breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration, while offsetting the weaknesses inherent to using each approach by itself.<sup>33</sup> The mixed method will be beneficial to this study.

### **Appropriateness to this Study**

Although the problem of members leaving the SDA Central Church in Koforidua and her environs has existed for long, there has not been any conscious academic research to address the problem. This study is appropriate since it will find out the reasons why a great number of converts do not stay long but leave the church. The stated problem is commonly known to church members in the Koforidua municipality. Since pastors, elders, and members are aware of this predicament, the strategy developed to address the alarming loss of membership will be a welcoming instrument for both pastors and the laity.

### **Population and Sample of Participants**

Even though the Koforidua Central SDA Church was solely chosen as the project site, the participants for the questionnaires went beyond the confines of the Central Church because the problem is common to all those churches and their participation will buttress the finding and conclusions. Participants include a cross

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<sup>33</sup>FoodRisc Resource Centre, [http://resourcecentre.foodrisc.org/mixed-methods-research\\_185.html](http://resourcecentre.foodrisc.org/mixed-methods-research_185.html), accessed: November 22, 2016.

section of Ephesus Church, True Vine Church, Okorase Church, Effiduase District of Church at 2016 annual camp meeting, Asokore District at 2016 annual camp meetings, Koforidua District at 2016 annual camp meeting, workers of the EGC office, and pastors from the eleven districts of the Conference.

After explaining the need to administer questionnaires to the Koforidua Central SDA Church board, the researcher went through all the (32) research questions with the Church board members. The board members expressed their joy and interest in the project. The first three announcements were given by the researcher, who is also the Church Pastor of the chosen congregation and the president of the East Ghana Conference. Every question in the questionnaire as well as options of the responses was explained in detail to respondents. This was done wherever the questionnaires were implemented. The import of the question and why one should circle between options 1-5 was vividly clarified to respondents.

The project director had a support team of three pastors and four lay persons (three males and a female) aside these the elders of the Koforidua Central Church gave immense support.

### **Criteria for Sampling Procedures and Selection**

To gather data for the project, questionnaires were distributed among some churches in the three districts in the Koforidua Municipality. However, the focus groups were selected from the Koforidua Central Church only.

### **Questionnaire Distribution**

The survey questionnaires were spread throughout the three districts of Koforidua, that is, Koforidua with 15 congregations, Effiduase with 15 congregations, and Asokore with 9 congregations. The reason for this extension is to have a broad

spectrum of respondents who reside within the Koforidua metropolis. Most of the churches were either created from, or opened through evangelism by the Central Church. Churches like the New Life, Amazing Truth, Ephesus and the True Vine SDA were all products of the Koforidua Central SDA Church. Others such as Effiduase, Adweso, Ada, and Amanfrom are fellowship centers that were opened following evangelism by the Koforidua Central SDA Church. Since these churches are in the same metropolitan area, research sampling, selection and findings from data analyses will be beneficial to all of them.

The selected procedure for sampling selected for this project is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling can be divided into three types: (i) accidental sampling (ii) purposive sampling and (iii) quota sampling.<sup>34</sup> For this project, purposive sampling was chosen. The purposive sample is used in impressionistic studies, in pilot and pretesting procedures, and when one wishes to gain a quick insight into a social phenomenon.<sup>35</sup> In all the churches where the questionnaires were distributed, copies were given to those members who were enthusiastic to participate.

### **Focus Groups**

Formation of three focus groups of six (6) to eight (8) baptized members were organized. They were from the Elders, Women's Ministries, and the Adventist Youth Ministries. The focus group discussion members agreed to meet once a week on Sabbath afternoons for three (3) Sabbaths. The dates selected for the meetings for all the groups were:

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<sup>34</sup>P. A. Twumasi, *Social Research in Rural Communities* (Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press, 2001), 26, 27.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 28.

- Week 1 - August 6, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 2 - August 13, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 3 - August 27, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.

The groups meetings took a minimum of two (2) hours, between 2:30 - 4: 30 P.M., and a maximum of four (4) hours, between 2:00 - 6:00 P.M. A quorum of four (4) was allowed to begin discussions whenever they met. Although the dates and time of meetings were agreed by all the groups, some of the group members could not meet at the exact date and time. However, the frequency of the meetings for discussions was honored by all the groups. The discussions were recorded by appointed secretaries in each group.

### **Instrumentation**

Basically, two research instruments were used. First, collection of data from the assessment of the questionnaires and the responses from the focus groups discussions. Questionnaires and research instruments are measurement tools designed to collect data on a topic of interest from research respondents.<sup>36</sup> Formal, realistic and relevant questions/statements were constructed for the research subjects to choose numbers in magnitude from 1—5 with (1) being the least in agreement to the question/statement, and (5) being the highest in agreement. The Likert Scale options were: (1) Strongly Agree (2) Agree (3) Neutral (4) Disagree (5) Strongly Disagree. In some cases, the options were described as: (1) Very Good (2) Good (3) Somehow Good (4) Not Good (5) Not at All. In all 32, questions/statements were framed. The last question, “In your own opinion, what factors make people leave your Church?”

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<sup>36</sup>Medline Cinahl, “Research Instruments,” [https://help.ebsco.com/interfaces/CINAHL\\_MEDLINE\\_Databases/CINAHL/CINAHL\\_Research\\_Instruments](https://help.ebsco.com/interfaces/CINAHL_MEDLINE_Databases/CINAHL/CINAHL_Research_Instruments)

was intended for those respondents with additional information not found in the questionnaire.

Three main questions for the focus group discussions were drawn from the questionnaires. Each group was to answer the same set of questions to find out the similarities and diversities in the responses from each group. The focus group discussion members were those committed to and familiar with the issues pertaining to the Church.

### **Data Analysis**

Data Analysis is the process of systematically applying statistical and/or logical techniques to describe and illustrate, condense and recap, and evaluate data. An essential component of ensuring data integrity is the accurate and appropriate analysis of research findings.<sup>37</sup>

The analysis of the data is an important stage in research findings. Careful execution by research assistants and diligent participation of the interested respondents were conducted. Most of the 600 questionnaires were distributed during the 2016 annual camp meeting (August, 2016). The project director and his assistants took time to explain vividly the phrases and the statements of the questionnaires to the various congregations. The document was also interpreted into “Twi,” which is the most widely language spoken and understood by majority of the populace in the New Juaben Municipality.

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<sup>37</sup>Shamoo and Resnik, “Data Management,” [https://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/n\\_illinois\\_u/datamanagement/datopic.html](https://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/n_illinois_u/datamanagement/datopic.html), accessed: November 11, 2016.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

The procedures for data collection took two main forms. Respondents who were given the questionnaires at the local congregations were allowed the space of one week to return the papers to the research assistants or the local church leaders for onward submission to the researcher. On the other hand, those who were given the questionnaires at camp meetings and conference-wide retreats or revivals did it together but independently. This was facilitated by the research assistants and collected the documents after the respondents have reasonably answered the questions. The project manager with two of his assistants conducted the exercise at workers meeting on August 16, 2016 at the Conference headquarters. Thirty-eight workers participated and submitted their surveys. Due to of time constraint it was advisable to use the questionnaire to reach many people and at the same time arrive at a reliable conclusion. The focus groups took three Sabbath days to meet for discussions every Sabbath afternoon - between 2:30 - 4:30 P.M. By September 3, all the responses, from questionnaires and focus groups discussion were gathered for a summary of findings. Out of the 600 questionnaires distributed (English –350 copies, and the local language, Asante Twi–250 copies) a total of 565 copies representing 94% were retrieved.

## **Presentation and Description of Findings**

This segment of the dissertation focused on the description of findings from the data analysis and presentation of the questionnaires and the focus groups discussions administered. The findings of the data were gleaned from: (i) the responses to the questionnaires and, (ii) the focus groups discussions.

## Questionnaire Findings

This section has been grouped under the following headings:

- Baptism
- Spirituality of Members
- Church Membership
- Church Welfare, and
- Church Leadership
- Programmes for Reclaiming Backsliders
- Reasons for Leaving the Church

**Baptism.** Table 3 below shows the gathered under baptism.

*Table 3. Baptism*

| Statements  | Strongly Agree | Agree          | Neutral       | Disagree       | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| That members were not taught thoroughly before baptism.   | 178<br>(51.5%) | 129<br>(22.8%) | 28<br>(5%)    | 79<br>(13.9%)  | 39<br>(6.9%)      |
| Do you agree that new converts are assigned mentors for some time after baptism                                       | 190<br>(33.7%) | 118<br>(20.8%) | 33<br>(5.9%)  | 123<br>(21.8%) | 101<br>(17.8%)    |
| There is a ceremony of welcoming members into the Church after baptism  | 118<br>(20.8%) | 145<br>(25.7%) | 50<br>(8.9%)  | 106<br>(18.8%) | 145<br>(25.7%)    |
| Are new members helped to join a particular group in the Church such as the Adventist Youth....                       | 162<br>(28.7%) | 106<br>(18.8%) | 56<br>(9.9%)  | 108<br>(20.8%) | 108<br>(20.8%)    |
| To what extent do you agree to this statement<br>“There is a post-baptismal instruction for new members in my church” | 129<br>(22.8%) | 180<br>(31.7%) | 62<br>(10.9%) | 67<br>(11.9%)  | 129<br>(22.8%)    |

Source: Fieldwork, August 2016.

The information above suggests that members were not taught thoroughly before baptism. As majority of the respondents - 291 (51.5%) strongly disagree to the statement against 129 (22.8%) who marked agree to the statement that members were taught thoroughly before baptism. Although 129 (22.8%) indicated agree, 79 (13.9%) also disagreed, while 39 (6.9%) strongly disagree, except 28 (5%) who were found neutral in their responses to the statement.

Concerning the assigning of existing members as mentors to the new converts as their spiritual guardians for some time, the data analysis revealed that 190 (33.7%) strongly agreed and 118 (20.8%) agreed that mentors should be assigned to new converts, but other respondents hold different views as 123 (21.8%) disagree, and 101 (17.8%) strongly disagree that new members be assigned mentors for spiritual guidance. However, 33 (5.9%) remained neutral.

As with the statement that “there is a ceremony of welcoming new members into the church immediately after baptism” shows that newly baptized members are not properly welcomed into the church. The table portrays that greater number of people ticked against the statement than those who indicated in affirmative. Those who disagree and strongly disagree rated 145 (25.7%) and 145 (25.7) correspondingly; those who indicated agree and strongly disagree had 106 (19.8%) and 118 (20.8%) respectively. However, 50 (8.9%) posited neutral.

On the issue of the old or existing members helping new converts join a particular group or department in the Church, such as Adventist Youth Ministries, Church Choir, Women’s Ministries, Adventist Men’s Ministries. The investigation discovered that 162 (28.7%) circled strongly agree, 106 (18.8%) marked agreed, 56 (9.9%) were in a neutral stand. For those who had negative opinions against the

statement, 118 (20.8%) underscored disagree while another 118 (20.8%) strongly disagree.

Again, respondents were asked the extent to which they agree to the statement that “there is a post-baptismal instruction for new members in my church”. To this statement, it can be seen from the table that 180 (31.7%) agree with 129 (22.8%) strongly agree as against 129 (22.8%) who strongly disagree. 67 (11.9%) disagree, and 62 (10.9%) took a neutral position. The implication of these findings is that there is the need for spiritual direction for newly baptized people into the church before and after baptism for their faith to grow.

**Spirituality of Members.** Many theologians and churchmen are worried about the rate at which church members leave the church after having and tasting the spiritual union with Jesus Christ. Basically, there are two major reasons allotted to why people do not stay but leave the Church. On one hand, it is blamed on the conditions that exist in the church house which includes the type of church building, activities that go on, and interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, lack of membership retention is blamed on the individual’s lack of spiritual commitment.

In his estimation, James A. Cress thinks the individual has a responsibility in maintaining a cordial relationship with Jesus Christ. He says, “Christ’s measurement for discipleship is based more on the attitudes that exist between church members than on theological orthodoxy.”<sup>38</sup> We must also understand that living in our contemporary world need strategies that addresses the needs at present. Conversely, Barna’s findings refute that of Cress. Barna comments the building and what is done

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<sup>38</sup>Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board*, 44.

within contributes greatly to church membership retention. He says, “Clearly the Christian Body cannot hope to have much impact if we respond in the same ways we have in the past” There are new challenges, continues Barna “demanding creative unique responses.” He affirms, “The solutions that worked ten years ago or even five years will fail in the coming decade. We are being challenged with a new wave of impediments, ideas and opportunities. Frankly speaking, though the messages of the Church must not necessarily change her methods and strategies of dealing with programs and ministry must change as often as possible. After careful study of different options, there is the need to tailor new strategies to address this new environment.”<sup>39</sup> With the above assertions of the various writers, and the objectives of the study, the researcher seeks to find out how members, both old and new need to grow spiritually.

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<sup>39</sup>George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1980), 223.

*Table 4. Spirituality of Members*

| Statements  | Strongly Agree | Agree          | Neutral       | Disagree       | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| The new members are given teachings concerning spiritual gifts before baptism             | 112<br>(19.8%) | 123<br>(21.8%) | 89<br>(15.8%) | 123<br>(21.8%) | 118<br>(20.8%)    |
| New members are assigned tasks according to their spiritual gifts in my church            | 62<br>(10.9%)  | 157<br>(27.7%) | 56<br>(9.9%)  | 140<br>(24.8%) | 151<br>(26.7%)    |
| Do you agree that the church's role in the Great Commission are commanded by Jesus Christ | 515<br>(91.1%) | 39<br>(6.9%)   | 6 (1.0%)      | ---            | 6 (1.0%)          |
| The Church has active and involve in integrating new members into the life of the church  | 67<br>(11.9%)  | 73<br>(12.9%)  | 67<br>(11.9%) | 150<br>(26.6%) | 207<br>(36.6%)    |

According to the table above, it can be easily concluded that new members are not given enough instructions concerning their spiritual gifts before baptism. As 123 (21.8%) and 118 (20.8%) disagree and strongly disagree in their perceptions. Although half of the respondents think that new converts are not well nurtured towards spiritual gifts, 123 (21.8%) and 112 (19.8%) also agree, and strongly agree. However, 89 (15.8%) were neutral. God endows every member of the church in every era spiritual gifts, which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good and the advancement of the church and humanity.<sup>40</sup>

Pertaining to the fact that new members are assigned tasks concerning their spiritual gifts in the church, 157 (27.7%) agreed but 151 (26.7%) strongly disagree

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<sup>40</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: 2006), 237.

and 140 (24.8%) disagree. Invariably, 56 (9.9%) were neutral. Finding out whether respondents do agree that the church's role in the Great Commission is commanded by Jesus Christ, majority 515 (91.1%) strongly agree while the other options were insignificantly low. With the statement that "the church has active and involve in integrating new members into the life of the church" the finding shows that most 207 (36.6%) of the respondents strongly disagree. From the findings, it can be deduced that new members were not instructed concerning their spiritual gifts before baptism.

**Church Membership.** A member of the church is the one who reflects a lifestyle in consonance with the Church. Such individual is a Christian who is actively involved in the life of a local congregation by attending church regularly, giving financial support, and participating in ministry.<sup>41</sup> People become members through the rite of baptism, but church membership is the place or the local congregation where the individual's association with the church is retained.

According to Romans 12:5, the universal Church—the Body of Christ is composed of all true believers in Christ, and local churches are to be microcosm of the universal Church. True believers will have their names written in the book of life (Rev 20:12). That is the most important thing in the life of every Christian. However, it is also important to commit to a local church where it can give resources and serve others, and be accountable. 1Cor. 5:1–13 teaches on how the church must remain pure by dealing with blatant, sins in her midst. On these premise, the study seeks to find out from respondents their perception on a church member.

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<sup>41</sup>Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board*, 7.

*Table 5. Church Membership*

| Statement   | Strongly agree | Agree          | Neutral        | Disagree       | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Do you see the church members functioning in local traditions and culture (e.g. putting properties of the dead in coffins, widowhood rites, puberty etc.) than Biblical teaching? | 56<br>(9.9%)   | 62<br>(10.9%)  | 101<br>(17.9%) | 123<br>(21.8%) | 224<br>(39.6%)    |
| Do you agree that the members are involve in church activities or few ministering and majority playing the spectator role   | 157<br>(27.7%) | 179<br>(31.7%) | 56<br>(9.9%)   | 123<br>(21.8%) | 50<br>(8.9%)      |
| How would you measure the love/care quotient (LQ) in your church  | 62<br>(10.9%)  | 107<br>(18.9%) | 50<br>(8.9%)   | 162<br>(28.7%) | 185<br>(32.7%)    |
| That the Church only concerns with the church growth/membership rather than the members faithfulness  | 196<br>(34.7%) | 151<br>(26.7%) | 56<br>(9.9%)   | 113<br>(19.8%) | 50<br>(8.9%)      |
| The Church thinks about winning souls but lacks retention programmes  | 162<br>(28.7%) | 173<br>(30.7%) | 67<br>(11.9%)  | 112<br>(19.8%) | 50<br>(8.9%)      |
| Apart from Bible studies and worship the church use to organize social events   | 151<br>(26.7%) | 179<br>(31.7%) | 44<br>(7.8%)   | 134<br>(23.8%) | 56<br>(9.9%)      |
| There is an action unit, small group, and P. Min for Sabbath afternoon visitation for members who could not attend church service   | 134<br>(23.8%) | 157<br>(27.7%) | 23<br>(4.0%)   | 134<br>(23.8%) | 118<br>(20.8%)    |
| Do you content to the statement that “the small groups, ministries in the church functions effectively  | 23<br>(4.0%)   | 39<br>(6.9%)   | 33<br>(5.9%)   | 201<br>(35.6%) | 268<br>(47.5%)    |

*(table continues)*

*Table 6 (table continued). Church Membership*

| Statement  | Strongly agree | Agree          | Neutral        | Disagree       | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Members whose relative are not Seventh-day Adventist are normally given nod (by their relatives) to stay in the church | 67<br>(11.9%)  | 89<br>(15.8%)  | 179<br>(31.7%) | 140<br>(24.8%) | 89<br>(15.8%)     |
| Do you agree that for every five (5) converts won through evangelism, only one normally stays in the church            | 341<br>(60.4%) | 168<br>(29.7%) | 23<br>(4.0%)   | 17<br>(3.0%)   | 17<br>(3.0%)      |
| Most members whose job opportunities and businesses clash with the Sabbath do not stay in church                       | 240<br>(42.6%) | 163<br>(28.7%) | 45<br>(7.9%)   | 95<br>(16.8%)  | 23<br>(4.0%)      |

Source: Fieldwork, August 2016.

Responses from the above table suggest church membership is very important for the growth of the church. When respondents were asked “to what extent do they agree to the statement that the church is functioning on local traditions and culture such as funerals, widowhood rites, puberty etc., than the Biblical teaching” the analysis records very high rate of responses as 224 (39.6%) of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. These means church members rely mostly on Biblical teachings than local traditions and culture. However, 113 (38%) ticked either strongly agree (9.9%), agree (10.9%) or neutral (17.8%).

Respondents were further asked whether “the Church members are involved in participating in church activities or few ministering and majority playing the spectator role” to this, 179 (31.7%) of the respondents agreed that the church members are involved in church activities. Again, to find out whether there is love/care quotient (LQ) in the church, the study found that most 185(32.7%) of the respondents strongly

disagree that there is love and care. These findings disagree with (Matt 25:35–36, 40) where Jesus Christ clearly teaches on caring for the needy, the naked, the stranger and the necessity to practice the acts of charity in general. Christ therefore counsels His followers “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My Brethren, you did it to Me.” In His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ spent much of His time caring for the poor, the needy and the outcast. He commanded his disciples to do the same by showing selfless love to others and to one another.

To find out whether church members often ask debatable questions about the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath, a total of 391 (69.3) responded affirmatively to the statement. That is 173 respondents marked strongly agree 173 (30.7%), and 218 (38.6%) also circled agree. However, 79 people (13.9%) remained neutral, another 79 (13.9%) selected disagree, while 16 (3.0%) opinioned strongly disagree. This means, if church members often ask questions about the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath, they will need regular and deeper education on issues relating to the Ten Commandments and the keeping of the Sabbath. The data also reveals that most members whose relatives or guardians are not Seventh-day Adventists become impediment to their commitment and stay in the Church and they eventually leave the Church.

Similarly, the data makes known those members whose job opportunities, businesses and work schedules fall on the Sabbath ultimately do not remain in the Church. Sample of such people includes: hairdressers and barbers; traders and marker women at places where the market days fall on the Sabbath; those who work with the forces like the police, soldiers, navy and customs. There are few others whose jobs and lifestyles are not in conformity with the doctrines and practices of the church. Such as those who indulge in “the use, manufacture, and the sale of alcoholic

beverages and tobacco and from the misuse of or trafficking in narcotics and other drugs”<sup>42</sup> and will not want to abstain from such lifestyle and practices. Greater number/percentage agreed to the fact that just about one out of five (20%) of converts won through evangelism stay in the church. The data divulges that: as many as 341 (60.4%) rate the statement highly agree, another 168 (29.7%) rate the statement agree. From this, a total of 509 (90.1%) out of 565 (100%) responded in the affirmative that only one-fifth of new converts remain in the church. The leadership of the Church, therefore, needs to take a serious look at how to retain members in the Church.

**Church Welfare.** The purpose of Church welfare is to promote self-reliance and to care for and serve the poor and the needy. Bishop H. David Burton states:

Church welfare is a solemn obligation imposed by the Lord Himself on the church. The purpose, promises, and principles that reinforce our work of caring for the poor and needy extend far beyond the bounds of mortality. This sacred work is not only to benefit and bless those who suffer or are in need. As sons and daughters of God, we cannot inherit the full measure of eternal life without being fully invested in caring for each other while we are here on earth. It is in the benevolent practice of sacrifice and giving of ourselves to others that we learn the celestial principles of sacrifice and consecration.<sup>43</sup>

Matthew 20: 1-16 and Luke 10: 29-37 emphasize the basic theological foundation for a Christian approach to the society is the directive to love our neighbour as ourselves. Neighbourliness is rooted in compassion – how one desires to be treated when in another person’s situation. In the light of this principle, the

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<sup>42</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015), 46.

<sup>43</sup>General Conference of SDA, “The Sanctifying Work of Welfare,” <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2011/04/the-sanctifying-work-of-welfare?lang=eng>, accessed: November 16, 2016.

church's welfare is an expression of the New Testament insight that affluence is not exclusively based on merit and that the destiny of other people reflects possibilities that one may face. Deducing from His teachings Jesus Christ declares our relationship with our fellow men is inseparable from our relationship with God. Love of God and love of our neighbors are two aspects of the same calling. As church welfare is very important to the church and her members, the study sought to find out how organized and fruitfully the welfare system operates. The table below shows.

*Table 7. Church Welfare*

| Statement   | Strongly agree | Agree          | Neutral       | Disagree       | Strongly disagree |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Does the church have welfare system to support church members in times of need  | 106<br>(18.8%) | 89<br>(15.8%)  | 17<br>(3.0%)  | 140<br>(24.8%) | 212<br>(37.6%)    |
| Does the church have funeral plan to support members financially when they are bereaved                                     | 218<br>(38.6%) | 274<br>(48.5%) | 33<br>(5.9%)  | 33<br>(5.9%)   | 6<br>(1.0%)       |
| The church welfare and funeral department embodies all members of the church, to what extend do you agree to this statement | 73<br>(12.9%)  | 101<br>(17.8%) | 89<br>(15.8%) | 196<br>(34.7%) | 106<br>(18.8%)    |
| The church has plans for meeting the physical, spiritual, and financial challenges of the members, do you agree             | 39<br>(6.9%)   | 112<br>(19.8%) | 84<br>(14.9%) | 145<br>(25.7%) | 185<br>(32.7%)    |
| The percentage of financial commitment level of members especially in tithe and offerings are relatively low                | 295<br>(52.5%) | 168<br>(29.7%) | 39<br>(6.9%)  | 45<br>(7.9%)   | 17<br>(3.0%)      |

Source: Fieldwork, August 2016.

When respondents were asked whether the church has welfare system to support church members in times of need, the greater part of the respondents 212 (37.6%) strongly disagree, 140 (24.8%) disagree, 106 (18.8%) strongly agree, 17 (3.0%) remained neutral, a marginal percentage of 89 (15.8%) agree to the fact that the church have welfare system to support church members in time of need. From the data gathered, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents are either not satisfied with the welfare system in the Church or think it needs to be improved. To find out whether the church has funeral plan to support members financially when they are bereaved, the study shows that 274 (48.5%) and 218 (38.6%) respectively agree and strongly agree that the church members are financially supported when they are bereaved through the church welfare. Also 33(5.9%) remained neutral, 33(5.9%) disagree and 6 (1.0%) strongly disagree. Determining whether the church welfare and funeral department embodies all members of the church, the study revealed that the welfare and funeral department does not embodies all members, for the reason that 196(34.7%) disagree, as well as 106 (18.8%) also, strongly disagree with the statement that the funeral department embodies all members of the church. Church leaders must encourage all members of the church to join the welfare department.

Finding out whether the church has plans for meeting the physical, spiritual, financial challenges of the members, the analysis shows that most of the respondents 185 (32.7%) strongly disagree, 145 (25.7%) as against 112 (19.8%) who agree and 39 (6.9%) strongly agree that the church has plans for meeting the physical/spiritual/financial challenges of the members, However, 84 (14.9%) were in the neutral position. Again, finding out the percentage of financial commitment level of members especially in tithe and offerings, the study revealed that majority of the respondents 53(52.5%) strongly agree that the level of financial commitment of

members especially in tithe and offerings are very low. Then, 168 (29.7%), 39 (6.9%) remained neutral, 45 (7.9%) agree, and 17 (3.0%) strongly disagree. The data and its analysis shows the percentage of financial level of members in giving, especially tithe and offerings are very low. The church will need to have stewardship education and promotion so that members would improve upon their commitment and giving levels to the church.

**Church Leadership.** Generally, leadership according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary is the person who leads, commands, or precedes a group, organization, or country. Secular leadership style differs from church leadership. To be able to become a successful leader, something better than book knowledge is vital. Church leadership needs integrity, industry, energy intelligence, and tact. Unless Church leaders can gain the confidence and trust of those they lead and labor for, they can do but little good.<sup>44</sup> True church leadership obtaining the confidence of the people they lead. The feeling of superiority must be shunned in all respect. The necessity of approaching the flock with kindness and courtesy is needed, but not with ruggedness and severity.<sup>45</sup>

Norman Shawchuch and Roger Heuser conceal convincingly that, “If the leader is broken, angry, duplicitous the congregation will reflect such qualities. If the leader is collected, complete, at peace, then the congregation will ultimately reflect these qualities.” The same authors convey that, “our interior world creates our

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<sup>44</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 53.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

contextual reality.”<sup>46</sup> While on earth Christ established the principle of Church leadership among His disciples that true greatness is serving.

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt 20: 25-28).

Church leadership is service to God and service to mankind. Such leaders do not seek to be hailed, uplifted, or adored. They are not to be served but to serve.

*Table 8. Church Leadership*

| Statement   | Very good | Good       | Somehow good | Not good   | Not at all |
|---|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| How would you rate the frequency of church leaders visit to members           | 28 (5.0%) | 56 (9.9%)  | 190(33.7%)   | 129(22.8%) | 162(28.7%) |
| How would you rate the frequency of marriage seminars conducted by the church | 50(8.9%)  | 118(20.8%) | 162(28.7%)   | 118(20.8%) | 118(20.8%) |

Source: Fieldwork, August 2016.

When respondents were asked “how they would rate the frequency of church leaders (both pastors and elders) visitation to members, 190 (33.7%) out of the total respondents 565 (100%) sampled for the study rated the church leaders’ visitation to

<sup>46</sup>Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 92

members as somehow good, 56 (9.9%) rate it as good while 28 (5.0%) rate it as very good. Although a handful of the respondents rate the visitation of the church leaders to the members as good or very good, majority of the respondents have negative and disappointing views about how church leaders visit members. The data shows that 162 (28.7%) responded not good, whilst 129 (22.8%) responded as not good at all. This means a total of 291 (51.5%) showed their displeasure on how the leaders of the Church visit their members.

On how would respondents rate the frequency of marriage seminars conducted by the church, 162 (28.7%) rate it as somehow good, 118 (20.8%) rate it as good and 28 (5.0%) rate it as very good. The remaining respondents 118 (20.8%) says not good, and another 118 (20.8) rate not at all respectively. From the findings, it can be said that both visits and frequency of marriage seminars need to be improved in the church.

**Reclaiming Backsliders.** Oftentimes a greater percentage of new converts baptized into the Church eventually stop worshipping with the church. It is the requisite responsibility of the Church to conduct programmes and activities to reclaim those who in one way or another, could not stay in the church. Ellen G. White, cautioning the Church to “Guard against Apostasy” writes:

Many accept the truth without digging down deep to understand its foundation principles; and when it is opposed, they forget the arguments and evidences that sustain it. They have been led to believe the truth, but have not been fully instructed as to what truth is, or carried forward from point to point in the knowledge of Christ. Too often their piety degenerates into a form, and when the appeals that first aroused them are no longer heard, they become spiritually dead.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 368.

The analysis from the data gathered from church members show the perception of members as to how the church plan effective programmes to reclaim people who backslide from the church.

Table 8 below shows that programmes for reclaiming backsliders were limited as only 196 (34.7%) indicated that there are programmes in place to reclaiming backsliders as against 369 (65.3%) of the respondents who indicated that there are either no programmes or insufficient programmes in place to reclaiming backsliders. The data analyzed from church members implies that there should be regular activities and programmes to retaining and reclaiming former members and backsliders.

*Table 9. Programmes for Reclaiming Backsliders*

| Programmes for Reclaiming backsliders | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes                                   | 196       | 34.7       |
| No                                    | 369       | 65.3       |
| Total                                 | 565       | 100.0      |

Source: Field Data, Aug., 2016.

**Reasons for Leaving the Church.** Finally, the researcher sought to find out from the respondents to state in their own opinions, causes that contribute to why members leave the church. There are inexhaustible reasons to why people leave the church. The causes in general remain a bizarre for most church leaders and researchers. Hale states, “The rites of passage by which people become members of religious communities are well known. The rites of passage by which people leave, the ‘tipping phenomenon,’ remains unexplored.”<sup>48</sup> Hale continues, “We do not know

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<sup>48</sup>James Russel Hale, *The Unchurched: Who They Are and Why They Stay Away* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1980), 176.

what triggers the exodus for some and what holds others in. The indications seem to suggest that for most people the process of estrangement is gradual.<sup>49</sup> Reasons for leaving the churches found in this study are many and diverse but in no wise exhaustive. They include the following captions

1. Lack of faith in times of challenges.
2. Conspiracy of church members against each other.
3. Lack of interest in the church activities which often take more time of the day.
4. Conflicts with some members and leaders of the church.
5. When members live far and cost of transportation to church become burdensome.
6. When members feel, they are not loved and cared for, when their needs and crisis were not addressed to expectation.
7. When members see segregation and partiality in the way they are treated.
8. When members are seldom visited, and have no friends in the church.
9. When there are unmet expectations like marriage and financial support.
10. When there are no social programmes in the church.
11. When people do not identify people of their social class or status.
12. Poor quality of sermons and programmes.
13. Contemporary issues are not addressed. Church leaders have no clue to the needs of the younger generation.
14. Confused because of the tension and confusion between the truth of the Church and the way new converts see the lifestyles of older members.

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<sup>49</sup>James Russel Hale, *The Unchurched: Who They Are and Why They Stay Away*, 167.

15. The Church focuses too much on rules which eventually eliminate people, especially the youth, rather than encouraging the development of one's spiritual life. When those found in sin need the church most they are rejected as active members and most of cannot gather confidence in coming back.
16. Neglecting new converts from participating from church activities.
17. Too little praises and prayers in the church.
18. Insufficient teachings before and after baptism.

The findings from the data concerning reasons people leave the church in this study are just representative, the list can be lengthy but by no means exhaustive. The Church needs to have programmes in place to minimize the greater number of converts who do not stay in the church.

### **Focus Groups Findings**

Three focus groups of six to eight persons were formed. They include: Church Elders, Women's Ministries, and Adventist Youth Ministries. Three (3) major questions (that embodies the 32 questionnaires) were set as the basis for the focus group discussions. All the groups were to answer the same set of questions. The focus group questions are the following.

1. What motivates people to become members of the Church?
2. What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church?
3. What can the Church do to improve retention of membership?

It was noted that answers given by the various groups were almost similar, but answers that are peculiar to a particular group are listed as their view, understanding, and contribution to the project.

**Focus Group Discussions for Church Elders.** Eight (8) Elders made up of former and current elders represented and contributed to the findings of the project. Addressing the issue about what motivates people to become church members? Three answers run through all the focus groups. That is: (1) Some members are in the church because they grew up from Adventist parents. (2) Some are the products of public evangelism, small group ministries and personal ministries. (3) Others came into the church by their own convictions. Either by reading the Bible or Adventists literature.

On the question regarding - What Motivates People to Become Church Members. The elders/men are convicted that:

1. A sizeable number of the people come to the church through marriage
2. Charitable deeds made through programmes led by the Adventist Men's Ministries and Women's Ministries to some families and individuals contribute to what motivates people to join the church.
3. Few of the elders gave testimonies that they are members of the church because they were influenced by the lifestyles of some devout members of the Adventist Church.
4. Some people too, especially women, became church members because of miraculous healing or answered prayers they experienced by attending a prayer programme organized by the Seventh- day Adventists.
5. Others tend to becoming members by listening to the Encounter with Truth (EWT) television programme which has Pastor Andrews L. Ewoo as the leader and speaker of the team.

From the perspectives of the elders, to motivate people to become church members, marriage programmes should be conducted frequently; charitable deeds to the poor and the needy must be strengthened; good and imitable lifestyles of church

members should be emphasized; and then, prayer programmes among members and the Church in particular should be intensified.

Finding out, what are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? The elders are of the opinion that:

1. Some converts see discipleship as burdensome, too sacrificial, and infringes on one's independent life.
2. People leave the church because of unmet expectations, in other words, they could not achieve their perceived intentions
3. Many of such converts are not "well baked," meaning that they are not given enough teachings on the beliefs and practices of the church before they are baptized.

The above reasons for leaving the church raised by the elders imply that the Church leaders should conduct programmes on the, Test of Discipleship; Reliance or Dependence on God for guidance and direction; also, Teachings and Discussions on Adventist Beliefs and practices should be organized often.

On the subject matter of "what can the Church do to improve retention of members?" The church elders' discussions suggest the following:

1. Organize open forum quarterly after business meetings to know and address issues that make members disinterested in the church.
2. Church leaders should practice servant leadership and avoid harsh and kingly treatment on church members.
3. Church elders and departmental leaders should be given orientation regarding how to handle and operate effectively in the assignment given to them.

4. Avoid discrimination and preferential treatment of the members in times of offering physical, spiritual or financial support to members.
5. Regular visits and follow-ups must be planned for all members. Special care should be given to new converts.

The suggestions given by the elders' assert that: issues that relate and affect the general good of the church should be made open to the members in due course. Leaders should administer their roles with kindness and tender heartedness. Regular visits to members should be planned intentionally with special care to new converts. Any acts of discrimination should be checked.

**Focus Group Discussions for Women's Ministries Members.** Eight (8) women were selected to represent the women's ministries department for the focus group discussions. Responding to: What motivates people to become members of the Church? The women ministries discussion group members gave the understated answers:

1. Through Adventist teachings and practices at Adventist schools and institutions.
2. Staying with a Seventh-day Adventist and worshipped with them.
3. Invitation to attend Seventh-day Adventist programmes.

From the viewpoint of the women's ministries discussion group, Adventist beliefs and practices should be emphasized in the institutions. During Biblical as well as social programmes, members must be asked to invite many people as possible to attend. Also, members should show good Christian virtues to children who happen to stay with them.

Concerning the question, what are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? The women ministries discussion group came out with the following ideas:

1. There are at times lacks of proper reception or courtesy towards people who enter to worship.
2. There is a lack of routine visitation from the leaders of the church.
3. Mode of worship needs innovations to make worship lively.
4. The church has a lot of factions and as a result, it breeds discriminations and favoritisms.
5. There are too much gossiping and backbiting which causes stumbling block to many who are not rooted in the faith.
6. When some of the men become wealthy they tend to become polygamous by increasing the number of wives or take concubines in addition to their matrimonial partner. By this most men eventually leave the church.

From the above discoveries, the church needs to improve upon the culture of reception; draw a visitation plan to cover every member in the church; make a progression on the mode of worship, counsel on gossiping and backbiting, and teach on the essentials of a united church. Marriage seminars must be conducted to address marital issues that are liable to cause cessation of fellowship for some church members.

On the discussion question concerning, what can the Church do to improve retention of membership? The women ministries focus group discussion members gave their views as:

1. Make members, especially new converts feel wanted and needed in the life of the congregation; by sharing ideas with them, visiting and making phone calls to them
2. Teach old and established members the necessity of caring for new and irregular members.

3. Church leaders must be more acquainted with members by providing spiritual parenthood by having personal conversation with them and calling them periodically to their homes.
4. Seek feedback about the needs of members; be ready to listen carefully and attentively.
5. Women should be given enough representation in the Church board and the various committees in the Church.

From the various views presented by the women's ministries discussion group, it is discovered that established members should dare to care for new and irregular members. Each and every member should feel needed and wanted in the church. Leaders should provide spiritual parenthood by having cordial relationship with all members.

**Focus Group Discussions for Adventist Youth Ministries (AYM).** Eight (8) people were selected to represent AYM. The enthusiasm and eagerness of the AYM to participate in the discussions clearly portrayed that the right time to express their opinion and expectation of the Church has come. Expressing their view on the question, what motivates people to become members of the Church? The following concerns were recorded:

1. Through Adventist music and song ministration
2. Through Adventist Youth marching drill and display during national events and church/community based programmes.
3. A lot of social programmes should be organized. Such as - indoor games, outdoor games, Bible games, quizzes and sightseeing.
4. Distribution of Adventist books, tracts and magazines.

5. Encounter with Truth (EWT) Television programme by Pastor Andrews Lawrence Ewoo.

The responses gathered from the AYM means, a lot of social programmes should be organized. Adventist music should be encouraged and promoted among the Youth. More books, tracts and magazines should be distributed. Then members should be encouraged to patronize in the viewing and sponsoring the EWT television programme.

Reacting to the inquiry - What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? The AYM discussions group gave out the following views:

1. There is no warmth and vibrancy in the Church, in other words, the Church is very dull, in comparison to other churches.
2. Mode of worship is becoming outmoded, suitable and comfortable for the elderly but not attractive to the youth and young elites.
3. Intensive prayer-oriented programmes, like all day, all night, fasting and praying for some days to address members' peculiar problems are lacking.
4. Harsh and offensive comments from leaders which tend to discourage and cause stumbling block.
5. Unskilful treatment of those who go through church discipline.
6. Members do not practice what the Church preach and teach.
7. Those who marry non-Adventists, especially the female partners.
8. Programme leaders or facilitators should honor the time allotted to every programme - start on time and end on time.
9. Database information about all members should be provided to have easy accessibility to members whenever the need arises.

Appraising the comments from the AYM, the Church will need to make church programmes attractive to suit both the elderly and the youth. The Church should organize intensive prayer programmes to address the needs of the church members. Care and tact should be applied in dealing with members who have to undergo church discipline. Periodic marriage seminars should be conducted. Begin on time and end on time. The Church must have database information for all members.

On the topic, what can the Church do to improve retention of membership?

The AYM discussion group gave the following contributions:

1. Song ministrations should be encouraged and improved - before, during and after programme
2. Dynamic and resourceful persons must be engaged to bring much interest and change in the way programmes are handled.
3. Strict conservatism about non-codified beliefs and practices should be addressed and discouraged.
4. Church edifice and the gadgets used should be attractive and inviting.
5. Regular visits and encouragement of the return of inactive members.
6. Make available more early life and young adult programmes
7. Pay attention and be interested in the pain of church members.

To review the views of the AYM on the subject matter: What can the Church do to improve retention of membership? The AYM discussion group says, music and youth programmes in the church should be strengthened. Resourceful personnel should be used to lead out programmes. Strict non-codified conservatism in post modernism is a misnomer. Befitting church edifice, modern gadgets youthful and contemporary programmes will help the Church to retain members.

## **Presentation and Description of Findings**

The data gathered from the questionnaires and the focus group discussions give the indications that there are both socio-economic and religious issues that should be addressed. These problems have their bearings on reducing the alarming rate of membership loss or increasing retention of membership. The findings are sieved from the questionnaires and the focus group discussions. Exclusively private and free hands to respond were accorded the respondents so that no one could influence another one's opinion. In a simple evaluative formula, the responses that have the greatest voice or appearance were used as the opinion and or judgment of the respondents.

The researcher and his assistants after analyzing the data came up with themes that could be used for the designing of the intervention. The analysis of the data and the findings are suitable and legitimate facts gathered to design the intervention, which will give a clue to address the problems of membership loss. As a result, the researcher designs the following facts which are seen as essentials in addressing the problems discovered from the analysis of the data.

### **Designing of Intervention**

Intervention is understood as, a deliberate process by which change is introduced into peoples' opinion, beliefs and behaviors.<sup>50</sup> The resultant expectation of the intervention is to measure how much better a situation has become, after a modification has been effected.<sup>51</sup> The results from the data spelt out the spiritual,

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<sup>50</sup> "Intervention Research," <http://psychologydictionary.org/intervention-research/>, accessed: November 30, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

social, economic and physical fitness of the members. The objectives are to find measures to improve the conditions that contribute to the declension of members from the church. The objectives raised to address the problems, formulated into themes, for this project are threefold: (i) to establish positive spiritual, intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship with and among people who are both within and outside the church, (ii) to set up suggestions that would address people with socio-economic challenges, and (iii) to organize intermittent social programmes in the Church.

The summary of the objectives was first outlined in the (three) objectives themes and elaborate further under each theme. The findings gathered from the questionnaires and the focus groups are developed as interventions. Below are the points and the discussion raised during the focus group discussions. At this stage, the whole church was brought together to study the findings discovered by the various focus groups. The researcher who is also the Church Pastor led out the topics and the concerns raised within the span of four (4) Sabbath afternoons.

- Week 1 - August 27, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 2 - September 3, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 3 - September 10, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 4 - September 17, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.

### **Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship**

1. Individual members should develop conscious spiritual formation and spiritual growth by cultivating the habit of Bible reading and personal devotion.
2. Church leaders should emulate Jesus Christ by exhibiting servant leadership.
3. Give orientation to church leadership to perform their roles positively and efficiently with the application of Christian principles.

4. Prayer - oriented programmes which are in scarcity should be organized regularly.
5. There should be innovations in the ancient of mode of worship to attract members who are won from other churches.
6. Conflict management and conflict resolution to address those who in one way or the other clash with others and are not in good terms.
7. Adventist institutions should be given chaplains in order to establish the Adventist faith among members and to extend the beliefs to non-Adventists.
8. Teach SDA beliefs and practices at regular intervals to establish members both old and new members.
9. All members should be encouraged to participate in church ministries. None should consistently play the spectator role.
10. Members should be more committed to church growth by contributing spiritually, physically, and financially.

Under this theme, the researcher seeks to encourage individuals to build spiritual formation, to increase cordiality among members, instil good leadership styles, and make innovations in the style of worship.

Church members are to rely on God for sustenance in all aspects of life. The Church has a supernatural character fashioned after the life of Jesus Christ, “who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” It behooves every member to be prayerful in all things and at all times (1Thess 5:17). Believers in Christ are the result of a divine change in their hearts because they have died to their sins, iniquities, and trespasses and “made alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:5). Therefore, Christians are to exhibit an exemplary character of love which goes beyond the human moral understanding of love and charity (I Cor 13). Church members must have personal

spiritual regulation, commencing in a private dimension before it can have a communal influence. Unless church members respond to God's initiative, they cannot initiate spirituality on their own. This response leads committed members to center their existence in Christ who becomes the passion of their lives. As a result, they are to practice praying regularly in private devotions, family worship, prayer cells and prayer meetings. Members are also to study the word of God constantly through the daily Sabbath school study guide, daily calendar reading plan, and Sunday Bible studies. Church members should also cultivate the habit of fasting and praying routinely and at special events, and continually rely on God who is the source of spiritual backing for every serious and sincere Christian.

Those who bear the name "Christian" must also have good relationship with their family members, the community as a whole, and among church members. The Apostle Paul admonishes Christians that "if it is possible" they must "live peaceable with all men." (Rom. 12:18), and be well-wishers of all men (I Tim 2:1), must have good reputation among the family members (I Tim 3:4), as well as the community (I Tim. 3:7), and show responsibility to the family (I Tim.5:8). On spiritual interpersonal relationship, the word of God counsels to "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves" (Phil.2:5).

The Lord's messenger, Ellen G. White, counseling members within the church to practice tenderness with the faults of others, writes:

Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and when His love reigns in the heart, we shall follow His example. If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind unjust acts of others, we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ has loved us; for there are few persons who do not on close acquaintance reveal unamiable traits of character... We should love and respect one another notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing; for this is the Spirit of Christ. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a

patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous.<sup>52</sup>

On the issue of interpersonal relationship, love is the foundation. Jesus Christ while on earth told His followers, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.” (John 13:35). Christians must definitely love people whatever the situation must be. There are those who do not manifest love, of course, they are unlovely people. As natural law would demand, those who do not show love must expect same in return. White further counsels Christians to “Love unlovely people” when she explains, “Loving faulty people in particular could be categorized as one of the more difficult tasks of Christian life.” She continues, “To be compassionate as Jesus means going beyond mere sympathy for the fallen nature of humanity. This compassion not only accepts people as they are in their imperfections but seeks to help them overcome in Christ.” White even added that Christians should love hurtful and unkind people.<sup>53</sup>

What is expected from the Christian in the Decalogue is to live right with God and fellow human beings. First, among the commandments given to Israel before reaching Canaan says: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut 6:5). Second, when Yahweh instructed Israel through Moses on interpersonal relationship He sums them by saying: “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” (Lev 19:18) Jesus Christ

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<sup>52</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 95.

<sup>53</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Minister's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2009), 23.

endorses these two laws in one-fold when a lawyer testing Jesus Christ inquired, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Ironically, in a self-answered question, the lawyer rightly said, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with your entire mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself,’ “

Church members must exhibit their stewardship towards church growth by contributing spiritually, physically, and financially. Christian stewardship, being a Biblical standard teaches that life is a divinely allotted opportunity for learning to be truthful stewards in temporal matters, thus showing readiness for higher stewardship in eternal matters... Tithe and offerings are not church fund-raising but a voluntary recognition of God’s ownership of all, and His blessings on His people.<sup>54</sup>

The leaders of the Church must be given orientation in their leadership roles to be effective and efficient. As under shepherds of Jesus Christ, those who are called to leadership positions should exhibit servant leadership. Church leaders must organize frequent problem solving prayer programmes to curb members who attend Pentecostal and Charismatic prayer programmes. The leaders, especially Family Life Ministries leaders, should acquire knowledge and skill for conflict management and conflict resolution. There is a clue given by Jesus Christ regarding how to deal with an offensive and offended people (Matt 18:15-17). The Church must plan to give frequent teachings on the beliefs and practices of the Church. This will refresh new converts to be committed to their newfound beliefs, and remind established members if they remain faithful to their calling. “Since the beliefs constitute the church’s

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<sup>54</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Minister’s Bible* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Editorial Safeliz, 2015), 1501.

understanding of Bible truth or finds better language to express the teachings of God's Holy Word."<sup>55</sup>

### **Socio-Economic Problems**

Those who are challenged with socio-economic conditions are mostly related to income, education and occupation. The socio-economic problems realized in the data analyzed include:

1. Unemployment.
2. Those whose jobs have challenges with proper observance of the Sabbath - like the bankers, people who rent chairs, canopies, public address systems, apprentices whose superiors would require them to work on the Sabbath hours, market women and people who own their businesses which have the Sabbath hours as their peak days.
3. Those whose parents or guardians cannot support them.
4. Widows and orphans.
5. The sick and physically challenged.

Socio-Economic Problems occur in each and every church. The fact that the church is comprised of sinful beings seeking to serve a sinful world where Satan and his associates seek to destroy God's church, means that the church will encounter all types of difficulties and challenges. The problems within the church may range from organizational struggles to conflicts, from problems with attendance to issues of

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<sup>55</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), v.

program effectiveness.<sup>56</sup> Problems that affect the church are many though, but those who are challenged with socio-economic problems realized in the data analyzed include: Unemployment; members whose jobs have challenges with the Sabbath; and those who are dependent on others.

The unemployed and those whose jobs income cannot support their living are among the high rate of people who leave the church. To address this situation, job creation seminar must be given to the church frequently. In addition, successful market women and shop keepers among the members were asked to tell their success stories.

Church members whose businesses clash with the Sabbath hours like those who rent chairs, mattresses, public address systems, canopies, apprentices whose superiors would require them to work on the Sabbath hours, and market women and traders who have the Sabbath hours as their peak days encouraged to change their jobs for options that will not conflict with their faith; especially in relation to proper Sabbath observance. This is when the cost of discipleship is exercised. In addressing those who responded to the call to discipleship, Jesus Christ also spells out the cost to a true and a determined disciple as the one who put aside everything that conflicts with the requirement of Christ-like living by saying: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:26, 27).

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<sup>56</sup> Glenn Daman, “Dealing with Problems Within the Church,” <http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-small-church-board/dealing-with-problems-in.html>, accessed: December 1, 2016.

The Church must have cash or kind arrangements for those who cannot make ends meet, like the widows and orphans, the sick and the physically challenged. Individuals who can offer help to the less endowed were encouraged to extend hands to offer help to those who have social and financial challenges. In the Epistle of James, the brother of Jesus Christ, the apostle declares true religion as a genuine Christian living. “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jas 1:27). For James, one of the most essential things in the life of the Christian is to be doers and not just hearers of the Word of God. The apostle talks about impact of living in an unjust world, divided between the rich and the poor. In this sense, he says salvation also implies good works that are the consequences of a genuine faith.<sup>57</sup>

### **Organization of Diverse Social Programmes**

1. Organize periodic indoor and outdoor games.
2. Song ministrations in the church should be enhanced.
3. Make intentional, regular visitation to church members.
4. Organize annual or biannual love feast.
5. Organize frequent sight-seeing events for the church.
6. Organize marriage seminars, youth and early life programmes.
7. Engage resourceful people to handle some Bible and non-Biblical matters.

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<sup>57</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Minister's Bible* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Editorial Safeliz, 2015), 1073.

Data gathered under this theme came up mainly from the youth focus group discussions. They complain the Church does not offer programmes that interest the youth. Even though meetings are spread from Sunday to Sabbath. They do not address pertinent issues of the society, and most especially those that affect the youth. Their focus group deliberations gave some clues that need attention and considerations: The Church will have to organize periodic indoor and outdoor games to bring joy unity and warmth. Playing church games is something many organizations do within religious groups. While many times, the games relate to the Bible, a lesson or a teaching, some outdoor games are simply group building exercises for everyone to enjoy.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, it is not every game that fits playing at church, the kind of game chosen must be approved by the leaders of the church.

Song ministrations must be enhanced in the church, accompanied with musical instruments. Some conservative elderly people abhor the use of musical instruments and dancing in any form would like to dissuade the church from indulging in anything of that sort. The Lord's messenger commenting on the use of musical instruments asserts:

In the gatherings held, let a number be chosen to take part in the song service. And let the singing be accompanied with musical instruments skillfully handled. We are not to oppose the use of instrumental music in our work. This part of the service is to be carefully conducted; for it is the praise of God in song.<sup>59</sup>

Music with instruments are pleasing to the ears, it is very joyous and can hold the listening congregation for a length of time without feeling bored. The Church must schedule intentional routine visits to church members. More of the visits are intended

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<sup>58</sup>Amy Hoover, "Church Party Games," [http://party.lovetoknow.com/Church\\_Party\\_Games](http://party.lovetoknow.com/Church_Party_Games), accessed: December 3, 2016.

<sup>59</sup>Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 507.

for the new converts, the backsliders, the youth, and those who need special attention or have challenges.

The Church should organize annual or biannual love feast. It is said that, “friends who eat together stay together,” “families that eat together stay together, and couples who eat together stay together”<sup>60</sup> Cheryl Chong a smart Chinese lady chef says, “food brings individuals together and dining with the right group of people just makes the food taste extra good.” she continues, “while it is perfectly fine to dine alone, eating with a companion give you the liberty to share your opinions about anything, be it the food you are eating or anything worthy for discussion.”<sup>61</sup>

Like love feast or get together, sightseeing or excursions are moments that bring the church together. These are instances when church members get closer to each other. As observed by the youth in the personal comments and the focus group discussions, the Church should engage resourceful, competent and more knowledgeable personnel to treat marriage related programmes, youth and early life programmes, and then controversial Bible-based, and general socio-economic and socio-political matters.

### **Limitation**

The researcher became more interested in the findings from the data analyzed from the questionnaire and the focus group discussions. Limitations include the poor quality and the fluctuation nature of the internet connectivity and unexpected lights

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<sup>60</sup>Youth focus group discussions, Central SDA Church, Koforidua, September 10, 2016.

<sup>61</sup>Cheryl Chong, “6 Reasons Why People Who Eat Together Stay Together,” <http://www.ladyironchef.com/2015/07/friends-eat-together-stay-together/>, accessed: December 4, 2016.

off. Unfortunately, interviews slated for four former members (two men and two women) could not materialized because of a heavy rainfall which flooded many places in Koforidua. Later dates slated for the interviews, were not honored by any of these former members. For whatever reasons, the earlier interest and understanding to participate and contribute to the programme was lost. Findings from this group of former Adventists could give additional information to what was gathered from the questionnaires and the focus groups. Also, the qualities found later in the video and the audio recordings of the focus groups discussions were not good for presentation, though they could be shown as they are for documentation purposes. There was also lack of funds to bring on board a lot of professionals and consultants. However significant discoveries have been gathered in this research that will aid subsequent researchers to come out with improved and more concrete findings.

### **Summary**

The congregation at Koforidua SDA Central Church was very happy for the investigation conducted on why people leave the Church. What the researcher discovered is that members know much more about what we, as a church, ought to be doing with regard to: What motivates people to become members of the Church? What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? And what can the Church do to improve retention of membership?

In the nutshell, the elders/men focus discussions group (as listed above) brought up five (5) points under the topic: What motivates people to become members of the Church? Three (3) points under the topic: What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? and five (5) points under the topic: What can the Church do to improve retention of membership? The Women's ministries raise three (3) points on, what motivates people to become members of the Church. Six (6) points

on, what are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? And five points on, what can the Church do to improve retention of membership? The Adventist Youth Ministries also presented five (5) points on, what motivates people to become members of the Church. Nine (9) facts on, what are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? And seven (7) on, what can the Church do to improve retention of membership?

In addition to the total of forty-eight (48) points raised together by the three (3) focus groups, eighteen (18) thematic points were raised under reasons why people leave the church (alone) in the thirty-two (32) questionnaires designed for respondents. All these concerns raised were discussed thoroughly with the entire congregation in the Sabbath afternoons of:

- Week 1 - August 6, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 2- August 13, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 3- August 20, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.

What the Church members actually need doing is to set our beliefs into more practical daily living rather than just keeping a theoretical understanding of what they just believe. The considerable result is the obvious indication that most church members have sufficient knowledge and ideas concerning the stated problems to design the intervention and implementation of suitable solutions. If the intervention and the implementations will yield the desired results, may depend on the commitment and willingness that will be attached to changes and solutions that have been recommended. The emphasis of the researcher as an agent of change, will to a large extent, will depend on the success or failure of “buy in” by the congregation.’<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Anne Davis and Wade Rowatt, Jr., eds., *Formation for Christian Ministry*, 155-157.

The project concentrates on the solutions to the core problems and needs of the people. It is expected that by the end of the programme, the membership of the Koforidua Central SDA Church will be more committed to the beliefs and practices of the Church and increase membership retention.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The ultimate aim of this research is to address and reduce the rate of membership loss - increase membership retention in the Koforidua Central SDA Church. In chapter two (2) the theological and Biblical foundation for the project was established. In chapter three (3) various literatures were reviewed to prepare the grounds to come up with the logic to implement this programme. In chapter four (4) the strategies developed and designed for the intervention were presented as the basis for the implementation of the project. This chapter presents description of the intervention, which includes testing the results of the data analyzed from the questionnaires and the focus groups discussions. This will be followed by the evaluation of the proposals implemented as well as the project report to the East Ghana Conference (EGC) and Koforidua Central SDA Church.

The Merriam Webster dictionary explains implementation as: to give practical effect to and ensure of actual fulfilment by concrete measures. Implementation is also explained as: “the execution, or practice of a plan, a method, or any design, idea, model, specification, standard or policy for doing something. As such, implementation is the action that must follow any preliminary thinking in order for something to actually happen.”<sup>1</sup> Kristie Lorette simply says, “Strategic

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Roose, “Project Planning and Implementation,” <http://searchcrm.techtargget.com/definition/implementation>, accessed: December 8, 2016.

implementation is the process that put plans and strategies into action to reach goals.”<sup>2</sup>

A report of the implementation of how to increase membership retention in the Koforidua Central SDA is given through four weeks Sabbath after Sabbath in-depth discussions, workshop/lectures, and sermons. Evaluation of the programme and its impacts on the members will be discussed. Thereafter a conclusion will be drawn as the general appraisal of the programme and its impact and benefits in the life of the Koforidua Central SDA Church in particular, and in churches within the domain of EGC and SDA Church in general.

The implementation of this project will explore the three (3) major issues gleaned from the analysis of the questionnaires and the focus groups discussions, as well as the various points raised as concerns and issues that militate against membership growth in the Koforidua Church. Hence, the deliberations on factors that can enhance membership growth.

1. To establish positive spiritual, intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship with and among people who are both within and outside the church
2. To set up suggestions that would address people with socio-economic challenges
3. To organize intermittent social programmes in the Church.

The above (3) summary themes discussed by the various focus groups were further broken into sub-themes listed below:

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<sup>2</sup>Kristie Lorette, ‘What Is Strategic Implementation?’  
<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/strategic-implementation-5044.html>.

### **Spiritual, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship**

1. Individual members should develop conscious spiritual formation and spiritual growth.
2. Church leaders should emulate Jesus Christ by exhibiting servant leadership.
3. Give orientation to church leadership to perform their roles efficiently.
4. Prayer - oriented programmes should be organized regularly.
5. There should be innovations in the mode of worship.
6. Conflict management and conflict resolution.
7. Adventist institutions should be given chaplains.
8. Teach SDA beliefs and practices at regular intervals to establish members.
9. All members should be encouraged to participate in church ministries.
10. Members should be more committed to church growth by contributing spiritually, physically, and financially.

### **Socio-Economic Problems**

1. Unemployment.
2. Those whose jobs have challenges with proper observance of the Sabbath
3. Those whose parents or guardians cannot support them.
4. Widows and orphans.
5. The sick and physically challenged.

### **Organization of Diverse Social Programmes**

1. Organize periodic indoor and outdoor games.
2. Song ministrations in the church should be enhanced.

3. Make intentional, regular visits to church members.
4. Organize annual or biannual love feast.
5. Organize frequent sight-seeing events for the church.
6. Organize marriage seminars, youth and early life programmes.
7. Engage resourceful people to handle some Biblical and non-Biblical matters.

The selected church members during the focus group discussions and analysis of the questions came up with the above points above gathered for the implementation of the programme.

### **Project Preparation**

The choosing of this particular topic “Strategies to Improve Membership Retention in the Koforidua Central S.D.A. Church, Ghana” was founded on the premise that since the year 2000 less than fifty percent of baptized members remained in the church. A typical example cited from the Statement of the Problem is the outcome of the West Central Africa Division’s (WAD) 2011-2013 membership audit which saw a significant reduction in membership records of the East Ghana Conference (where Koforidua is cited as the headquarters) from 32,216 to 16,075.

It became a concern and a worry for the researcher who was then the Executive Secretary of the Conference (2009-2013) to investigate and develop strategies that would help curb the downward trend of church membership in the Koforidua Central SDA Church – a strategy to retain membership. To start with, the field work questionnaires were designed for both individuals and focus groups to examine the matter from the grassroots. The research findings and strategies will be presented to the Koforidua Central SDA and the EGC administration. The implementation of the investigation and its positive impact will be a joy and eye

opener for soul winners and church leaders who care for the welfare of new converts and church members as a whole.

### **Permissions**

Permission letters to enable the researcher conduct the study on “Strategies to increase membership retention in the Koforidua Central SDA Church were written to the East Ghana Conference of SDA, and the Koforidua Central SDA Church.

**East Ghana Conference (EGC) of SDA.** To be able to conduct the survey in the Koforidua Central SDA Church (and her environs) the researcher wrote a letter to seek for permission from the headquarters of the EGC of SDA. (See Appendix A). The administration of the Conference admitted that the research will be a tool and eye opener to increase membership retention in Koforidua and churches in the Conference as a whole. Therefore, the researcher was granted the permission to carry out the survey in the Koforidua Central SDA Church.

**Koforidua Central SDA Church.** Another letter for permission to conduct an investigation on the low rate of membership retention after baptism of new converts in the Church was written to the Koforidua Central SDA Church. The researcher is also the church pastor of this local congregation. A letter of permission was granted by the local church board for the researcher to begin the investigation. The authorization from both the Conference administration and the local church board paved the way for the project to commence.

## **Material Development**

The researcher prepared and implemented the following interventions in the Koforidua Central Seventh-day Adventist Church after the analysis on the questionnaire and the focus groups discussions.

- 1) Formation of Prayer Team.
- 2) Church Members Divided Under Six Elders for Easy Running of the Church.
- 3) Spiritual Growth
- 4) Conflict Management and Resolution
- 5) Divine Order of Marriage
- 6) Transformation in the Mode of Worship
- 7) Church Building and Church Growth
- 8) The Place of Traditional African Music in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- 9) The Use of Musical Instruments.
- 10) Dancing in the Church.

## **Questionnaire and Focus Groups Surveyed**

To have a balance and effective survey, the researcher used both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (focus groups discussions) methods to design the programme. The questionnaires (thirty-two questions in number) were written in both the English language and Asante Twi for those who are either not well versed in the English language or cannot read and understand the English language. Out of the 600 questionnaires distributed, 350 were printed in the English language, and 250 copies were printed in Asante Twi - the most widely spoken language in Ghana. The Likert Scale options of 1-5 were applied, where 1 is the lowest in agreement and 5 the

highest. In some other cases 1 (strongly agree), is ranked the highest and 5 (strongly disagree) is graded the lowest. Three (3) major questions (which were derived from the 32 questions) were set as the basis for the focus group discussions. They are: (i) what motivates people to become members of the Church? (ii) What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church? (iii) What can the Church do to improve retention of membership? The three (3) focus groups were: (i) The elders/men, (2) women, and (iii) the youth.

### **Analysis of Data**

Out of the 600 copies of the questionnaires sent out, a total of 565 copies, representing 94% were completed and returned. The 32 questionnaires were then grouped under seven (7) headings as follows: Baptism, Spirituality of Members, Church Membership, Church Welfare, Church Leadership, Reclaiming Backsliders, and Reasons for Leaving the Church.

Regarding baptism, the statistics gave a clear indication that members were not taught thoroughly before and after baptism. It also counsels that members after baptism should be encouraged to join some of the departments in the church.

Concerning spirituality of members, the findings directs that new members should be taught on spiritual gifts and be integrated into active life of the church. The survey commends church members as relying more on Biblical teachings than depending on local traditions like accompanying properties of the dead in coffins, widowhood rites, puberty rites and the like. The assessment revealed that love-care quotient (LQ) in the church to cater for the poor and needy, and the physically challenged should be enhanced. It was also noticed that though the church makes a lot of effort to win souls, she lacks strategies to assimilate and retain her members.

Furthermore, the review portrays malfunctioning of the small group ministries and sustainable visitation plan to church members. Appropriate plans to visit members would increase the current ratio of 1:5 or 20% retention of members won to the church. It was also noted that frequent teachings on church doctrines, especially proper Sabbath observance and the cost of discipleship should be given to church members. With reference to Church Welfare the study discloses, as much as the church welfare supports bereavement, its arm of catering for the poor and needy is very weak. Church members who do not contribute to the welfare do not benefit from it when they are faced with any misfortune like death.

On the subject of Church Leadership, the members in answering the questionnaires unfavorably wrote against the leadership on relational and caring leadership. During the focus group discussions, where people could express their views, the members angrily complained bitterly by comparing the care other church leaders, especially Pentecostals/Charismatics give to their members with what our leaders give to their church members. Some narrated known cases where lack of care from church leaders cause membership loss. It was also discovered and recommended that the Church should give more seminars on contemporary marriage issues. As to why people leave the church, the reasons were basically twofold: One of them is the leadership lack of proper care to church members; and the other is that some members lack of proper conversion and real commitment to Christian virtues.

The focus group discussions brought up the following: Under what motivates people to become church members, a greater number of people attributed it to marriage and family, charitable deeds, lifestyle of some members, miraculous healing, and evangelism. With regard to what cause people to leave the church, the reasons include the fact that, some converts discover discipleship as burdensome, too

sacrificial and infringes on one's independent life. Others leave the church because of unmet expectations or ill treatment from church members. In respect of what can the church do to improve retention of members; the salient points were that; the Church should organize quarterly open forum to address issues that make members disinterested. Again, preferential treatment and tribalism should be discouraged. Every good thing concerning church membership retention should be encouraged.

### **Implementation Stage**

The measure of the programme, thus, success or failure depends much on its implementation. It is after the interventions have been implemented that what was really accomplished can be identified. Strategic intervention is not intended to remain in a note pad, on a personal library shelf or in a file in a computer. The absence of implementing the strategy will render the strategy useless. Larry Bossidy and Ram Charam note, "You cannot craft a worthwhile strategy if you do not have what is required to execute it, including the right resources and the right people. The plans gathered must be applied on a location."<sup>3</sup> The implementation of this programme shall put some tactical activities in place to arrive at descriptive and measurable conclusions. The issues raised by the respondents in the questionnaires and the focus groups were discussed thoroughly by the entire church. The implementation considered the various activities conducted at the time of the intervention.

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<sup>3</sup> Larry Bossidy and Ram Charam, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (New York: Crown Business, 2002), 7.

## **Formation of Prayer Team**

Seven-member prayer team members were selected from the Koforidua Central SDA to ask for the Lord's favor and directions for the success of the research work, and for the growth of the Church.

Apart from prayers they offered for the success of the project's implementation that will bring spiritual and physical growth to the Church, prayers were offered for church members who met the prayer team at 7: - 8:00 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays. Prayer lists were brought in by group members to address individual or corporate needs. Consequently, the number of church members and their friends and relatives who came to pray with the prayer team increased. Many people testified of how the Lord has been gracious to them by answering their prayers.

A success story that has been indelible in the ministration of prayer team is the healing of one Mr. Johnson Adu whose infirmity was declared terminal because of serious infection contracted from serial dog bites. Johnson Adu who used to be a member of Church of Christ asked for baptism, and he was baptized together with his wife, Sarah Adu, and senior sister, Mary Yaayaa Aidoo. When Adu returned to Tema from Koforidua he introduced himself and his wife to some SDA Church elders who are neighbors in the same community and told them of his miraculous healing and added that the family has become Seventh-day Adventists. The Church at Tema wrote for the membership transfer of Mr. Johnson Adu and his wife. So, at the moment he worships with a family of six (6): Mr. Johnson Adu, Mrs. Sarah Adu, Betty Adu (daughter, currently baptized), Pamela Adu, and Nancy Adu (yet to be baptized), and Princess Maafia Adu (granddaughter), at Tema Newtown - Manhean SDA Church. Adu's senior sister, Mary Aidoo, also received a membership transfer from Koforidua

Central SDA Church to Kasoa Central SDA Church. In his thanksgiving service,

Johnson Adu testified:

I have worshipped with five (5) different churches since my infancy, I have even been a co-founder of a church before, but I never knew that God's miraculous and healing power resides in the SDA Church. Henceforth, I and my family (wife, three daughters, and a granddaughter) pledge our allegiance to the Lord of the Sabbath and the SDA Church as long as we live.

Audio phone recordings with Mr. Johnson Adu were made by some of the prayer team members, and they are available as testimony for the Koforidua Central SDA Church members in general, and for those who lose hope in their predicament to have hope and assurance in the almighty God. The Mondays and Fridays 7:00 - 9:00 P.M prayers are still going on for the benefit of both church members and non-members.

### **Church Members Divided Under Six Elders**

The Church membership was divided into six (6) among the six (6) elders elected for the Church in the year 2016. Aside the various existing small groups, Sabbath School Action Units and the various departments in the church, the congregation as part of the intervention, was divided among the six (6) elders for easy administration. Elders have an average of thirty-five (35) members under their care. Members under the elders will be on rotational basis - the elders will change the set of members under their care every quarter.

The elders sub divided the members allotted to them into groups of 8-10 and appointed leaders for each group. This kind of small group method has helped the elders to be familiar with almost all the church members. The list of the members under each of the six elders has the name of the member, phone number and house number (see appendix). The elders visit the homes of the members and discuss their

problems with them. The entire church has embraced the outcome of the survey which has the purpose to increase membership retention in the church, and to bring warmth in church services. Elder Henry Nana Nyarko, a committed Elder gave the understated baseline statistics.

*Table 10. Evaluation of Church Attendance*

| Dept. /Activity     | Before | After | Remarks  |
|---------------------|--------|-------|----------|
| Church Choir        | 22     | 28    | Increase |
| Singing Band        | 25     | 36    | Increase |
| Bible Studies       | 25     | 60    | Increase |
| Mid-Week Prayers    | 45     | 72    | Increase |
| Women's Ministries  | 12     | 35    | Increase |
| Advent Men's Min.   | 30     | 35    | Increase |
| Sun. Bible Studies  | 20     | 50    | Increase |
| Pathfinder Meetings | 25     | 35    | Increase |
| Snr. Youth Meetings | 20     | 14    | Decrease |
| Vesper- Sabb. Open  | 15     | 22    | Increase |
| Vesper-Sabb. Close  | 40     | 60    | Increase |
| Divine Service      | 150    | 205   | Increase |

Source: Field Data, August 2016.

All the departmental meetings recorded some increase in membership attendance from Sunday to Sabbath. The only activity that recorded decrease in attendance is the Senior Youth meetings on Fridays 7:00 - 8:00 P.M. The Adventist Youth Ministries (AYM) leader, David Adu Kyei attributed the recording of low attendance to the greater number of the Senior Youth members who are Senior High School students, and Tertiary School students who left for within the time of the assessment vis-à-vis when the baseline record was taken at the time of vacation.

## Spiritual Growth

Dealing with this topic, member's attention was drawn to the eleventh item/topic of the twenty-eight (28) fundamental beliefs of the Church, which is found under the Doctrine of Salvation. The views outlined here are not just Biblical or doctrinal, but also throw light on this paper. Life begins with deaths. First, the death of Christ on the cross gives us new life from the dominion of the adversary - (Col. 1:13-14), guiltless from the condemnation of sin (Rom. 8:1), freedom from the punishment of sin (Rom. 6:23) - reconciling humans with God. Second, the death of self makes it possible for us to take up the life that Christ offers, enabling us to walk in the newness of life.<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt 16:24; cf. Luke 9:23).

Commenting on spiritual growth and discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's commentary is worthy of note

If our Christianity has ceased to be serious about discipleship, if we have watered down the gospel into emotional uplift which makes no costly demands and which fails to distinguish between natural and Christian existence, then we cannot help regarding the cross as an ordinary everyday calamity, as one of the trials and tribulations of life ... When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die, ... it is the same death every time - death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at his call.<sup>5</sup>

The hallmarks of growing in Christ include:

1. **A Life of Spirit.** Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

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<sup>4</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists), 150, 151.

<sup>5</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 78, 79.

This means that without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian life cannot begin.

2. **A Life of Love and Unity.** Christian life is a life of unity, a life reconciled to God, on the one hand and to one's fellow human beings, on the other. Reconciliation, actually, is the remedial of a breach in relationships to God and to humankind.
3. **A Life of Bible Study.** Jesus Christ prescribed word of God as a spiritual food for the soul is His response to Satan's temptation was, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). David giving an experiential knowledge of the word of God said, "Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psa 119:12). The Apostle Paul endorsing the absolute reliability on the word of God said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16,17).
4. **A Life of Prayer.** Prayer is talking with God, listening to His voice, and prostrating before Him. The Apostle Paul deems prayers very essential in Christian life and maturity that he mentions six vital principles: "Pray always;" "pray with supplication in the Spirit;" "pray watchfully;" "pray with perseverance;" and pray for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). "Prayer is a perpetual communion with God; it is the oxygen of the soul, and without

it the soul atrophies and dies.”<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White says, “Prayer is one of the most essential duties. Without it you cannot maintain a Christian walk. It elevates, strengthens, and ennoble; it is the soul talking with God.”<sup>7</sup> Comparing individual prayers to corporate prayers Melody Mason emphasizes - “Praying with others can be a powerful blessing, but praying individually is a special privilege that can never be replaced by praying together. Knowing Christ personally and knowing how to wrestle alone is paramount to our spiritual success.”<sup>8</sup>

5. **A Life of Fruit-Bearing:** Fruit-bearing is a significant feature of Christian growth. Jesus Christ said about true or false Christians that, “By their fruits, you will know them” (Matt 7:20). “Salvation by grace is often misconceived as denial of obedience and fruit-bearing. Nothing can be farther from Biblical truth. Truly, we are saved freely by faith in... Jesus Christ (Eph 2:7, 8; John 3:16). Nonetheless we are not saved to do what we please; we are saved to live in accordance with God’s will. There is nothing legalistic and hence unnecessary about obedience to the law...Hence, ‘faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead’ “ (Jas 2:17).<sup>9</sup> Jesus Christ told his followers, “If you love Me you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

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<sup>6</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists), 159.

<sup>7</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1995), 2:313.

<sup>8</sup>Melody Mason, *Daring to Ask for More: Divine Keys for Answered Prayer* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2014), 62.

<sup>9</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 159.

6. **A Life of Spiritual Warfare.** Since the transgression and the fall of Adam and Eve, there has been an ongoing spiritual warfare for the possession of people's minds. The Bible is explicitly clear about the existence of the kingdom of Satan. The Apostle Paul discloses, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). The book of James cautions to "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:7,8). In his book *Demons or Angels*, Louis R. Torres gave steps of resisting the devil to flee from someone. "First, you must become aware that there is such a being before you can resist; second, there must be recognition of the utter inability of human strength when dealing with such a foe." Torres continues, "The sentiments of envy, jealousy, suspicion of others, evil surmising, evil speaking, impatience, selfishness, greed, vanity, and prejudice the devil implants in our hearts must be uprooted."<sup>10</sup> Paul, knowing well that for a person to be able to resist the devil, that person must be able to put away sin and live a sinless life admonishes: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy

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<sup>10</sup>Louis R. Torres, *Demons or Angels: Demonic Possession* (Coldwater, MI: Remnant, 2013), 158.

that is set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:1, 2).

7. **A Life of Worship, Witness and Hope.** Experiencing maturity and Christian growth does not happen in a vacuum. It happens, within the community of the redeemed, and as one witnesses to the neighborhood that needs to be redeemed. The Bible counsels and gives hope: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much as you see the (Lord’s) Day approaching.” (Heb 10: 24, 25). The more Christians grow in worship, Bible study, and fellowship, the more we are urged to serve and witness. Growing in Christ demands growth in service (Matt 20:25-28) and a growth in witnessing. Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20:21). We live, fellowship, worship, and witness in anticipation of the future. Paul says, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12-14). Growing in Christ is thus a growing in anticipation, in hope of the final consummation of the redemptive experience in the Kingdom to come.<sup>11</sup>

To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The songs of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ’s representatives, are God’s appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for the loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defiles.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 161.

<sup>12</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:491.

## **Conflict Management and Resolution**

Since conflicts are bound to rise, there is also the need to manage and resolve them when they arise.

Conflict is a normal, and sometimes healthy, part of relationships. Definitely, two people cannot be expected to agree on everything at all times. Since relationship conflicts are inevitable, learning to deal with them in a healthy way is vital. When conflict is mishandled, it can harm the relationship. But when managed in a respectful and positive way, conflict provides an opportunity for growth, ultimately strengthening the bond between two people or a group of people. By learning the skills, you need for successful conflict resolution, you can keep your personal and professional relationships strong and growing.<sup>13</sup>

Materials gathered below are beneficial in managing and resolving conflicts if the steps are applied carefully.

Everyone needs to feel understood, encouraged, and supported, but the ways in which these needs are met vary widely. Differing needs for feeling comfortable and safe create some of the most severe challenges in our personal and professional relationships. Conflict triggers strong emotions and can lead to hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort. When handled in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups. But when conflict is resolved in a healthy way, it increases the understanding of one another, builds trust, and strengthens our relationship bonds.<sup>14</sup>

**Why People Argue.** There are no two people on earth who are exactly alike. Even twins whose DNA are identical can be very different and have opposing

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<sup>13</sup> Jeanne Segal and Melinda Smith, "Conflict Resolution Skills," <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships/conflict-resolution-skills.htm>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Jeanne Segal and Melinda Smith, "Conflict Resolution Skills," <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships/conflict-resolution-skills.htm>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

thoughts, ideas and beliefs. Having differences of opinion is natural. How we feel about issues hinges on how we were raised as well as our religious beliefs. The way we handle and appreciate those differences is the key to avoiding arguments and resolving conflict.

Conflict and arguments are bound to happen in any relationship, whether it is between life partners, family members, co-workers, associates or friends. There is no guarantee that you will be able to avoid an argument. We are all entitled to our own opinions, but it is often the differences in those opinions that create the most conflict. It is all based on our individual mindsets and what we each believe. Hopefully our opinions are defined and derived from our moral and ethical compass.

Often, we can be led to believe the opinion of others without educating ourselves and truly understanding the facts. Regardless, we are each entitled to believe what we do, but we do ourselves a great injustice by not being open to the thoughts, beliefs and teachings of others. It damages our personal learning curve when we refuse to view things from a different perspective. We can be sympathetic to someone who is going through something we have experienced ourselves. Where many of us fail is our ability to be empathetic. It is difficult to understand what we have not experienced ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

### **What the Parties Can Do During Conflict Resolution.**

1. Make understanding the priority rather than winning or “being right.”
2. Listen to the other person’s feelings, in addition to their words.
3. Focus on the present rather than the past.

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<sup>15</sup> Melissa Paige Leigh, “How to Avoid Arguments,” [http://www.lifescrypt.com/well-being/articles/h/how\\_to\\_avoid\\_arguments.aspx?](http://www.lifescrypt.com/well-being/articles/h/how_to_avoid_arguments.aspx?), accessed: October 13, 2016.

4. Be willing to let go of resentment.
5. Be willing to agree to disagree and move on.
6. Use appropriate humor to reduce tension and anger.<sup>16</sup>

**Healthy and Unhealthy Ways of Managing and Resolving Conflicts.**

| Unhealthy responses to conflict   | Healthy responses to conflict   |
|---|---|
| An inability to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person         | The capacity to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person                   |
| Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions  | Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions   |
| The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment | A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger |
| An inability to compromise or see the other person’s side                                   | The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing  |
| The fear and avoidance of conflict; the expectation of bad outcomes                         | A belief that facing conflict head on is the best thing for both sides                                |

If someone perceives conflict as treacherous and unbendable, it tends to become a self-fulfilling prediction. When the person enters into a conflict condition already feeling very threatened, it is hard to treat the problem at hand in a healthy way. Rather, the fellow is more likely to shut down or blow up in anger.<sup>17</sup>

**Interest Based Relational (IBR) Approach.** The simple rule for this method of resolving conflict is by treating everyone involved with respect. Conflict is an inevitable part of life. There are situations where people with different goals and needs have clashed, and most of the times intense personal animosity has been the

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<sup>16</sup> Melissa Paige Leigh, “What the Parties Can Do in Conflict Resolution,” <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships/conflict-resolution-skills.htm>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Pon Staff, “Conflict Resolution,” <http://www.pon.harvard.edu/category/daily/conflict-resolution/>, accessed: October 13, 2016.

outcome. The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing. When conflict is resolved effectively, it can also eliminate many of the hidden problems that may surface.

When conflicts arise, it is easy for people to become entrenched in their positions and for tempers to flare, voices to rise, and body language to become defensive or aggressive. All these can be avoided by using the Interest-Based Relational (IBR) approach. Roger Fisher and William Ury developed the IBR approach and published it in 1981 in their book, *Getting to Yes*. They argue that conflicts should be resolved by separating people and their emotions from the problem. Their method also focuses on building mutual respect and understanding, and it encourages people to resolve conflict in a united, cooperative way. The approach is based on the idea that the mediator's role as a conflict manager is not only to resolve conflict but to ensure that parties feel respected and understood, and their differences appreciated. In essence, it helps to manage conflict in a civil and matured way. During the process, the intercessor's focus should be on behaving courteously and consensually, and on insisting that others do the same. Your priority is to help each side develop an understanding of the other's position, and to encourage both to reach a consensus – even if that means agreeing to disagree.

In applying the IBR approach to an organizational conflict (and for any others), Roger Fisher and William Ury developed six (6) steps in a conflict resolution scenario. A practical example is cited below for the application of the IBR method.

Imagine that you run a paper products manufacturing company and you work closely with two managers, Roger and Juanita. Roger heads up production, and is eager to buy a new machine that will increase his department's output. Juanita works in purchasing, and is keen to reduce costs. She understands Roger's motivation, but informs him that the organization won't be making any new purchases. This has created conflict and tension that is spreading throughout the workplace.

1) **Make Sure Good Relationships Are a Priority.** As a manager, your priority in any conflict situation is to take control early and maintain good relationships within your team. Make sure that everyone understands how the conflict could be a mutual problem, and that it is important to resolve it through respectful discussion and negotiation, rather than aggression. Make it clear that it is essential for people to be able to work together happily, effectively and without resentment, so that the team and organization can function normally and effectively.

So, in this situation with Roger and Juanita, you might facilitate a face-to-face meeting with them to clarify the importance of good relationships and to identify the main problems. Tell them that you respect their points of view, and that you appreciate their cooperation and desire to resolve the situation. You should also make it clear that everyone needs to work together to build and preserve relationships that allow the organization to achieve its goals.

2). **Separate People from Problems.** At this point, it is important to let team members know that conflict is rarely one-sided, and that it is best to resolve it collaboratively, by addressing the problem rather than the personalities involved. The problem is caused by neither person, but they do need to work together to resolve it. So, in this example, Juanita may initially think that Roger is the problem. She believes that he is being defensive and demanding, but you should point out that she is focusing on the person instead of the problem. The problem is whether the organization can afford the new equipment or not.

3) **Listen Carefully to Different Interests.** It is important that everyone understands each party's underlying interests, needs and concerns. So, take a positive stance, keep the conversation courteous, and avoid blaming anyone. Ask for each person's viewpoint, and confirm that you need his or her cooperation to solve the

problem. Ask your team members to make an effort to understand one another's motivations and goals, and to think about how those may affect their actions. Encourage everyone to use active listening skills, such as looking directly at the speaker, listening carefully, nodding, and allowing each person to finish before talking. By following these guidelines, everyone will be able to hear and understand one another's positions and perceptions. Focusing on listening will also help to prevent the conversation from becoming heated and getting out of hand.

Once everyone knows that their views have been heard, they are more likely to be receptive to different perspectives. In our example, perhaps Juanita didn't realize the amount of pressure that Roger was under to meet his production targets. Similarly, Roger may have assumed that Juanita was being unfair when she actually had a mandate to cut costs.

If you are dealing with difficult people and the conversation becomes heated or the parties are not listening to one another, remind them sensitively that it is important to work together and to stay calm.

4) **Listen First, Talk Second.** Encourage each person or team to listen to the person or other people's points of view, without defending their own position. Make sure that each person has finished talking before someone else speaks, emphasize that you want to resolve the situation through discussion and negotiation, and ensure that listeners understand the problem fully by asking questions for further clarification. Be sure to focus on marital, family, work or individual issues, and leave personalities out of the discussion. You should also encourage everyone to:

- Listen with empathy, and to see the conflict from each participant's point of view.
- Explain issues clearly and concisely.

- Encourage people to use “I” rather than “you” statements, so that no one feels attacked.
- Be clear about their feelings.
- Remain flexible and adaptable.

Once you have listened to everyone’s needs and concerns understandably, outline the behaviors and actions that you will or will not tolerate, and gain the opposing parties’ agreement to change. In this example, Juanita and Roger were both keen to get their opinions across, so they didn’t listen to what the other had to say. Once they did listen, they began to understand the situation more clearly.

5) **Set Out the “Facts.”** Different underlying needs, interests and goals can often cause people to perceive problems differently. You will need to agree the problem that you are trying to solve before you can find a mutually acceptable solution, and you should agree the facts that are relevant to the situation. Sometimes, people will see different but interlocking problems. So, if you are not reaching an agreement, you should aim to understand the other person’s perception of the problem.

In this example, the “facts” are that a new machine would improve the production department’s output, meet customer demand, and increase sales. But it would cost so much that its impact will seriously decrease the company’s profitability.

6) **Explore Options Together.** By this stage, the reconciler may have resolved the conflict. Each side will likely understand the other’s position better, and the most appropriate solution might be obvious. However, the conflict manager may also have uncovered some serious differences. This is where a technique like win-win-negotiation can be useful, so that mediator can find a solution that satisfies everyone. Or, the conflict manager might need to take action to modify the fundamental circumstances that have caused the conflict.

By asking each team member to help generate solutions, the one leading out the conflict resolution ensures that everyone feels included and that they are more likely to be satisfied with the outcome. All three sides: Brainstorm ideas and be open to all suggestions, including ones you might not have considered before.

**Key Points.** Conflict in marriage, family, among friends, individuals, or workplace can destroy good teamwork. When conflict is managed effectively, real and legitimate differences between people can quickly get out of control, which can result in an irretrievable breakdown in communication.

The Interest-Based Relational approach is useful to resolving difficult conflict situations, by being courteous and non-confrontational, focusing on issues rather than individuals, and listening carefully to each person's point of view. It will be discovered that when people listen and explore the facts, issues and possible solutions carefully, conflicts can be resolved effectively.<sup>18</sup>

**Jesus Christ's Teaching on Conflict Resolution.** The Lord Jesus Christ teaches that issues of difficulty among Christians are to be settled within the Church. They should not be laid bare before those who do not fear God. If a brother offends another, let not the offended appeal to unbelievers in court of justice. Let the one follow out the instruction Christ has given. Instead of avenging oneself, let the person seek to save the fellow brother.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you; you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to

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<sup>18</sup> Mind Tools, "Rebuilding Morale," [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_81.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_81.htm), accessed: October 13, 2016.

<sup>19</sup>Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 248, 249.

hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector (Matt 18:15-17).

When a brother sins against another, the two of them should discuss the matter. If the matter can be settled at that level, there is no need for it to go any further. But if the sinning brother refuses to listen... two or three witnesses should be taken along for a clear testimony. This was in keeping with Old Testament precedents, as in Deuteronomy 19:15. If the sinning brother still failed to recognize his error, the situation should be told before the entire church, or “assembly.” The disciples probably would have understood Jesus to mean the matter should be brought before the Jewish assembly. After the establishment of the church, on the day of Pentecost, these words would have had greater meaning for them. One who refuses to acknowledge his sin is then to be treated as an outsider (a pagan or a tax collector).<sup>20</sup>

In this passage (Matt 18: 15-17) Jesus Christ discusses the kind of attitude a Christian should take toward a fellow believer who has injured him. The erring brother is evidently the same as the one sheep that went astray. Going to reconcile with the erring fellow is more than a wise admonition, it is a command. Christ forbids strife, He wants us to be soul winners whatever be the situation. “For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.”<sup>21</sup> To circulate information about what a fellow member has done will make it more difficult, perhaps even impossible, to make amends. The less publicity made towards a wrong deed, the better. If the offender will not admit his

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<sup>20</sup>John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Cook Communications, 2000), V5.02

<sup>21</sup>Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 41.

wrongdoing for an amicable solution, then one or two more that are not involved directly, and can offer an unbiased opinion to help in resolving the conflict, could be consulted. If reconciliation is not effected at this stage, the leadership of the church should come in to mediate and to resolve the matter. If settlement is not achieved at this point, and the person in question will not respect church authority, then the fellow must be seen as someone who has no understanding in Christian principles and must be treated as an unbeliever and tax collector.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless the one should not be forsaken.

### **Divine Order of Marriage**

At the intervention and implementation periods of the project, a lot of marital issues were discussed. Among the hearty ones are: Sex before marriage, teen age pregnancy, perverse marriages like gayism and lesbianism, polygamous state of men before conversion, divorce and remarriage, courtship, and pregnant ladies before the altar at the time of marriage ordinance. The latter one (pregnant ladies at the time of the marriage ordinance) became a great concern for the entire church and was given a lot of time for discussion. Genesis 2:24 “Therefore shall a *man* shall *leave* his father and mother and shall *cleave* unto his wife, and they shall be *one flesh*,” was used to explain God’s explicit order of marriage before consummation. Four definite steps are to be followed. These clear-cut steps are:

- Man
- Leave
- Cleave

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<sup>22</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nicol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 5:447.

- One flesh

**Man.** The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines man as an adult human male. From the descriptions of Leo Trepp, even though the Bible does not give explicit information about the age at which one is to be married, a man (in the generic sense, but the male in particular) who has the capability of leaving his father and mother, “implies sufficient independence; it also presupposes mental, spiritual, financial, and emotional maturity.”<sup>23</sup>

**Leave.** Marriage is described in the Bible as an act of both detachment and attachment. That means, a person shall “leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24. KJV). Essential to the marriage relationship is a leaving behind of the previous relationship. The Seventh-day Adventist Believe records that, “the marriage relationship is to *supersede* that of the parent and child.”<sup>24</sup> However a more appropriate description is found in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC), which states: “the love in marriage is to exceed, though certainly not to supersede, a very proper love for the parents.”<sup>25</sup> In each of the descriptions above, relationship in marriage is to be regarded above all other relationship. It should be noted that God created marriage - husband and wife before any other relationships, such as siblings, parents, grandparents, in-laws, and friends

The command to depart from mother and father, thus detaching from the closest human relationship can have, convey the idea that marriage between a man

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<sup>23</sup>Leo Trepp, *A History of the Jewish Experience* (New York: Behrman House, 1973), 223.

<sup>24</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 332 (Chapter 23).

<sup>25</sup>SDABC 1:227

and a woman has priority over all other family relationships.<sup>26</sup> Leaving ones parents gives room for an exclusive new relationship between a man and a woman, thereby providing the home and seedbed for new life.<sup>27</sup> As explained by Cornes, leaving “means the man leaves emotionally and psychologically. Till now his first loyalty, the first call on his honoring of other people has been due to his parents. Now it will be due to his wife.”<sup>28</sup>

The Biblical account in Genesis 2:24 urge the man, and not the woman to leave his parental home. In his research on Geneses 1-15, Gordon J. Wenham reports: The Israelite marriage was usually patrilocal - the man continued to live in or near his parents’ home. That the man has to leave his parents indicates the importance of the new commitment that takes place in marriage.<sup>29</sup> The course of leaving involves an important public notion that goes along with the marriage covenant relationship. The sacred agreement entered into by a man and a woman, witnessing by the representatives of both families and other people, shows that, “marriage is both personal and communal.”<sup>30</sup> Covenanting marriage does not only involve the man and the woman. It includes the presence of some witnesses and a scheduled ceremony.

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<sup>26</sup>Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 57.

<sup>27</sup>Frank M. Hasel, "The Biblical Concept of Marriage in the Bible," in *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects*, ed. Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, Review and Herald, 2015), 31.

<sup>28</sup>Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 57.

<sup>29</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 70.

<sup>30</sup>O. J. Baab, "Marriage," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:284.

**Cleave.** The Hebrew term *dabaq* translated “cleave” means “to stick to, to fasten to, to join, or to hold unto” the closeness and strength of this bond illustrates the nature of the bond of marriage. Any attempt to break up this union would injure individuals bound this closeness together.<sup>31</sup> The cleaving of the couples includes traditional, legal and religious arrangements. Traditionally, the dowry is paid and families behind the couple accept to give their support and consent to the marriage couples. Legally, the couples register the marriage at the district assemblies or court to acquire a certificate as evidence of marriage ordinance. Religiously, the Church becomes involved in counselling and officiating in the holy matrimony. In the nutshell, God the creator, the couple families, friends, the church and community witness the covenant that the couples make with each other. That covenant is endorsed in heaven, when they solemnly hear, “What God has joined together let no man separate” (Matt .19:6).

**Become One Flesh.** Leaving and cleaving results in a union that is mystery. Oneness is achieved in the full sense - the married couple does everything together and shares a deep intimacy. The two people shall all that they have., not only their bodies, not only their material possessions, but also their joy and their thinking, their feeling, suffering, hopes, fears, successes and failures. Becoming one flesh means, the two persons become completely one with body, soul, and spirit, and yet there remain two different people.<sup>32</sup>

Becoming one flesh involves sexual intercourse - “Adam knew his wife and she conceived” (Gen 4:1). Sexual intercourse is associated with the consummation of

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<sup>31</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Believe*, 332 (Chapter 23).

<sup>32</sup>Walter Trobisch, *I Married You* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1971), 18.

marriage, occurring at the end of public ceremony. However, a man alone is not one flesh. Similarly, a woman by herself is not one flesh either. "What is being pinpointed is solidarity."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, marriage is the place where human sexuality finds its divine fulfilment. God has not devised sexuality to be experienced apart from marriage, outside of marriage, or before marriage. Sexuality is a component of God's good creation; it should be enjoyed only if it is exercised within the boundaries set by God. Outside of such borders sex can simply deteriorate into exploitative behaviors - such as pornography, prostitution and other kinds of sexual distortions.<sup>34</sup>

In summation, God created humans as man and woman - male and female. God Himself initiated and performed the first marriage ordinance in Eden. It was carried out in a monogamous order between a man and a woman. God's divine order of marriage is constituted by matured individuals who can live independent of their former parental supervision, and be joined together, considering the involvement of God, the family, the church and the state to play their roles as parties in a lifelong union.

### **Transformations in the Mode of Worship**

One of the discussions that caught the attention and greater contribution of the church members is how to make transformations in the church make church service to make fellowship attractive and meaningful as we worship our God and Maker. Some of the members spoke about the worship places - church buildings. Their complaint is, we go out and evangelize people who after accepting the Adventist message have to leave their former place of worship in cathedrals and befitting pews and come to

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<sup>33</sup>Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 181.

<sup>34</sup>Frank M. Hasel, "The Biblical Concept of Marriage in the Bible," 35.

worship in rented classrooms and benches. Some prescribed the use of ultra-modern public address system, locally composed gospel music, musical instrument and “sacred dancing.” These issues were discussed in their spiritual imports, advantages and disadvantages.

### **Church Building and Church Growth**

Church buildings are regarded as sacred space or place where church members meet to worship, thank, praise God and put before Him their prayer requests. Joseph Ratzinger, writing on the Significance of the Church Building says, “Even the staunchest opponents of sacred things, of sacred space in this case, accept the Christian community needs a place to meet, and on that basis, they define the purpose of a church building in a strictly functional sense.”<sup>35</sup> Truly, Church buildings are highly regarded and respected by people that it is treated as a sacred object. Some of the members look at the Bible in the first century Christianity and argue that the Church must be seen as a body of believers rather than architectural edifice. In debating back and forth an aged woman known as Maame Abbey with a soft but convincing tone said, “I have lived quite a time in this church, but I want to say with all confidence that a well-built church house is evangelistic in itself, attractive and inviting.”<sup>36</sup> As the discussion continued, Elder Aboagye Sarpong remarked, “because of its (Church Building) importance, God asked the Israelites through Moses, ‘And let

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<sup>35</sup>Joseph Ratzinger, [http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/sacred\\_places\\_the\\_significance\\_of\\_the\\_church\\_building/](http://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/sacred_places_the_significance_of_the_church_building/), accessed: October 14, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Esther Abbey, *Discussion on the Importance of Church Buildings*, Facilitated by the Researcher, Koforidua Central SDA Church, Under the group of Elder Solomon Boama, October 29, 2016.

them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them' (Exod 25:8), this means God Himself wants us to build Him an edifice, and it must be nice and presentable.”

The church members after the discussions on the importance of church buildings became convinced that befitting church building is an element of church membership retention. One Madam Patience Agbeviada, probingly asked, “Are the number of church buildings for the Roman Catholic and the Apostles’ Revelation Society in the Volta Region the secret of their growth?” “And now,” added by Mr. Hanson Ahiadzi, “The Church of Pentecost is spreading like a wild fire.” Members gave examples of former Adventists who left the Church because there were no befitting church buildings; while others left a particular town where they stayed to another to find a church that has a church building to worship. The facilitator also contributed that between 1995 and 1997 the Kade SDA Church was worshipping in the garage of the then church elder - Prof. J.K. Osei. Then the chief director of the National Commission for Civil Education (NCCE), Mr. Samuel K. Nkrumah, when he was posted to Kade, never showed up as an Adventist when he saw that the Church was worshipping in a garage. Until he was posted to Asamankese where he found a church building. Then he started going to Church.

### **The Place of Traditional Ghanaian Music in the SDA Church**

Africa, and for that matter Ghana, is one of the most musically diversified area of the world. The African culture is heterogeneous and this influences all facets of life. Africans like to hear music performed in their local dialects. For the reason of this programme, Traditional African Music is the purely undiluted local music or having little backing by foreign musical backgrounds.<sup>37</sup> Exclusive local Ghanaian

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<sup>37</sup>Francis Opoku, "The Place of Traditional African Music in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: A Ghanaian Perspective," in *Music and Worship in Africa*:

songs are enjoyed by the natives more than any other forms of music. Since the coming of Christianity to Ghana, some churches like the African Independent Churches, Charismatics and Pentecostals have shown keen interests in the use of indigenous songs for church services. They believe, through meaningful music to the congregation, their spiritual experience will be enhanced.<sup>38</sup>

The mainline churches, protestant or orthodox that operates totally on Western type of Christian music started experiencing drought from the 1990's. To redeem their image, some of the churches started applying the traditional songs and minimizing the use of hymns and canticles during worship. The missionaries implemented the principle of *tabula rasa* - meaning there is nothing in the pre-Christian tradition which the missionaries could build on. All aspects of the primal culture had to be discarded before Christianity could be initiated. Africans who are enlightened in our modern-day have noticed how spiteful the missionaries regarded our culture and heritage.

To make worship more Ghanaian-like, locally composed anthems, choruses, and *abibidwom* - lyrics normally sang by women are used in Sabbath Services. At times the Church Choirs and Singing Bands sing songs from local composers applying *highlife* or *agbadza* with local instruments like guitar, stick clappers, maracas, and etcetera. Though music composed and sang in whichever language is acceptable to God, caution should be taken in the way music is applied in the house of God. The main purpose for singing at church is to glorify God. Experientially, the

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*Adventists' Dialogue from Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Sampson M. Nwaomah, Robert Osei Bonsu, and Kelvin O. Onongha (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission - Andrews University, 2014), 117.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

local songs made by local composers are much more desired and enjoyed by church members than the western type of music.

During the presentation and the discussions many people gave their contributions in support of the use of local compositions during church services. Sister Constance Nana Nyarko, a chorister, said: “Now that we have learned that we can use a lot of African/Ghanaian compositions, let us sing more of such songs to exalt and glorify God, and make the congregation desirous and happy.” There is no doubt that music is more understandable when it is performed in one’s mother tongue.

### **The Use of Musical Instruments in Worship**

A considerable interest has arisen in recent times for the use of musical instruments in worship. While it has conventionally been a practice to make use of Western style of music in divine worship, nowadays people are apprehensive as to whether the indigenous musical compositions with its accompaniments must also be given place in worship. This brief review is to know whether or not musical instrument can have a place in divine worship and how it can or cannot affect

The SDA Church Manual encourages the church to accompany music with the use of musical instruments. “Music should have beauty, pathos, and power. Let the voices be lifted in songs of praise and devotion. Call to your aid, if practicable, instrumental music, and let the glorious harmony ascend to God, an acceptable offering.”<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that instrumental music skillfully applied, ascends to God and it is an acceptable offering. Commenting on the acceptability of instrumental music before God, Ellen G. White says: “Let the talent of singing be brought into the

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<sup>39</sup>General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015), 118.

work. The use of instruments is not at all objectionable. These were used in religious services in ancient times. The worshippers praised God upon the harp and cymbal, and music should have its place in our services. It will add to the interest.”<sup>40</sup> The Lord’s messenger gives a clue that the Jews accompanied their Sabbath worship songs with musical instruments. She states in the book *Desire of Ages*, “Sabbath after the crucifixion, the usual rituals took place. The trumpets and musical instruments and voices of singers were loud and clear as usual.”<sup>41</sup>

As much as the Spirit of Prophecy endorses the skillful usage of instrumental music, it also cautions against the excessive noise, theatrical display and emotionalism which often comes along with the use of instrumental music. “The science of salvation, says Ellen G. White, should be the burden and the theme of every song”<sup>42</sup> On the contrary, “Still others go to the opposite extreme, making religious emotions prominent, and on special occasions manifesting intense zeal. Their religion seems to be more of the nature of a stimulus rather than an abiding faith in Christ.”<sup>43</sup>

From the above analysis, it is clear that instrumental music is not an objection in the place of divine service. However, it should be used to praise and please God but not to gratify self in display of talent. In his comparative analysis of the use of instrumental music by the African Indigenous Churches (AIC’s) with solemn music of the Euro-American style of worship, Kelvin O. Onongha agrees with Femi Faseun

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<sup>40</sup>Ellen G. White, Letter 132, 1898.

<sup>41</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Desire of the Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 2002), 774.

<sup>42</sup>Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 107*, 1898.

<sup>43</sup>Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 21*, 1891.

by saying, “The emergence of the African Indigenous Churches led to the worship of God with the use of local instruments. The result was a mass exodus of members from the Protestant churches, which had the effect of jolting the colonial church.”<sup>44</sup> This analysis has brought to fore a considerable application of instrumental music, and further discussions on the use of indigenous instruments for music.

Kelvin has not only been convinced of the mass exodus of Protestant/Orthodox churches to AIC’s, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, but again observes:

Instrumental music, especially the primal African models, has over the years assumed significant and important roles that cannot be neglected in religious spheres. It has not only gone beyond national but denominational borders due to its keen comprehension of African Cultures and worldviews. The emergence of this genre of music calls for a contemporary consideration of worship styles in the mainline churches, and the need to strike a balance between contextual relevance and faithfulness to Biblical principles.<sup>45</sup>

For a proper and a clearer contextualization towards instrumental music and traditional musical compositions, Bruce Bauer’s counsel is remarkable.

National church leaders need to do much more to encourage local hymn writers to put into local music forms the great themes of the Bible, to use local instruments, to find local cultural forms that can carry the Biblical message. North Atlantic hymn tunes are not required to worship and praise God. In some parts of the world it is forbidden to sing any song for worship hour if the hymn is not in the *Seventh-day*

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<sup>44</sup>Femi Faseun, "Continuity and Change in the Organization and Structure of Music in the Three Foremost Protestant Churches in Nigeria," *Lagos Papers in English Studies*, vol. 3, 2008: 89.

<sup>45</sup>Kelvin O. Onongha, "Nigerian Pentecostal Music: Context, Content, and Challenge," in *Music and Worship in Africa: Adventists' Dialogue from Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Sampson M. Nwaomah, Robert Osei Bonsu, and Kelvin O. Onongha (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Mission - Andrews University, 2014), 117.

*Adventist Hymnal*. This type of slavish dependence on American forms alienates the younger generation and causes resentment.<sup>46</sup>

Church leaders and scholars must educate and encourage local hymn writers and composers should develop Biblical guidelines for the use of local musical instrument in worship using a body of musicians and theologians to arrive at a desirable spiritual objective.

### **Dancing in the Church**

Dance has been explained as moving rhythmically to music or song, typically following a set of sequences of steps; moving in a quick and light or lively way (of someone's eyes) sparkle with pleasure or excitement. (Concise Oxford Dictionary - Tenth Edition). The Smith's Bible Dictionary also comments: "The dance is spoken of in Holy Scripture universally as symbolical of some rejoicing, and is often coupled for the sake of contrast with mourning, as in Ecclesiastes 3:4b. 'a time to mourn and a time to dance.'<sup>47</sup> The issue about dancing in the church has attracted a lot of spiritual and hermeneutical questions - whether or not it is appropriate and acceptable to dance in the house of God. From the pen of inspiration; Mrs. Ellen G. White's comments in the book *Adventist Home* carries both negative and positive views about dancing:

David's *dancing in reverent joy before God* has been cited by pleasure lovers in justification of the *fashionable modern dance*, but there is no ground for such an argument. In our day dancing is associated with folly and midnight reveling. health and morals are sacrificed to pleasure. By the frequenters of the ballroom God is not an object of thought and reverence; prayer or the song of praise would be felt to be out of place to their assemblies. This test should be decisive. Amusement that have a tendency to weaken the for sacred things and

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<sup>46</sup>Bruce L. Bauer, "Christian Worship and Cultural Diversity: A Missiological Perspective," in *Diversity: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Bruce Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Department of World Missions, Andrews University, 2010), 176.

<sup>47</sup>Smith's Bible Dictionary, *Dance*, Power Bible CD 3.7

lessen our joy in the service of God are not to be sought by Christians. *The music and dancing in joyful praise to God at the removal of the ark had not the faintest resemblance of the dissipation of modern dancing. The one inclined to the remembrance of God and glorified his holy name the other is a stratagy of Satan to cause men to forget God and to dishonor Him.*<sup>48</sup> (Italics supplied by the researcher)

In the quotation above, Mrs. Ellen G. White, on one hand, endorses dancing in reverent joy before God as in the case of King David at the removal of the Ark of God (2 Samuel 6: 14-16; 1 Chron. 13:8; 15:29). This one she claims “is tended to the remembrance of God and exalted His Holy name.” On the other hand, Ellen G. White despises “fashionable modern dance which is a device of Satan to cause men to forget God and to dishonor Him.” In the above passage, Ellen G. White distinguishes between “dancing in reverent joy before God,” and “fashionable modern dance” - the former has positive connotation and the latter has negative connotation. This topic is divided into three sections: (i) Opposing Reasons for Dancing in Church, (ii) Supportive Reasons for Dancing in Church, (iii) Conclusion: Dancing in the Church.

**Opposing Reasons for Dancing in Church.** From his search on dancing in the Church, Doug discovers -dance was not part of worship in the early church. Jewish custom featured dancing at the Feast of Tabernacles and weddings. There have been many references to David’s dancing in the Old Testament, however, such dancing was just celebratory and spontaneous, but in no wise liturgical. Dancing, according to Doug, appears in the New Testament in two contexts: Herod’s banquet

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<sup>48</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, 515.

(Mark 6:21-22, with disastrous results for the beheading of John the Baptist) and the joyful celebration of the Prodigal Son's return (Luke 15:22-27).<sup>49</sup>

Dance was associated with pagan cults, like the orgiastic cult of Dionysius. Early Christians did not want to be associated with such rites, they most likely avoided dancing in church, though their intense, sometimes ecstatic worship (see Acts 2:46, 47 for example) may well have included motions of some sort. Christians avoided social dancing, too, as it was usually associated with drinking and sexual immorality in Roman culture.<sup>50</sup>

A question was posed in the book *Questions Adventists Ask* - "If scripture does not prohibit dancing, why do some churches such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church discourage dancing in the church?" The co-authors answer to the question was: "This is a good question," they said, "but we must note that Christians are not mandated to support everything that was practiced in ancient Israel into the church." They declare, "it is hermeneutically wrong to assume that everything that Scripture does not prohibit is allowable in the church."<sup>51</sup> This means there are things that can be found in the Bible though, but are not necessarily for the church to practice. Commenting on David's dance which had been used for proponents of dancing in the church, Professor Philemon O. Amanze in his candid opinion writes:

Despite David's action on the day the Ark of God was returned, there is the need for us to distinguish between the descriptive and prescriptive actions of Bible characters. Everything that a person had done and which is recorded in the Scripture should not be emulated by

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<sup>49</sup>Doug, *Did Early Christians Dance in Church*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2008/august/did-early-christians-dance-in-church.html>, accessed: October 16, 2016.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Daniel Bediako, Daniel Berchie, and Elikplim Zanthia, *Questions Adventists Ask* (Accra, Ghana: The Advent Press, 2014), 31, 32.

us though we might have some lesson to learn from them. For instance, the Lord forbids kings from increasing their wives (Deut 17:17) but David took more wives and concubines as recorded in 2 Samuel 5:13. Since David did that, should we today increase our spouses and concubines? The answer is no!<sup>52</sup>

From Amanze's analysis we should not just practice the descriptive actions of Bible character which does not have any divine prescription or endorsement. He thinks, "it is not safe for us to interpret the Bible to suit our purpose, but let us understand the meaning of the Scriptures as the people of the Bible understood it."<sup>53</sup> It is safe often times to delve into Bible history before one can make a tangible conclusion and application in our present day. Amanze warns, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible are not silent on the evils which can crop up from dancing.

#### **The Evils of Dancing.**

1. Dancing goes with unnecessary merriment (*Review and Herald*, Feb. 28, 1882, p.12).
2. It is grouped among the works of the flesh (*Manuscript* 139).
3. It is linked with drunkenness and enchantments (*The Youth Instructor* May19, 1998).
4. Dancing is called a school of depravity (*Adventist Home*, 516 - 517).
5. It is grouped among Satan's snares of the last days (*Last Day Events*,159).
6. Dancing led to the death of John the Baptist (Matt 14:1-11).

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<sup>52</sup>Philemon O. Amanze, "A Contextual Study of Dancing as a Part of Worship among Seventh-day Adventists: King David a Case Study," in *Music and Worship in Africa: Adventists' Dialogue from Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives*.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 33.

7. It fosters pride, vain show and vainglory (Mark 6:22-27).
8. It is associated with heathen worship (Exod 32:1-28).
9. It is linked with strife and jealousy, e.g. David and Saul (1 Sam . 18:6-8).<sup>54</sup>

With the above references and many more, it can be said that dance or dancing can change the mental attitude of the performer and lead to sensual stimulation and moral laxity. Care should therefore be taken when the church determines to indulge in dancing as part of worship.

**Supportive Reasons for Dancing in Church.** In the inspired Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, God exhorts His people time and time again to worship Him in the dance. In Psalm 149:2-3 the Bible says, “Let Israel rejoice before Him who made her, let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name in the dance.” Also in Psalm 150:4 the Bible instructs, “Praise Him with the timbrel and dance.”

The ancient Israelites obeyed the Word of the Lord. They danced at every joyous occasion. The Jewish nation which was regarded as the people of God, performed dances which were acceptable before the Lord God. These included ritual dances, wedding dances, harvest dances, victory dances, dances for warfare, even dances at the digging of wells (Numbers 21:17). In Judges 21:19-23 the Bible says the maidens of Israel went up to Shiloh every year for the Lord’s Feast to “dance in dances” (la-CHUL-bim-cho-LOT) before the Lord.

Each time Israel won in battle, dance was a major expression of appreciation to the Lord and an indication to other nations that the God of Israel was the only true

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 38.

God. I Samuel 18:6 shows us an example of this type of dancing: “and it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the massacre of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabret, with joy and with instruments of music.” Some of the Old Testament prophets experienced dance as part of the intimacy of their relationship with God. In 1 Samuel 10:5, for example, Samuel mentions a newly anointed King Saul that he would meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place. They would be preceded by a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp. In the Hebrew culture and religion, there is little doubt that even the prophets were dancing in some sort of enraptured way.<sup>55</sup>

The Scriptural passages cited above attest that Christian worshippers can engage in an appreciative dance, expressing their sincere heartfelt gratitude to God through the gestures of the body. The example of King David’s expressive dance before the Ark of God points out that dance can put across solemn and holy delight in the Lord.

**Conclusion.** Dance as a subject matter is mentioned many times in Scripture. The first mention of God’s people dancing as an act of praise worship is recorded in Exodus 15:20 - “Miriam the prophetess took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.” This joyful and thankful dance to the Lord, led by Miriam, followed Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea and celebrated Israel’s freedom from Egyptian bondage and slavery.

Conversely, dancing is not all the time presented in an affirmative manner in the Bible Shortly after Miriam’s praise dance; the Israelites were seen dancing before a golden calf in worship. “As soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the

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<sup>55</sup>Neil and Jamie, “Worship and Dance,” <http://www.jewishjewels.org/jewish-jewels-television-series/worship-and-dance/>, accessed: October 16, 2016.

calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and break them beneath the mount (Exod 32:19). In this instance dancing was part of unthankfulness to a loving God. Rather an appreciation to a speechless golden calf molded by the people themselves. Thus, praise dancing can be used to revere or dishonor God. In her cautious message to the church about the use of drums, shouting and dancing, Ellen White warns against any worship associated with a "bedlam of noise" coupled with "shouting, drumming and dancing." She adds, "Careful management on all points is needed, so that we shall neither run into the fire of fanaticism nor drift into formalism, which will freeze our own souls and the souls of others."<sup>56</sup> Ellen White is careful in condemning the practice of dancing in the church. She rather cautions, in the above quotation, "Careful management on all points is needed, so that we shall neither run into the fire of fanaticism nor drift into formalism."

It is noteworthy to understand that dance in the context of praise worship is not simply self-exaltation or self-expression. It should be done in a way that is accommodating to the whole worshippers. Paul writes "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Cor. 14:40 KJV). "All things" will include the use of dance in worship. Anything during a worship that can distract from focusing on Christ should not be entertained. Every assembly of worshippers bears the responsibility to organize its worship service in a way that will honor God and encourage the congregation.

Before the workshop on whether or not it is acceptable to dance in church for worship, there were mainly two opinions: Those who see dancing as evil during

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<sup>56</sup>Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Feb 12, 1901.

worship, and those who think it is right to worship God by expressing reverent joy. Elder Agyei Nketia who spoke in favor of those who have negative opinion about dancing said poignantly that, “The SDA Church is patterned after “dos” and “don’ts” so it will be better not to enter into any form of dancing than to allow it and try to manage it.

Then on behalf of those who have positive views about dancing in the church, Mrs. Christiana Asiedu (alias Maame King), zealously said, “there shouldn’t be much worry by negotiating or battle on this issue - ‘dancing in the church,’ there is a clear difference between holy dancing and worldly dancing. When to express sacred joy to God is innate and natural which can’t be suppressed by varied opinions.” Bediako, Berchie and Zanthia, concluding on “Dancing in the Church,” said, “We may conclude that dancing does not need to be liturgized in church worship ... we should not discourage spontaneous, spirit-filled acts of bodily movement, dance, or even regulated movement of the choir when singing during church service.”<sup>57</sup>

To conclude, dance in the Scripture is used as an act of worship, a clue in this can be used in similar way in our day. There are a lot of Bible passages which encourage Christian worshippers to praise God in a joyful manner which includes dance. Psalms 149:3 and 150:4 entreat worshippers of God to “Let them praise His name with the dance,” and “To praise Him with the timbrel and dance. “However, churches should educate members not to employ worldly forms of dance into the church. The focus of sacred dancing must communicate the majesty and greatness of a loving God rather than drawing people’s attention to themselves. Throughout the search about dancing in the church, it was found out that the Bible does not forbid or

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<sup>57</sup>Daniel Bediako, Daniel Berchie, and Elikplim Zanthia. *Questions Adventists Ask* (Accra, Ghana: The Advent Press, 2014), 35.

condemn dancing in the presence of God, but it rather encourages it. When dancing is done in an acceptable way, it becomes a beautiful form of art that can express trust in the creator, edifying fellow worshippers and bringing glory to the almighty God.

### **Important Assumptions**

The project could not see success without financial, personnel, consultations and attitudinal support from the Southern Ghana Union Conference (SGUC), East Ghana Conference (EGC) workers, church elders and members. These are significant external factors which contributed to the successful completion of the project. The next session would look at the evaluation of the programme.

### **Evaluation of the Project**

Evaluation in the Oxford Advance Dictionary is defined as the formation of “an opinion of the amount, value, or quality of something after thinking about it carefully.” The main reason for evaluating a project is to identify the problems and take advantage of the opportunities in order to offer reliable information to all stakeholders. It is from this information that the problems and weaknesses unearthed can be addressed and the strengths and opportunities opened by the project can be built on<sup>58</sup>in evaluation one examines the values and lessons of what has taken place in the immediate or remote past.<sup>59</sup> The evaluation helps in the process of making adjustments towards the implementation of the strategy. This project will be assessed

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<sup>58</sup>W. K. Kellogg Foundation, *W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook: Philosophy and Expectation* (Battle Creek, MI: Kellogg Foundation, 2004), 2.

<sup>59</sup>Samuel A. Larmie, *Strengthening Local Church Follow-Up of Adventist Media Ministry Contacts in Ghana*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Adventist Theological Society), 2009.

to bring out the strengths and weaknesses, to enhance the implementation of the project.

The Sabbath afternoons of the month of November was used to conduct evaluation in the Koforidua Central SDA Church. The evaluation team saw it prudent to apply the Participation Evaluation Process (PEP) initiated by John D. Robb. The PEP as applied by the World Vision International takes insight from the kind of people group thinking expressed in the following poetic lines by James Yen - one of the earliest originators of participative approach to development:

Go to the people

Live among the people

Learn from the people

Plan with the people

Work with the people

Start with what the people know

Build on what the people have.<sup>60</sup>

In PEP, it is discovered that the people by whom the researcher want to touch for Christ somehow know their own maladies. If the researcher wants to teach them the right path he must first be their student, or at best their mate to listen and learn from them as they describe their own actuality. They are the best to describe their current situation and the best to assist to discover the solutions.

To apply the PEP, the three (3) focus group members and church members present were assembled to have a feedback from the implementation of the

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<sup>60</sup>John D. Robb, *Focus! The Power of People Group Thinking* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1994), 65.

programme. The three (3) major questions, the activities, discussions from sermons and the seminars were repeated for pragmatic appraisal. The questions are:

- (i) What motivates people to become members of the Church?
- (ii) What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church?
- (iii) What can the Church do to improve retention of membership?

The activities, sermons and the seminars include the following:

- 1) Formation of Prayer Team.
- 2) Members Divided Under Six Elders for Easy Running of the Church.
- 3) Spiritual Growth
- 4) Conflict Management and Resolution
- 5) Divine Order of Marriage
- 6) Transformation in the Mode of Worship
- 7) Church Building and Church Growth
- 8) The Place of Traditional African Music in the SDA Church.
- 9) The Use of Musical Instruments
- 10) Dancing in the Church

A Baseline Survey collects key information early in a project so that later findings can be made about the value and progress results achieved by the project.<sup>61</sup> Generally, the impact of the project conducted at the Koforidua Central SDA Church is measured as positive and progressive. There are descriptive and measurable indicators which attest to the positive impact of the project.

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<sup>61</sup> Study Mode. Com, “The Importance of Conducting Baseline Surveys Before a Particular Project Has Commenced,” <http://www.studymode.com/essays/The-Importance-Of-Conducting-Baseline-Surveys-975179.html>, accessed: December 1, 2016.

Church attendance after the survey has increased. All the departmental activities and meetings: Sunday - Bible Studies; Monday - Women's Ministries meetings; Tuesday - Singing Band/Choir practice; Wednesday - Mid-Week prayers; Friday - Senior Youth/Pathfinders meeting; Sabbath Afternoon - Adventist Men/Personal Ministries/Sabbath School recorded significant increase, except the Senior Youth meetings on Fridays which recorded a decrease. The Senior Youth Leader, gave an explanation that the count taken during the evaluation period was when the Senior Youth members were at school (see table 9)

Before the programme, Friday's vespers (for Sabbath Opening) and Morning Devotion for daily Sabbath School Studies had been redundant for some time. Currently, Friday vespers for Sabbath opening can record twenty-two (22) people; while Morning Devotion for Sabbath School Studies can record ten (10) people. Another major concern that came to the notice of the researcher is that the church does not practice the Sabbath dawn morning devotion, which is one of the major worship times for most Adventist Churches in Ghana. One thing that came to the notice of the researcher is that, there is no specific day or time allotted for Stewardship, Health, and Temperance. These departments need to have special time, so that church members would be educated on health and temperance issues, as well as on stewardship.

The formation of the prayer team has been very beneficial. Apart from the miraculous healing of Mr. Jonathan Adu, which resulted in the conversion of seven (7) people from the same family (former members of the Church of Christ), many church members and non-members have testified of amazing answered prayers from the Lord.

The division of the members under the six church elders has been very useful for the easy running of the church. Visiting church members or communicating with members by the church leaders has been enhanced. The elders use their lists to monitor members' church attendance, contributions toward church goals and their total well-being. The elders also act as spiritual guardians or mentors to people under their care to support their spiritual growth.

The seminar on conflict management and conflict resolution is one of the important topics that attracted a lot of contributions from the members. The facilitator inquiringly made a statement: "I believe there are no conflicts, contentions and dissensions (Gal. 5:20) in this congregation." Surprisingly, Sister Comfort Amponsah Nketia aggressively remarked, that is not true Pastor! Contentions and divisions are some of the cankers that are affecting this congregation, especially amongst the choristers."<sup>62</sup> Elder Henry Nana Nyarko supported Sister Comfort and advisedly, in a low tone said, Pastor, there are issues among both leaders and members of this assembly which need to be ironed out, and some are very delicate."<sup>63</sup> The topic was interesting. Jesus Christ's teaching on conflict resolution (Matt 18: 15-17) was treated among others.

The workshop/sermon on divine order of marriage in Genesis 2:24 attracted a lot of cautious statements from the elderly to the youth. Now church members have the understanding that there are boundaries to courtship and dating. And that having

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<sup>62</sup>Comfort Amponsah Nketia, "Seminar on Conflict Management and Resolution," Facilitated by the researcher, Koforidua Central SDA Church, Under the group of Elder Peter Sarkodie, October 29, 2016.

<sup>63</sup>Henry Nana Nyarko, "Seminar on Conflict Management and Resolution," Facilitated by the researcher, Koforidua Central SDA Church, Choir Master 2016; Church Elder 2017, October 29, 2016.

sex (one flesh) can only be done at the consummation of marriage. A lady who later approached the facilitator said she would prefer a simple programme for her marriage than a wedding since she could not follow the divine order of marriage.

As a result of the project, by discussing transformation in the mode of worship, praise worship has been encouraged, the church building has been painted, the activities of the front door receptionists have been improved. The church is now using metal stuffing pews (400 pieces) imported from China to replace the existing plastic chairs. Members are regarding the church house as a sacred space more than before.

The members attested to the fact that, they appreciate and enjoy traditional Ghanaian songs, like the compositions of:

- Osei Boateng (*Wiase Asetena; Nkumimdifo Yesu; Yesu Ka Wo Ho; Anwanwasqm Besisi*)
- J.K. Amoako (*Ahotefo Ani da Asase Foforo No So; M'Agyenkwa Pa Yesu; Gya Me Kwan Dwoo*)
- Advent Heralds (*Zakeo M'ekchwq Yesu Nti Maforo Dua; Mede Aseda Bqma Yehowa, Scre Na Hyerqn*)
- Sekyedomasi Gospel Band (*Halleluyah Yq Me Ycnko, Bra Na Cbqgye Wo, Gye No Di*);
- Missionary Singers (*Sika Deq Enkosi Hwee, Megyidi Agye Me Nkwa*)
- Kwabena Donkor (*Kan' Na Meyq 'Nifurani*)

There are also modern composers like:

- Baffour Kyei Mensah (*Noah; Abodom Nkumaa; Mewo Nyame Bi*)
- Mark Anim Yirenskyi (*Fakye, Me dimafo Tease; Kasa Ma Me, Bisa Nyame*)
- Isaiah Kwadwo Ampong (*Hosanna; Onim W'akwan, Wo Nnwuma Ne Sen?*)

- Hannah Essel - alias Abibidwom Maame (*Nkwa 'Homa; Obqba O Obqba; Ebenezer; Ayeforo Kanea a Wasc Wodeq; Abapa Na Ogui, Nkyq Meredc*), and many others.

Ghanaians, instinctively react joyfully to local songs with some drumming and artful dance. It has been tested and proven that Church members in the Koforidua Central SDA Church are more responsive and enthusiastic to locally composed songs than Western style of singing. This became evident on November 26, 2016 when Elder Stephen Okyere used the whole period of the divine service for different types of songs. Even though it was generally accepted that the Bible does not ban dancing in the church, the researcher observed that it is not everyone who made joyful moves or dance to the praise worship. Most of the women take part in dancing during the praise worship but for the men, especially the older ones, almost forty (40) percent do not make any responding bodily movement.

The announcements made to visit and invite backsliders, family members and friends for the December 31, 2016/January 1, 2017 thanksgiving service, yielded much fruit. A lot of non-Adventist friends and old time backsliders attended the programme. Interestingly, the researcher witnessed for the first time in his ministry a non-Adventist (middle-aged woman) partaking of the Lord's Supper.

The antidote to lessen mass membership loss after baptism has been prescribed in the aforementioned strategies in this project. It is the hope of the researcher that, if the steps are rightly followed, the problem of losing members in the church will be significantly reduced.

### **Reporting of the Project**

People oriented research is intended to be shared with others who have similar concern for the organization or community and can join hands to touch them with the

love and power of Christ.<sup>64</sup> When the project is successfully completed, a report will be submitted to the East Ghana Conference, and also to the Koforidua Central SDA Church.

### **Summary**

The greatest achievement of evangelism is to retain converts who were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The main objective of this project was to find strategies to reduce the high rate of membership loss, but rather increase membership retention in the Koforidua Central SDA Church.

The researcher noticed that the goal to retain members in the Church includes matters like visiting members, prayer and healing, caring for the poor and needy, having loving and lovable leaders, and treating matters relating to members with fairness and justice. The fact about the transformation of the mode of worship was also seen as a tool for improving membership retention.

It is helpful to use the Participatory Evaluation Process (PEP) where the target group is involved in identifying the problems and challenges as well as contributing to reach at an agreeable and workable solution. The best method to retain members in the church is to have cordial one-on-one relationship with them.

What has become clear to the researcher is that effective communication tool to retain church members is neither about giving instruction nor information. It is not very much about techniques, materials, tools nor money. It is really about love.

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<sup>64</sup>John D. Robb, Focus, 89.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, FINAL EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

This project went through many stages of research procedures before this final stage. A proposal of a felt need (church membership retention) was presented; a strategic project to address the problem was designed, implemented and evaluated. The results of the implementation of the project have been evaluated as beneficial by the Koforidua Central Church. To the researcher, the programme has been successful and given more experience and insights into how to deal with membership retention problem in the Church. The procedure and the outcome of the dissertation will be a guide to others who may engage in this aspect of study.

#### **Summary of the Dissertation**

The idea to choose the topic, “Strategies to Improve Membership Retention in the Koforidua Central SDA Church, Ghana” emanated from an outcome of a drastic membership loss when the West-Central Africa Division (WAD) conducted membership audit in all her fields between 2011 and 2013. The membership of the EGC reduced from 36,216 to 16,075. A reduction of more than twenty thousand (20,000) souls.

The purpose of the project is to develop strategies that could help to increase membership retention in the Church. The Koforidua Central SDA Church was cited for the pilot implementation of the project. Biblical and theological foundation for the problem of retention was cited from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Also, from the Spirit of Prophecy writings of E.G. White and other sources of literature were reviewed.

To ascertain the extent of the problem, the researcher used the mixed method by forming three focus groups and giving out questionnaires. Findings from the questionnaires and the focus groups were used to develop strategies to address the problems. The focus of the people was drawn to: (i) What Motivates People to Become Church Members (ii) Reasons Why People Leave the Church (iii) What it Means to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ, and (iv) Measures to Retain Members. After digesting the above topics, three main subject areas were gleaned. These are: (i) Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationship (ii) Socio-Economic Problems, and Organizing Diverse Social Programmes.

The researcher who is also the Church Pastor led out the implementation and the concerns raised within the span of four (4) Sabbath afternoons.

- Week 1 - August 27, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 2 - September 3, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 3 - September 10, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.
- Week 4 - September 17, 2016, at the Central SDA Church, Koforidua.

The results that are showing up in the Koforidua Central SDA Church in terms of Church attendance, the return of some backsliders and the general feeling of warmth in church service, and among members and elders are evidences that justify the success and effectiveness of the strategies developed, implemented and evaluated.

Christ's calling to believers to come unto Him (John 15) is more of a choice from Jesus Christ unto believers for salvation rather the believers' choice of Jesus Christ. His choice for believers is not for us to be redundant, but fruit-bearers; not to be occasional worshippers, but zealous laborers; not as people who call on God

spontaneously - like the need for fire service, but incessant people of prayer; to remain constantly as fruit-bearing branches but not to withdraw or be cut off from the vine. Thus, Jesus Christ's invitation to Christians is for them to remain, "...that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).

### **Final Evaluation of the Project**

From start to finish the project had smooth running of activities. The researcher can now see himself as people group thinker who did the excavation of the problem together with the church members of the Koforidua Central SDA Church and arrived at appreciable findings. The implementations of the intervention have seen positive light. Casual church members are now regular and punctual; some backsliders have renewed their covenant relations with God. Various departments in the church have seen improvement in attendance and punctuality. Generally, there is warmth and unity of purpose in the Church.

Members of the church were zealous in participating in all aspects of the project. The responses from the data gathered from the questionnaires were similar to the responses from the focus group discussions. There were three (3) focus groups: Elders and men, women's ministries and the youth. At the last day of interacting with the focus groups to evaluate the project, almost all the church members at present took interest in sharing their views on the positive impact the project has had on the church. The ultimate objective of the researcher - to let members know and understand that people who are baptized into the church should remain, and the fruit of their labor should also remain was achieved.

## Lessons Learned

The under listed findings are some of the lessons the researcher learned in the project.

1. People group thinking - working with the group from which the research or the investigation is being made is an effective approach.
2. As a Missiology student, the venture on the entire programme was regarded as Mission driven to design a solution to the problem of mass and rampant membership loss in the church.
3. The people from whom the investigation is being conducted have some ideas about which solutions to recommend to achieving pragmatic solutions.
4. From the antediluvian time to present the issue about membership retention has always been a problem. Few people have been responding to God's clarion call for people to forsake worldliness to accept the free offer of salvation. Instances like the story of the cosmic deluge at the time of Noah; the wilderness journey from Egypt to Canaan; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the Early Disciples of Jesus Christ; the Apostle John's vision on the lost souls who are like "the sand of the sea" (Rev 20:8) attest to the fact that membership retention has almost always been a predicament.
5. A cluster of people joins the church because of secular reasons like sex, hunger, poverty or pain.
6. Organizing social programmes help members, especially the youth to stay in the church.

7. Inasmuch as the church organizes outreach welfare services, the church members want the church to do more of such services to poor and needy members.
8. The members do not receive wholistic Adventist teachings before and after baptism.
9. Most members enjoy the African way of worshipping - using locally composed song with instrumental background than the Western style.
10. Frequent open discussions help church members to come out with facts that can encourage membership retention.
11. To gain converts and help them remain is not an event but a loving and a caring process.
12. Transformation of the mode of worship to suit contemporary ways of life without affecting church doctrines and Biblical teachings has the potential of reducing rampant exodus from the church.

### **Conclusion**

The dissertation proposal, “Strategies to Improve Membership Retention in the SDA Koforidua Central SDA Church, Ghana” was approved by the Adventist University of Africa (AUA) - Kenya, at the Theological Seminary and the School of Postgraduate Studies in 2013. Information to embark on this project was given to the Southern Ghana Union Conference (SGUC), East Ghana Conference (EGC), and Koforidua Central SDA Church - the project site.

The project was developed through questionnaires and focus groups, implemented, written and printed, produced, and reported to the EGC of SDA and the Koforidua Central SDA Church.

When Jesus Christ asked the church to evangelize all the nations, the cardinal thing He asked the church to do is to “make them disciples” (Matt 28:19), this implies that they should be trustees of the Christian community and help others to follow suit. Another Biblical foundation statement which is a pillar to membership retention is found in John 15:16 “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My Name He may give you.” The center of attention of this project is to develop the fact that after accepting the invitation to become members of the church, members should not only remain but that those they labor to bring to the church should also remain.

In every epoch, God has a strategic plan of conserving a remnant that will be obedient to His plan. God saw Noah as a righteous man that lived and remained in His instructions, so God spared Noah and his family as the rest who did not heed to His instructions suffered death through the worldwide flood. The same can be said of Israelites journey from Egypt to Canaan, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In this project, the mixed method of surveying field work was applied to accrue the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research findings. Questionnaires were designed to reach many respondents. Out of the 600 questionnaires distributed (English 350 copies, and Twi 250 copies), a total of 565 copies, representing 94% were retrieved. Three focus groups involving: (i) Elders and men (ii) Women’s Ministries, and (iii) Adventist Youth Ministries (AYM) were formed.

When the data was implemented, the Church began realizing a positive impact on departmental meetings and church attendance in general. The rekindling of the Church brought gradual transformation. Not only did church attendance shoot up,

backsliders started coming back to church. Additional activities which were conducted aside the questionnaires and the focus groups were - the formation of a prayer team and the dividing of church members under the six elders of the church (see appendix). Dividing members under the six elders has encouraged visitation and the general welfare of church members.

Through the project both elders and members were educated that all should be involved in the ministration of church programme. All must be participating in the running of the programmes at the rostrum; none should permanently remain a spectator in the congregation. This has encouraged those who feel shy and or incompetent to mount the stage to play their given roles.

The programme has stirred up interest among the two pastors (district and local), the elders and the entire membership of the Koforidua Central SDA Church. The baseline statistics of members' attendance to various church programmes has increased creditably. The dissertation has broadened the horizon of the researcher and endowed him with more techniques to help members stay in the church. The researcher discovered that with some efforts on the part of the leadership of the Church such as showing love, care and understanding, some members who leave the Church for one reason or another could remain. Since the evaluation of the programme has proven positive, it can be applied in every other place where retention of members is considerably low.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher's task in this dissertation was, to craft a strategy to significantly reduce the number of church members leaving the church for various reasons. Beginning from the description of the ministry context, the Biblical and theological foundations, literature review, findings from the survey and data gathered,

the designing and the implementation of interventions, evaluation, observations and lessons learned from the project, the researcher recommends to the Union, the Conference and the Koforidua Central where the project was conducted, the following measures.

- 1) Pre-and post-baptismal lessons should be given frequently to church members to affirm their faith.
- 2) Newly and non-established members should be given mentors (Spiritual guardians) to encourage and guide them for some time.
- 3) Newly baptized members should be integrated into church life to establish their faith.
- 4) The welfare department must intensify caring, especially for the poor and the needy in the church.
- 5) Church leaders must check on absentee members to find out their challenges and encourage them to return.
- 6) Members should be educated to build strong personal relationship with God.
- 7) Organize more of youth and young adult programmes
- 8) Organize frequent social programmes including sight-seeing for the church.
- 9) Preach Christ centered sermons.
- 10) Preach intentionally planned doctrinal sermons.
- 11) Church members and leaders should not be judgmental or discard members because of their mistakes and sins.

- 12) Church members and leaders should exhibit positive attitude towards God's Church, too much criticism, gossiping and backbiting tend to discourage the newly and non-established members.
- 13) Let backslidden and casual members feel wanted and needed in the life of the Church.
- 14) Pray constantly for church members.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The journey through this dissertation has discovered new things to the knowledge of the researcher. The findings from the survey, intervention, and implementation of the project have been very satisfying. The pastors, elders, and members of the church have testified to the positive impacts of the project. The new discoveries have made the researcher a debtor and placed on him a responsibility to investigate into new fields of study which are also recommended to interested researchers. These new researchable areas are:

1. How to affirm members in the Seventh-day Adventist faith.
2. How to call back our former worshipping companions.
3. How to make every convert a disciple.
4. Preventing new converts from dropping out. A possibility.
5. Proper care of converts.
6. Sieving out the ante-growth mechanisms from church growth
7. Does standing in the ways and asking for the old paths, prevent contemporary forms of worship?
8. How can drumming and dancing be applied in the Seventh-day Adventist setting?
9. Can evil spirits attack a genuine Christian?

10. Did we call them only to see them off?

11. Making active the passive members.

## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### PERMISSION LETTERS AND ACCEPTANCE

- 1) Letter to East Ghana Conference of SDA Church
- 2) Letter to Koforidua Central SDA Church
- 3) Approval letter from East Ghana Conference of SDA Church
- 4) Approval letter from Koforidua Central SDA Church

PERMISSION LETTER TO EAST GHANA CONFERENCE OF SDA



**SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH**

East Ghana Conference  
P. O. Box. Kf2470  
Koforidua-Ghana  
Tel:233-03420-22635  
Fax: 233-03420-25790  
E-mail: eastghana2000@yahoo.com

May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Executive Secretary  
East Ghana Conference of S.D.A  
Koforidua

Dear Sir,

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT KOFORIDUA CENTRAL  
S.D.A CHURCH FOR DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DISSERTATION PROJECT**

I write to ask for permission to conduct a research project on the topic: "Strategies to Improve Membership Retention in the Koforidua Central S.D.A. Church." from July 1, to December 31, 2016.

I hope that you will grant my request.

Yours faithfully,

Pastor Samuel Bonya Arloo  
Doctor of Ministry Student  
Adventists University of Africa  
Nairobi - Kenya

PERMISSION LETTER TO KOFORIDUA CENTRAL SDA CHURCH



**SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH**

East Ghana Conference  
P. O. Box. Kf2470  
Koforidua-Ghana  
Tel:233-03420-22635  
Fax: 233-03420-25790  
E-mail: eastghana2000@yahoo.com

May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The District Pastor  
Central S.D.A Church  
P. O. Box KF 60  
Koforidua

Dear Pastor,

**PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT KOFORIDUA CENTRAL  
S.D.A CHURCH FOR DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DISSERTATION PROJECT**

I write to ask for permission to conduct a research project on the topic: "Strategies to Improve Membership Retention" in the Koforidua Central S.D.A. Church. From July 1, to December 31, 2016.

I hope that you will grant my request.

Yours faithfully,

Pastor Samuel Bonya Arloo  
Doctor of Ministry Student  
Adventists University of Africa  
Nairobi – Kenya

RESPONSE FROM EAST GHANA CONFERENCE



**SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH**

East Ghana Conference  
P. O. Box. Kf2470  
Koforidua-Ghana  
Tel:233-03420-22635  
Fax: 233-03420-25790  
E-mail: eastghana2000@yahoo.com

May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Pastor Samuel Bonya Arloo  
East Ghana Conference of S.D.A  
Koforidua

Dear Sir,

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT KOFORIDUA  
CENTRAL S.D.A CHURCH FOR DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DISSERTATION PROJECT**

With reference to your letter dated May 14 2016, on the above subject matter.  
The East Ghana Conference administration is pleased to inform you that your request for  
permission to conduct your research project has been granted.

Yours faithfully,

Pastor Kwaku Okyere Baffour  
Executive Secretary  
Cc: The Treasurer - EGC

RESPONSE FROM KOFORIDUA CENTRAL SDA CHURCH



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH  
KOFORIDUA CENTRAL

EAST GHANA  
CONFERENCE

P.O Box 60  
Koforidua – Ghana  
Tel.: 08122635  
Bankers: Barclays Bank Ltd.

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Dear Pastor,

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH PROJECT AT KOFORIDUA  
CENTRAL S.D.A CHURCH FOR DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DISSERTATION PROJECT**

In your response to your request to conduct a research for Doctor of Ministry Dissertation project. I write to inform you that you have been fully granted the permission to carry out your project. We hope to comply and give you the needed assistance.

Sincerely,

Pastor Albert Darko  
District Pastor  
Koforidua

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE IN ENGLISH AND TWI

QUESTIONNAIRE: ENGLISH

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE  
KOFORIDUA CENTRAL S.D.A. CHURCH

In a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest on the positive) answer by circling the following questions. In situations where you are not very sure of your answer, circle 3.

1. Are baptismal prospects thoroughly taught before baptism?  
(1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
2. New members are assigned mentors, (Spiritual Guardians) for some time after baptism.  
(1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
3. There is a ceremony to welcome new members into the church immediately after baptism. (1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
4. New members are helped to join a particular group in the church such as the Adventist Youth Ministries, the Adventist Women Ministries, the Church Choir, Singing Band. etc. (1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
5. There is a post-baptismal instruction for new members in my church.  
(1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
6. New members are given instructions concerning spiritual gifts before baptism.  
(1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
7. New members are assigned tasks according to their spiritual gifts in my church.  
(1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
8. My church has active and operational counseling services.  
(1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)
9. Church members are involved in integrating new members into the life of the Church.  
(1.                      2.                      3.                      4.                      5.)

10. Do you see the church members functioning in local traditions and culture (e.g. Accompanying properties of the dead in coffins, widowhood rites, puberty etc.).  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
11. Do you see the Church members involved in Church activities or a few ministering and the majority playing the spectator role?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
12. How would you measure the love/care quotient (LQ) in your Church?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
13. Is the Church concerned about Church growth/membership increase or not worried about membership reduction?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
14. Does the Church have membership retention and assimilation program for new converts?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
15. Apart from Bible studies and worship does the Church organize any social events for members?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
16. Does the action unit/small group/personal ministry departments have Sabbath afternoon visitation for members who could not attend Church Service?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
17. Does your Church have a Welfare System that supports Church members in times of need?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
18. Your Church has a funeral arrangement plan that supports members financially when they are bereaved.  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
19. Does the welfare and funeral department include all members of the Church?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
20. How effective does the small group ministry function in your Church?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
21. How would you measure the Church's role in the Great Commission as commanded by Jesus Christ?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
22. Does the Church have plans for meeting the physical/spiritual/financial challenges of the members?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
23. Do members usually ask questions about the Ten Commandments? and the keeping of the Sabbath?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)

24. Do members whose relatives are not Seventh-day Adventists normally give them the nod to stay in the Church?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
25. Most members whose job opportunities and businesses clash with the Sabbath do not generally stay in the Church.  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
26. For every five (5) converts won through evangelism, how many normally stay in the church? (1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
27. What is the percentage of financial commitment level of members, especially in tithe and offerings? (1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
28. How would you rate the frequency of Church leaders visit to Church members?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
29. How interesting are church programs (Sabbath School, divine service, mid-week prayer meetings etc.) to church members?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
30. How would you rate the frequency of marriage seminars conducted in your Church? (1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
31. Does your Church have a programme of reclaiming backsliders?  
(1. 2. 3. 4. 5.)
32. In your own opinion, what factors make people leave your Church?  
.....  
.....  
.....

QUESTIONNAIRE IN GHANAIAN LANGUAGE (TWI)

NSQMMISA

NHYEHYQEQ AHODOC A QBQBOA AMA ASAFOMMA ANI AKA  
MEMENEDA AKWANHWEFOC SOM A QWC KOFORIDUA QNE NE  
MMORCNOO A ATWA HO AHYIA.

Wc nsqnnua baako kosi num no (1 – 5) sensan deq edimu aseq.

Berq a w'adwene mu yq wo ntanta no san mmiqnsa ase.

1. So yqde wcn a wcpq sq wcyq Akwanhwqfoc asafomma no fa nkyerqkyerq korogyeen mu ansa na woabc wcn asu anaa?  
(1, 2, 3, 4, 5.)
2. Yqde honhom mu ahwqsofoc ma nnipa woaba asafo no mu anaa?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
3. Yqyq ammamrq de ma asafomma afoforcfoc akwaaba berq a woabc wcn asu awie no?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
4. Yqboa asafomma afoforcfoc ma wcde wcn ho kcdcm ekuo ahodoc a qwc asafo no mu sq ebia, mmaabunkuo, mmaakuo mmarimakuo ne nnwontokuo.  
(1 2 3 4 5)
5. Asubc akyi no, yqde asafomma fa csom no nkyerqkyerq mu  
(1 2 3 4 5)
6. Yqyq nkyerqkyerq ma asafomma afoforcfoc fa honhom mu akyqdeq ho ansa na woabc wcn asu.  
(1 2 3 4 5)
7. Yqma afoforcfoc no adwuma ahodoc sqdeq wcn honhom mu akyedeq teq.  
(1 2 3 4 5)
8. M'asafo no wc afotufoc nhyehyqeq a wcde ma asafomma no.  
(1 2 3 4 5)
9. Asafomma boa afoforcfoc no ma wcn asetim wc asafo no mu.  
(1 2 3 4 5)

10. Wohunu asafo no sq cde ne ho gye atetesqm ne ammamrq mu sq ebia (ayieyc, kunayc, Bragorc) sene Twerq Kronkron no?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
11. So asafomma no nyinaa de wcn ho hyq ascre adwumayc mu anaa sq nnipakuo ketewaa bi na egyina wcn so? (1 2 3 4 5)
12. Sqn na wobqsi akari cdc ne tema ho asqm wc asafo no mu?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
13. So ascre no nyini yq asafo no ahiasqm anaa qmfa wcn ho sq ascre no bqtc ape?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
14. Asafo no wc nhyehyqeq a qboa ma aforfcfoc no ani ka wc ascre no mu anaa?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
15. Wc Twerq Kronkron adesua ne csom akyi no, so asafo no yq nhyehyqeq fa abrabc mu nsqm dwumadie bi ho biom anaa?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
16. Sq obi antumi amma ascre homeda a, homeda sukuukuo ahodoc no taa yq nhyehyqeq srasra saa nkorfcfoc no awia anaa?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
17. Asafo no wc nhyehyqeq sononko bi a wcde ma asafomma berq a wwc chaw ne amanneq mu? (1 2 3 4 5)
18. Asafo no wc nhyehyqeq a wcde boa asafomma sikafam berq a w'ahwere wcn dcfo bi  
(1 2 3 4 5)
19. So ekuo a wchwq yiyieyc ne ayieyc so no yc, de boa asafomma nyinaa?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
20. So ekuo ahodoc adwumadie no di mu wc w'asafo mu?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
21. Sqn na wosi kari asafo no wc asqmpaka adwuma a, Kristo de hyqq no ho?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
22. So asafo no wc nhyehyqeq a wcde boa asafomma wc honhom fam, honam fam ne sikafam anaa?  
(1 2 3 4 5)
23. Asafomma taa bisa nsqm fa mmarransqm du no ne homedadie no ho anaa.  
(1 2 3 4 5)

24. Asafomma a wcn abusuafof nyq akwankwafoc ma wcn kwan sq wentena asafo no mu?  
(1        2        3        4        5)
25. Asafomma ahodoc a wcn nnwoma ne homeda taa hyia no ntaa nya kwan ntena ascre no mu.  
(1        2        3        4        5)
26. Sq yqkcka asqmpa no wie na wcbc nnipa num biara asu a dodoc sqn na qka asafo no mu?  
(1        2        3        4        5)
27. So ascremma sika yie ne ntotosodudu ho asqm te sqn?  
(1        2        3        4        5)
28. Mpqn dodoc sqn na ascre mpanimfoc taa srasra asafomma  
(1        2        3        4        5)
29. So asafo no mu yq ascremma akennc anaa?  
(1        2        3        4        5)
30. Sqn na wobqsi akari awareq nteteq ahodoc a qkc so wc w'asafo mu?  
(1        2        3        4        5)
31. So w'asafo wc nhyehyqeq ahodoc a qbqboa atwe akyisanfoc aba ascre no mu bio anaa?  
(1        2        3        4        5)
32. Wc wo nsusuyq mu no, nneqma bqna na qma asafomma gyae ascre no?  
(1        2        3        4        5)

APPENDIX C

BASELINE RECORDS OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Between August and December 2016.

| Dept. /Activity     | Before | After | Remarks  |
|---------------------|--------|-------|----------|
| Church Choir        | 22     | 28    | Increase |
| Singing Band        | 25     | 36    | Increase |
| Bible Studies       | 25     | 60    | Increase |
| Mid-Week Prayers    | 45     | 72    | Increase |
| Women's Ministries  | 12     | 35    | Increase |
| Adv. Men's Min.     | 30     | 35    | Increase |
| Sun. Bible Studies  | 20     | 50    | Increase |
| Pathfinder Meetings | 25     | 35    | Increase |
| Snr. Youth Meetings | 20     | 14    | Decrease |
| Vesper- Sabb. Open  | 15     | 22    | Increase |
| Vesper-Sabb. Close  | 40     | 60    | Increase |
| Divine Service      | 150    | 205   | Increase |

## APPENDIX D

### FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Focus Groups Findings.** Three focus groups of six to eight persons were formed. They include: Church Elders, Women's Ministries, and Adventist Youth Ministries. Three (3) major questions (that embodies the 32 questionnaires) were set as the basis for the focus group discussions. All the groups were to answer the same set of questions. The focus group questions are the following.

1. What motivates people to become members of the Church?
2. What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church?
3. What can the Church do to improve retention of membership?

It was noted that answers given by the various groups were almost similar, but answers that are peculiar to a particular group are listed as their view, understanding and contributions to the project.

**Focus Group Discussions and Answers for Elders/Men.** Eight (8) Elders made up of former and current elders represented and contributed to the findings of the project. Addressing the issue about what motivates people to become church members? Three answers run through all the focus groups. That is: (1) Some members are in the church because they grew up from Adventist parents. (2) Some are the products of public evangelism, small group ministries and personal ministries. (3) Others came into the church by their own convictions. Either by reading the Bible or Adventists literature.

On the question regarding - **What Motivates People to Become Church**

**Members.** The elders/men are convicted that:

1. A sizeable number of the people come to the church through marriage
2. Charitable deeds made through programmes led by the Adventist Men's Ministries and Women's Ministries to some families and individuals contribute to what motivates people to join the church.
3. Few of the elders gave testimonies that they are members of the church because they were influenced by the lifestyles of some devout members of the Adventist Church.
4. Some people too, especially women, became church members because of miraculous healing or answered prayers they experienced by attending a prayer programme organized by the Seventh-day Adventists.
5. Others tend to becoming members by listening to the Encounter with Truth (EWT) television programme which has Pastor Andrews L. Ewoo as the leader and speaker of the team.

From the perspectives of the elders, to motivate people to become church members, marriage programmes should be conducted frequently; charitable deeds to the poor and the needy must be strengthened; good and imitable lifestyles of church members should be emphasized; and then, prayer programmes among members and the Church in particular should be intensified.

Finding out, **what are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church?**

The elders are of the opinion that:

1. Some converts see discipleship as burdensome, too sacrificial, and infringes on one's independent life.

2. People leave the church because of unmet expectations, in other words, they could not achieve their perceived intentions
3. Many of such converts are not “well baked,” meaning that they are not given enough teachings on the beliefs and practices of the church before they are baptized.

The above reasons for leaving the church raised by the elders imply that the Church leaders should conduct programmes on the, Test of Discipleship; Reliance or Dependence on God for guidance and direction; also, Teachings and Discussions on Adventist Beliefs and practices should be organized often.

On the subject matter of **“what can the Church do to improve retention of members?”** The church elders’ discussions suggest the following:

1. Organize open forum quarterly after business meetings to know and address issues that make members disinterested in the church.
2. Church leaders should practice servant leadership and avoid harsh and kingly treatment on church members.
3. Church elders and departmental leaders should be given orientation regarding how to handle and operate effectively in the assignment given to them.
4. Avoid discrimination and preferential treatment of the members in times of offering physical, spiritual or financial support to members.
5. Regular visits and follow-ups must be planned for all members. Special care should be given to new converts.

The suggestions given by the elders assert that: issues that relate and affect the general good of the church should be made open to the members in due course. Leaders should administer their roles with kindness and tender heartedness. Regular visits to

members should be planned intentionally with special care to new converts. Any acts of discrimination should be checked.

**Focus Group Discussions for Women's Ministries Members.** Eight (8) women were selected to represent the women's ministries department for the focus group discussions. Responding to: **What motivates people to become members of the Church?** The women ministries discussion group members gave the understated answers:

1. Through Adventist teachings and practices at Adventist schools and institutions.
2. Stayed with a Seventh-day Adventist and worshipped with them.
3. Invitation to attend Seventh-day Adventist programmes.

From the viewpoint of the women's ministries discussion group, Adventist beliefs and practices should be emphasized in the institutions. During Biblical as well as social programmes, members must be asked to invite many people as possible to attend. Also, members should show good Christian virtues to children who happen to stay with them.

Concerning the question, **what are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church?** The women ministries discussion group came out with the following ideas:

1. There are at times lacks of proper reception or courtesy towards people who enter to worship.
2. There is a lack of routine visitation from the leaders of the church.
3. Mode of worship needs innovations to make worship lively.
4. The church has a lot of factions and as a result, it breeds discriminations and favoritism.

5. There are too much gossiping and backbiting which causes stumbling block to many who are not rooted in the faith.
6. When some of the men become wealthy they tend to become polygamous by increasing the number of wives or take concubines in addition to their matrimonial partner. By this most men eventually leave the church.

From the above discoveries, the church needs to improve upon the culture of reception; draw a visitation plan to cover every member in the church; make a progression on the mode of worship, counsel on gossiping and backbiting, and teach on the essentials of a united church. Marriage seminars must be conducted to address marital issues that are liable to cause cessation of fellowship for some church members.

On the discussion question concerning, **what can the Church do to improve retention of membership?** The women ministries focus group discussion members gave their views as:

1. Make members, especially new converts feel wanted and needed in the life of the congregation; by sharing ideas with them, visiting and making phone calls to them
2. Teach old and established members the necessity of caring for new and irregular members.
3. Church leaders must be more acquainted with members by providing spiritual parenthood by having personal conversation with them and calling them periodically to their homes.

4. Seek feedback about the needs of members; be ready to listen carefully and attentively.
5. Women should be given enough representation in the Church board and the various committees in the Church.

From the various views presented by the women's ministries discussion group, it is discovered that established members should dare to care for new and irregular members. Each and every member should feel needed and wanted in the church. Leaders should provide spiritual parenthood by having cordial relationship with all members.

**Focus Group Discussions for Adventist Youth Ministries (AYM).** Eight (8) people were selected to represent AYM. The enthusiasm and eagerness of the AYM to participate in the discussions clearly portrayed that the right time to express their opinion and expectation of the Church has come. Expressing their view on the question, **what motivates people to become members of the Church?** The following concerns were recorded:

1. Through Adventist music and song ministration
2. Through Adventist Youth marching drill and display during national events and church/community based programmes.
3. A lot of social programmes should be organized. Such as - indoor games, outdoor games, Bible games, quizzes and sightseeing.
4. Distribution of Adventist books, tracts and magazines.
5. Encounter with Truth (EWT) Television programme by Pastor Andrews Lawrence Ewoo.

The responses gathered from the AYM means, a lot of social programmes should be organized. Adventist music should be encouraged and promoted among the Youth. More books, tracts and magazines should be distributed. Then members should be encouraged to patronize in the viewing and sponsoring the EWT television programme

Reacting to the inquiry - **What are the reasons that cause people to leave the Church?** The AYM discussions group gave out the following views:

1. There is no warmth and vibrancy in the Church, in other words, the Church is very dull, in comparison to other churches.
2. Mode of worship is becoming outmoded, suitable and comfortable for the elderly but not attractive to the youth and young elites.
3. Intensive prayer-oriented programmes, like all day, all night, fasting and praying for some days to address members' peculiar problems are lacking.
4. Harsh and offensive comments from leaders which tend to discourage and cause stumbling block.
5. Unskillful treatment of those who go through church discipline.
6. Members do not practice what the Church preach and teach.
7. Those who marry non-Adventists, especially the female partners.
8. Programme leaders or facilitators should honor the time allotted to every programme - start on time and end on time.
9. Database information about all members should be provided to have easy accessibility to members whenever the need arises.

Appraising the comments from the AYM, the Church will need to make church programmes attractive to suit both the elderly and the youth. The Church should

organize intensive prayer programmes to address the needs of the church members. Care and tact should be applied in dealing with members who have to undergo church discipline. Periodic marriage seminars should be conducted. Begin on time and end on time. The Church must have database information for all members.

On the topic, **what can the Church do to improve retention of membership?** The AYM discussion group gave the following contributions:

1. Song ministrations should be encouraged and improved - before, during and after programme
2. Dynamic and resourceful persons must be engaged to bring much interest and change in the way programmes are handled.
3. Strict conservatism about non-codified beliefs and practices should be addressed and discouraged.
4. Church edifice and the gadgets used should be attractive and inviting.
5. Regular visits and encouragement of the return of inactive members.
6. Make available more early life and young adult programmes
7. Pay attention and be interested in the pain of church members.

To review the views of the AYM on the subject matter: What can the Church do to improve retention of membership? The AYM discussion group says, music and youth programmes in the church should be strengthened. Resourceful personnel should be used to lead out programmes. Strict non-codified conservatism in post modernism is a misnomer. Befitting church edifice, modern gadgets youthful and contemporary programmes will help the Church to retain members.

The general diverse reasons for people leaving the church, recorded from the three focus groups together, which are by no means exhaustible, include the following:

1. Lack of faith in members in times of challenges.
2. Conspiracy of church members against each other.
3. Lack of interest in the church activities which often take more time of the day.
4. Conflicts with some members and leaders of the church
5. When members live far and cost of transportation to church become burdensome
6. When members feel, they are not loved and cared for, when their needs and crisis were not addressed to expectation.
7. When members see segregation and partiality in the way they are treated.
8. When members are seldom visited, and have no friends in the church.
9. When there are unmet expectations like marriage and financial support.
10. When there are no social programmes in the church.
11. When people do not identify people of their social class or status.
12. Poor quality of sermons and programmes.
13. Contemporary issues are not addressed. Church leaders have no clue to the needs of the younger generation.
14. Confused because of the tension and confusion between the truth of the Church and the way new converts see the lifestyles of older members.
15. The Church focuses too much on rules which eventually eliminate people, especially the youth, rather than encouraging the development of one's spiritual life. When those found in sin need the church most they are rejected as active members and most of cannot gather confidence in coming back.
16. Neglecting new converts from participating from church activities.

17. Too little praises and prayers in the church.

18. Insufficient teachings before and after baptism.

## APPENDIX E

### PRAYER GROUP MEMBERS

Seven-member prayer team members were selected from the Koforidua Central SDA to ask for the Lord's favor and directions for the success of the research work, and for the growth of the Church. They include:

1. Elder Peter Sarkodie
2. Elder Henry Nana Nyarko
3. Bro. Kyei Baffour
4. Bro. Daniel Sarpong
5. Daniel Larbie Junior
6. Emmanuel Botwe

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## VITA

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| Father        | Charles Albert Arloo            |
| Mother        | Georgina Emma Arloo             |
| Children      | Linda, Amos Seth, Rhoda, Samuel |

### **Education**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| 1970-1975  | Local Council Primary School- Awutu Bawjiase   |
| 1976-1979  | SDA Middle School- Awutu Bawjiase  |
| 1979-1984  | Agona Swedru Secondary School  |
| 1990-1995- | B.A. Theology – Valley View University   |
| 2005-2006  | M.A. Religions – University of Ghana   |
| 2013-2017  | Doctor of Ministry in Global Mission Leadership (Adventist University of Africa, Kenya; Babcock Univ. Campus, Nigeria) |

### **Employment**

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1985        | Ghana Education Service  |
| 2000        | Entered the Gospel Ministry (South Ghana Conference)                     |
| 2005        | Ordained (East Ghana Conference)   |
| Currently   | President (East Ghana Conference)  |
| Hobby       | Watching religious films, songs, and football                            |
| Interest    | Sharing the Gospel Message and researching into challenging Bible topics |
| Food Choice | Rice and Soup  |