

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EVANGELISM IN THE SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN MWINILUNGA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA

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Mwinilunga is one of the seven districts in the Northwestern Province of Zambia. The district lies in the extreme northwest of the province and covers an area of 20,910 square kilometers. Mwinilunga District lies 872 kilometers from Lusaka, Zambia's capital. The district has a population of 131,515 according to the census of population and housing of 2000.

Though the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been in the area for more than twenty (20) years, the current church membership stands at 365. There is only one organized church. Church growth is very low, making it a source of concern. Chapter one discusses the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. It also looks at the delimitations of the research and the methodology/procedure followed in the research. Chapter two deals with the biblical,

Ellen G. White, Seventh-day Adventist proponents and other Protestant theologians' basis for church growth through evangelism.

The local setting of Zambia, Mwinilunga District, and Mwinilunga Central Seventh-day Adventist Church is described in chapter three. Chapter four deals with suggested solutions to the problem of low growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District. Chapter five gives the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the research.

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A project

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Humphrey Kambanzhi Nshindo

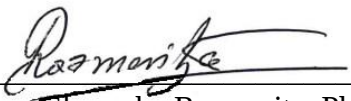
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This research is dedicated to God's flock of Mwinilunga Central Seventh-day
Adventist Church and her spiritual leadership.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District of Northwestern Province of Zambia, which is part of the Copperbelt Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has been in existence for more than twenty years. Despite being in existence for this time, church membership is very small, there is only one church in the district, and finances are very low. In comparison to other denominations like the Roman Catholic Church, Christian Missions in Many Lands, The New Apostolic Church, and the Baptists found in the area, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is insignificant. Evangelism, the task of every church member and cooperate work of the church, is almost non-existent. The slow growth of the church in this part of Zambia is a source of concern to the church and to me, as a researcher.

Statement of the Problem

Church Growth through evangelism is low in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District in the Northwestern Province of the Copperbelt Field in Zambia. What are the causes for this slow growth? What can be done to grow the church in this area?

Causes of slow church growth through evangelism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District in the Northwestern Province should be found and solutions offered.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to identify the causes of slow growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District in the Northwestern Province of the Copperbelt Field and give suggested solutions to the church for growth through Personal and Public Evangelism.

Significance of the Study

This research may be of benefit to the following groups of people once done and suggested solutions implemented:

1. The people of Mwinilunga district in Northwestern Province who need to hear the gospel as preached by the Seventh-day Adventists.
2. Local Seventh-day Adventist Church members in the district will be strengthened through their involvement in Evangelism and Community Outreach Services.
3. The local pastor and lay leaders in the area will be assisted in their efforts as they implement the suggestions of church growth through evangelism.

Delimitations

This research had the following scope:

1. The study is delimited to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District of the Northwestern province in the Copperbelt Field.
2. The church in the district where the research was conducted is Mwinilunga Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.
3. The people from whom data were collected: the district pastor, church elders, church clerks, personal ministries leaders, and all church members not elected for church office.

Methodology and Procedure

This is a case in Ministry Study and employs the following methodology and procedure:

1. Biblical/ theological/ practical study of church growth through evangelism.
2. Investigate the church growth patterns by traveling to Mwinilunga Central Church and having meetings with the church membership.
3. Study the climate and evangelistic activities of the church during the past two years.
4. Analyze the community in which the church is located.
5. Conduct a two days study with the Mwinilunga Central Seventh-day Adventist Church to discuss and get from the membership reasons why the church has not grown as expected and make suggestions of how the church can grow.
6. Give out questionnaires to church members of Mwinilunga Central Church.

Definition of Terms

1. **Church Growth:** A process whereby new members are added to the church and new congregations are formed. A church grows when it multiplies its membership and its congregations.
2. **Evangelism:** The proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ through personal witnessing or public preaching.
3. **Field or mission:** Group of Seventh-day Adventist organized Churches in a province, provinces, region or state of a given country.
4. **Copperbelt Field:** One of the fields into which the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Zambia is operating.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A living creature exhibits at least three properties: growth, which is an increase in size and weight; reproduction, the production of new members or the adding of new units to the colony; and metabolism which is the chemical and physical processes by which living things release and use energy. It is natural for living organisms to grow if they are healthy. Lack of growth is a serious indication of something wrong, and many times it is the sign of disease. The church is a living organism. The members of the church have a common life imparted to them by the Holy Spirit, and a common head, Jesus Christ. The church is His body. Each local church is a visible expression of the body of Christ. If the church is not growing it is dying, it is unhealthy.

As a living organism the church should display the properties of living things. It should be growing in size. It should be able to grow in membership and produce baby churches. It should also be able to have physical and spiritual energy in members and from the Holy Spirit for the functions of the church. God's will is for His church to grow. The growth of the church is closely related to the fulfillment of the evangelistic mandate. This chapter studies the Bible, Ellen G. White writings, Seventh-day Adventist proponents and other protestant theologians in order to look for principles of Church Growth through Evangelism.

Evangelism in the Old Testament

The Old Testament presents the people of God in a story. From creation, God's desire for His people was to "be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28).¹ Growth is of God. His people are expected to grow. The evangelistic mandate has its origin in God, for mission and evangelism are part of His eternal plan of salvation.

From beginning to end, the Bible is concerned with God's purpose of creating a people who would be faithful and obedient, a source of blessing to the world, growing in the things of God and multiplying in number. Even before the fall of Adam and Eve in sin the plan to save them was already laid. Sin made salvation and evangelism necessary because no human being can be saved without the gospel.

Thorough investigation of the Bible shows that the salvation of the nations is God's point of great concern because in the Bible, He has the whole world in view and the divine plan of salvation is revealed as pertaining to the whole world. God's first words to human beings after the fall was the beginning of putting of the evangelistic mandate into effect: "Adam where are you?" (Gen 3:9). These are words of a God who cannot be content when human beings created in His image are lost because of sin and are not in fellowship with Him. He desires every man and woman in the world to enjoy fellowship with Him. After the fall, humanity was lost in sin, but God put in operation His plan of salvation which consisted in creating a people of His own. This plan aimed at calling all human beings into this ever-growing people. God intervened in history in order to accomplish His mission to save humankind.

Evangelism is rooted in the Old Testament. This becomes evident as we study the patriarchs, the prophets, and the nation of Israel. Jesus Christ constantly linked

¹Bible texts are from the *Holy Bible, New King James Version*. (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1982).

Himself, His message, and His ministry to the Old Testament. His coming, His ministry, and His sacrifice were in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Quoting from the writings of the Prophet Isaiah He said:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. ... And He said to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' (Luke 4:18, 19).

Commenting on this passage, Matthew Henry says:

All the gifts and graces of the Spirit were upon Him without measure. By Christ, sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilty, and by His Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. He came to bring light to those that sat in the dark, to give light to those that were blind. And He preached the acceptable year of the Lord. Let sinners attend to the Savior's invitation when liberty is thus proclaimed.²

In the Book of Genesis, God "blessed Noah and his sons and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth'" (Gen 7:1). Commenting on this passage one theologian writes that

Noah and his family received a blessing that was similar to the one pronounced upon Adam and Eve after their creation (Gen 1:28). As Adam had been the progenitor of all members of the human race, Noah became the progenitor of all human beings after the flood. The blessing consisted in both instances of a divine commission to 'be fruitful' and to fill the earth.³

God's purpose and desire is to see His children grow, multiply, and increase. God intervened in history in order to accomplish His mission to save humankind with Adam shortly after the fall and later with Noah and his family after the flood. Later the evangelistic mandate was given to Abraham when God chose him to be the father of His people, Israel. God made an amazing promise with universal implications to

²"Luke," *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Bible*, accessed 20 July 2009, [http:// www.eworldtoday.com/comments/luke/mhc/luke4.htm](http://www.eworldtoday.com/comments/luke/mhc/luke4.htm).

³"Genesis," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 1:262.

Abraham and his descendants. God chose Abraham with a clear purpose in mind, the salvation of all nations. For the Bible states clearly the mission God had for Abraham: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:2, 3). Commenting on this text the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary stresses that

All families of the earth—All nations and all ages are included ... all families of the ground were to receive blessing through the obedience of one who was found faithful. As his spiritual offspring, Christians today share in the blessings imparted to Abraham (Gal 3:8,29). ... All further promises to the patriarchs or to Israel either clarified or amplified the promise of salvation offered to the entire human race in the first promise made to Abraham.⁴

Prior to and during the time of Moses, God allowed centuries of long oppression of Israel to show His power, proclaim His name, and manifest His glory to the nations. At the exodus, we see God’s evangelistic intent as we do in the other books of the Old Testament. We read statements showing this intention such as: “that my name may be declared in all the earth” (Exod 9:16); “that all the peoples of the earth may know” (Josh 4:24); “and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Sam 17:46); and “that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations” (Ps 67:2).

Israel’s Missionary Call

The Scriptures show that all of God’s dealings with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament times were based on the covenant that originally had been ratified between God and Abraham. God envisioned a great multitude, great growth out of His covenant with Abraham as recorded in the Bible:

⁴“Genesis,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 1:294.

And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly. ... As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you (Gen 17:2-7).

Through Abraham, God was to continue with His plan of growth in bringing many to Him, thus establishing a people who would be used as God's agent of bringing salvation to the whole world.

Abraham was to be a father of many nations. In a wider sense, this promise pointed to the innumerable spiritual descendants who would claim Abraham as their father. The terms and benefits of God's covenant relate not only to Abraham as an individual but to all his descendants as well, both literal and spiritual. The promise here made to Abraham refers specifically to Christ (Gal 3:29; Acts 2:30), and through Him according to Paul, all Christians are to share in it (Gal 3:29; Acts 16:31).⁵

Mindful of His covenant with Abraham as found in Exodus 2:24 where the Bible Says, "and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob." God renewed it with the children of Israel as a nation at Mount Sinai, so that His universal purpose of reaching the world with salvation might be fulfilled. Israel was to be His "own possession among all peoples, a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:5, 6) chosen to represent God to the world, thus inviting the world to salvation.

According to the divine plan and purpose the Israelites were to be both a royal and a priestly race. In an evil world they were to be kings, moral and spiritual, in that they were to prevail over the realm of sin (Rev 20:6). As priests, they were to draw near to the Lord in prayer, in praise, and in sacrifice. As intermediaries between God and the heathen, they were to serve as instructors, preachers, and prophets, and were to be examples of holy living—Heaven's exponents of true religion. As a people consecrated to God's service, they were to be unlike other nations.⁶

The election of Israel by God did not mean that the rest of the world was rejected by God. Israel was chosen for the sake of the world's salvation, thus growing

⁵"Genesis," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 1: 322.

⁶"Genesis," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1978), 1: 594.

the kingdom of God. God had chosen both Abraham and Israel as a nation not just to enjoy the privilege of being God's people but to service, that is, to further the purpose of God for the nations.

The Old Testament presents Israel as God's model people and God's witness to the nations. God had a purpose in making Israel His redeemed people. For He said: "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth" (Deut 7:6). Holiness to the Lord and service were to be the watch words for Israel. They were separated for a holy purpose. Bob Utley correctly observes that the

Old Testament election was for service. ... God chose Israel to choose a nation to choose a world. He wants a 'holy people' to show the world His character and desire to know them. ... The covenant community was made up of individuals who submitted themselves by faith to the law of God. ... Israel had a missionary task.⁷

God's choice and plan for Israel as His elected people is linked to Israel's vocation and work as His witnesses. Israel was God's agent to communicate His message to the nations. For God said: "I will make you a light for the gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6). God promised to give them the land He swore to their fathers and to endow them with physical, intellectual, and material blessings.

As the rest of the nations would watch Israel's witness and living example, one by one they would unite with Israel in worshiping and serving the God of Israel. As a result, God said: "Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord and they shall be afraid of you" (Deut 28:10, 13). This "meant that Israel would be recognized as God's property. ... All men would know Jehovah's

⁷Bob Utley, *Free Bible Commentary*, accessed 20 July 2009, http://freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/EN/VOL_03.

relation to His people.”⁸ Israel was to be a living example of the righteous kingdom of God. By living a life of obedience and fear of the Lord, Israel was to experience the fullness of the blessings of God. In this way they were to attract the nations to attention, arouse their enquiry and draw them to Zion and to God.

Through Israel of old, God planned to provide the nations of earth with a living revelation of His own holy character and an exhibit of the glorious heights to which man can attain by cooperating with His infinite purposes.⁹

God’s Original Plan of Evangelism

God placed His people in Palestine and provided them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the face of the earth. Ellen White correctly stated that:

The success of Israel was to be based on and to include holiness of character, the blessings of health, intellectual knowledge, skill in agriculture, craftsmanship, prosperity in all things and ways, and national greatness. God purposed to make them an honor to His name and a blessing to the nations about them. ... Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God.¹⁰

As the nations surrounding Israel would see the progress and prosperity accompanying Israel, they would then come to enquire from Israel the secret of their success. This was then to be the opportunity for Israel to urge the heathen nations to accept their God, love Him, and serve Him as they did. If they too would do this, God would accept them too and bless them.

The concept of the role of Israel as an agent of growth through evangelizing the world is repeated again and again in the Old Testament. God was to be glorified in Israel (Isa 49:3) and His people were to be His witnesses to the world to reveal the

⁸“Deuteronomy,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 1052.

⁹*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, edited by F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980) 4:27.

¹⁰Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 268, 269.

principles of God's kingdom (Isa 43:10). God desired that "all men would recognize that Israel stood in a special relationship to the God of heaven" (Deut 7:6-14; 28:10; Jer 16:20). By beholding Israel's successes, the gentiles would acknowledge that "they are the seed that the Lord has blessed" (Isa 61:9, 10). The material advantages that Israel enjoyed were designed to arrest the attention and catch the interest of the heathen. They would gather themselves together and "come from afar, from the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6-9, 18, 21, 22; Jer 16:19) to the light of truth shining forth from the mountain of the Lord. Nations that had known nothing of the true God would run to Jerusalem because of the manifest evidence of divine blessing that would attend Israel (Isa 55:5).

In Jerusalem, the nations were to learn the ways of the Lord and to worship. Israel's relationship to the world was to be one of attracting the nations to her, not necessarily going out to the nations to propagate the goodness of the Lord. People from one foreign nation after another were to discover upon coming to Israel the great secret of Israel's prosperity. This happened to the visitors who came from Babylon to Israel. Though the king of Israel had the opportunity of directing the visitors to the true source of all good things who is God, unfortunately, he directed them to his own achievements.

From the visible, the foreigners' minds were to be directed to the invisible, from the seen to the unseen, from the material to the spiritual, from the temporal to the eternal. Returning to their homelands, the Gentile ambassadors would counsel their fellow countrymen, 'Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord' (Zech 8:21, 22; 1 Kings 8:41-43). They would send messengers to Israel with the declaration, 'we will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you' Zech 8:23.¹¹

¹¹*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, edited by F. D. Nichol. (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 4:29.

It is clear from the Old Testament that God did not want Israel's growth to be biological. But He called Israel to grow by inviting other nations through evangelization to join them. The prophets envisioned this. The house of God in Jerusalem "was to be called a house of prayer for all people" (Isa 56:7) and "many people and strong nations would come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before Him in that day' and be His people," (Zech 8:22; 2:1). Eventually, "all the nations" would "call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord" and "be gathered unto it, not to walk anymore after the imagination of their evil hearts" (Jer 3:17). Ellen White aptly comments that

All who turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world.¹²

The principle of Israel's growth was fundamentally through evangelism. Israel was created by the gospel and Israel was to be the people of the gospel to all the nations. But this growth was to take place through a centripetal process where in all nations were to join Israel. J. Blauw alludes to this process when he says "A centripetal missionary consciousness becomes in the book of Acts a centrifugal missionary activity."¹³

Israel's failure to Fulfill God's Mission of Evangelization

God provided Israel with every facility to enable them become the greatest nation on earth and be used by Him to evangelize the heathen nations. Israel's unwillingness to submit to the requirements of God prevented them from reaching the

¹²Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 290.

¹³J. Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 34.

standards God wanted them to attain, thus becoming unfit to be used by Him in witnessing for Him. Ellen White comments that

They (Israel) cherished the idea that they were favorites of heaven ... and were ungrateful for the opportunities so graciously afforded them. ... They forfeited God's blessings because of failure to fulfill His purpose in making them His chosen people, and thus brought ruin upon themselves.¹⁴

The prophet Isaiah predicted the failure of Israel as a nation in fulfilling the evangelistic mandate. Isaiah 5 is a graphic picture of Israel's failure and the consequences of lack of growth. This is depicted in the parable of the vineyard God had planted for the purpose of bringing forth fruit.

The choicest vine represents the people of Israel, carefully selected by God Himself. Instead of producing the fruits of the spirit, Israel brought forth fruits of the flesh. ... When they 'brought forth wild grapes' instead of the mature fruit of character, He inquired, 'what would have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?' (Isa 5:1-7). There was nothing God could have done for them that He did not do, yet they failed.¹⁵

Israel became more concerned with their racial and national identity than being witnesses for God. They had less concern for lost Gentiles to be saved, thus growing the people of God by inviting others to God's kingdom. In the parable of the cursed fig tree is revealed the failure of Israel to live up to God's mission and expectation. In the book of Mark, we find the parable recorded:

Now the next day when they had come out from Bethany, He (Jesus) was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it. ... Now in the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots (Mark 11:12-14, 20).

¹⁴Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 284, 294, 302.

¹⁵"Isaiah," *SDA Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 4:30, 122.

This parable of the barren fig tree showing off its leaves without fruit is a representation of the nation of Israel. Their failure to live up to God's expectation of enlarging His kingdom by inviting the Gentiles to God and the results of this failure is portrayed. Analyzing this parable, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* says:

In this acted parable the fully leafed fig tree represented the Jewish nation, and the other trees, the Gentile nations. ... Here was promise without performance. Of all vices there was none Jesus found more offensive than that of hypocrisy. Like the fruitless fig tree, Jewish religion was destitute of fruit. ... The barrenness of the tree represented the unproductiveness of Israel, and the curse, the judgment Jesus was to pronounce the following day- 'Your house is left unto you desolate.'¹⁶

By Jesus cursing of the fig tree is revealed God's displeasure of Israel's failure to minister to the world and witness to God's righteousness. The drying of that fig tree symbolizes the abandonment of Israel as a nation by God as His witnessing agent. God is displeased with lack of growth. "The formal rejection of Jesus by the Jews, as a nation, marked the close of their last opportunity as the special agent of God for the salvation of the world."¹⁷ It was "last of all" that God "sent unto them His son" according to Christ's own words (Matt 21:37), but they "caught Him" and "slew him" (v. 39). Thereafter, God "let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen" who would "render him the fruits in their seasons (Matt 21:41). Upon His final departure from the temple, Jesus said, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt 23:38), thus He no longer owned it as His own. "The Jewish nation was once chosen to represent God on earth, but because of unbelief and hardness of heart, they lost their favored position."¹⁸

¹⁶"Matthew," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 5: 643, 644.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁸"Matthew," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 5: 27, 30.

Evangelism: The Means of Church Growth in the New Testament

This section looks at Church Growth through Evangelism as revealed in the New Testament. Due to Israel's failure, God created the Christian church as His agent of mission to the world. 1 Peter 2:9 refers to the Christian church as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Seventh-day Adventist commentators explain this text by stating that:

Peter here declares that God has now assigned the privileges and responsibilities of the Jewish nation to the Christian community, not as a nation group, but as a people called out of every nation to constitute one spiritual entity, one great family throughout the world. As God set the Jewish nation apart to bear witness to the principles of His government, so He later called the Christian church to be a 'holy nation' to represent Him on earth.¹⁹

God now works with His church and makes them into a people with a goal. At the heart of the Christian church is evangelization. It is its reason for existence. Its main task is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord and only savior and encourages men and women who believe to become responsible members of His church. This is the means of growing God's Church.

The Divine Call and Significance of the Great Commission

The New Testament reveals the missionary character of Jesus. Jesus knew that His Father had sent Him into the world on a mission. The mission was "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). By doing this work, Jesus was making His church grow. The role of Jesus during His ministry on earth was to be the sent one (missionary) and to make His disciples missionaries. Jesus' actions throughout His ministry were missionary in character. The lesson taught in all the three stories in

¹⁹"1 Peter," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 7: 9, 10.

Luke 15 is that God wants lost people found, and heaven rejoices when sinners repent and come home.

It is important to note that the three parables present different aspects Of the problem of sin and salvation, and that none is complete in itself. In each parable the lost is found and restored, and thus in each case, Jesus justifies His attitude toward sinners and His efforts on their behalf.²⁰

Jesus showed His passion for lost people and their salvation in His conversation with people like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman as recorded in the Bible (John 3-4). Jesus' ministry was mainly to preach and teach the message of the kingdom with the purpose of winning people to salvation thus increasing believers and growing His church. After His resurrection, Jesus gave a Great Commission to His disciples and through them to the church of reaching the whole world with the gospel of salvation. This is the means His church grows. He said to His disciples:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you (Matt 28:19, 20).

This was the final instruction Jesus gave to His disciples. As Christ was sent into the world by the Father, so He sent His disciples. Throughout the Bible God is a God of sending and mission. Matthew 28:19, 20 constitute the great charter of the Christian church. In the word 'you' Christ included all believers to the very end of time. This commission is sometimes referred to as the 'charter of foreign missions.'"²¹ Christ's approach in reaching human beings is by sending someone to speak to them for Him. He said to the people of Judah: "Since the day that your fathers came out of

²⁰"Luke," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 5:814.

²¹ "Luke," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 5:557.

the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them” (Jer 7:25).

In the fullness of time God “sent forth His son ... to redeem” (Gal 4:4). The Son in turn gave a Great commission to His disciples and through them to the church, sending them to take the gospel to the whole world. Their primary task, as well as that of the church is the preaching of the gospel, thus growing His church as people believe in Him.

The call to evangelism in the New Testament originates from a command of the Lord to the church. The church as a body of Christ has not been called to exist as an end in herself. She is called to fulfill God’s purpose of carrying on the Lord’s ministry of proclaiming the message to the lost people. This is the reason for the existence of the church. The disciples were to go out into the world and win others who would come to be what they themselves were—Disciples of Christ.

At the foundation of this commission is the undeniable thought that Jesus will provide them power and the means to accomplish the mission that He has given them. That is why He declared as the final component of the commission that: “lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). The disciples were not to start forth on this great mission without the presence of Him who had all the authority in heaven and on earth. Inherent in the call of the great commission is the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the representative of Christ on earth, who came in full measure at Pentecost to empower the disciples for mission.

The gospel is to go into the entire world. The proclamation of the gospel is the greatest sign of Christ’s second coming. For He said in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the

nations, and then the end will come.” Gospel proclamation is the only sign connected to the end of the world.

The Great Commission is more than just one commission among many commands of Christ. It is lifted out because of its singularity as a command given by the risen Lord and Savior. It is also a Great Commission because of its comprehensiveness revealed as follows:

1. The sovereignty of the Lord of the Christian gospel is seen in the Great Commission. Our Lord Jesus Christ is seen in the Great Commission as a sovereign Lord. For He said: “All power is given unto Me” (Matt 28:18). The Lord of the Christian gospel can accomplish anything. He sends His followers with the assurance that He will be with them in the great work of spreading the gospel.

2. The imperative of the Christian gospel is clear in the Great Commission. For Christ commanded the disciples to, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). His command was accompanied by the promise to equip the disciples with the presence of the Holy Spirit. For He said to them:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Luke here refers to supernatural ‘power’ received only by those upon whom the Spirit comes. This power is for witnessing: It gives (1) power within, (2) power to proclaim the gospel, (3) power to lead others to God. Through the disciples, thus empowered, Jesus would continue the work He began on earth, and even ‘greater works’ than those would be accomplished (John 14:12). This Spirit-given witness was to be a distinguishing mark of the Christian church.²²

Jesus, here, does not negotiate as to what His followers should do in regard to their mission on earth, but gives them a straight forward job. The gospel should be preached to the entire world.

²²“Acts,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 6:124.

3. The human instrumentality in the proclamation of the Christian gospel is crucial. Opening the understanding of the confused disciples after His resurrection Christ said: “Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses to these things” (Luke 24:47, 48). The human part is needed in the taking of the gospel to the world. Human beings go and God enables them to work. It is the divine and human working together that the world can be reached with the gospel of salvation.

4. There is need for spiritual equipment to minister successfully in the Christian gospel. It was when they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit that the disciples would be fitted for the work of proclaiming the gospel. Before embarking on this great task, Christ told His disciples to “tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). We see this fulfilled on the day of Pentecost as revealed in the book of Acts. Thus the great commission is made dynamic by this theological reasoning.

The Theology of Evangelism

God in His Word has emphasized the work of evangelism as key to the growth of His Church and the salvation of humankind. His Word reveals the heart of God in the enterprise of soul winning. Several points synthesize the theology of Evangelism:

1. Evangelism is God’s only means of saving lost people. The apostle Paul in stressing this point wrote the following statements to the Church of Rome:

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’ (Romans 10:14, 15).

This text shows us that God saves through the sending of preachers with His message. Discussing this text, the Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament says:

People cannot call on the name of the Lord without believing, they cannot believe in someone of whom they have not heard, and they cannot hear without proclaimers, who cannot make proclamation unless they have been sent.²³

Those who believe the gospel preached get saved. Those saved form a church, thus church growth becomes the end product of evangelism.

2. Evangelism is God's means for the Christian's personal and spiritual growth. If the believer is growing in the gospel of God, he/she will be feeding others God's Word. The Christian's love for God is revealed in his/her desire to share the gospel with fellow human beings, getting interested in humanity's salvation. This brings spiritual growth to the believer.

3. Evangelism is heaven's means of bringing joy to the heart of God. The New Testament brings out this point when Jesus said that:

I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. ... Likewise I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7, 10).

God's greatest desire is the salvation of the lost people. He is willing to go to any length to sacrifice for their redemption as the *Seventh-day Adventist Commentary* puts it:

Divine love would have made Jesus to make His great sacrifice for even one sinner. It is God's goodness manifested in His love and long-suffering that leads us to repentance (Rom 2:4).²⁴

²³*Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 660.

²⁴"Luke," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 5:816.

4. Evangelism is God's means of building His church. The book of Acts portrays how the church was built and grew as a result of evangelization. Here are a few examples:

120 disciples—Peter and his fellow disciples were hundred and twenty in number prior to the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:15).

3000 new converts—At Pentecost after the preaching of Peter “about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).

5000 men—Many of those who heard the word believed “and the number of men came to be five thousand” (Acts 4:4).

More and more—“Believers were increasingly added to the Lord” (Acts 5:14) as a result of the preaching of the gospel.

Multiplying or increasing—when the Word of the Lord spread, “the number of the disciples multiplied greatly” (Acts 6:7). The “churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5).

5. Evangelism is God's means of finishing the work so that Jesus could come soon. Jesus called Evangelism the greatest sign closely connected to His second coming. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14).

The glorious progress of the gospel throughout the world during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th cheers the heart of every earnest and conscientious Christian to believe that the complete fulfillment of the promise of Matthew 24:14 is soon to be realized.²⁵

6. Evangelism is the supreme task of the church, the one job Christ gave it to do. Granting the church her work, Christ said:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;

²⁵“Luke,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 5:498.

and you will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Therefore evangelism is the primary business of every disciple of Christ.

Church Growth through Evangelism in the Book of Acts

Evangelism and the resulting church growth are the primary focus of the book of Acts. The apostles and all the believers were concerned with communicating the message of salvation. Whereas the Old Testament shows evangelism as Gentiles coming to Israel to be taught of God, the book of Acts reveals that God's people are to go to the whole world to preach the gospel. J. Blauw puts it clearly:

A centripetal missionary consciousness becomes in Acts a centrifugal missionary activity ... the great turning point is the resurrection, after which God gives His people a universal commission to go and disciple the nations.²⁶

In obedience to that commission, the early disciples made new disciples from every nation known to them. The church grew in numbers. And we see how the church grew through evangelism: "The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). From the day of Pentecost, the church manifested the vital force given by the Holy Spirit, by beginning to expand. The plan of the church's existence had been given it in advance by our Lord Jesus Christ. The disciples were to preach the gospel "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

From Jerusalem, the church spread rapidly. The three stages Judea, Samaria, and the end of the world are geographical and religious stages. The preaching of the word must reach all people where they live. It must also reach all people, whatever may be their position as regards God, whether they be Jews, Samaritans, or Gentiles.

²⁶J. Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 34.

Peter preached first at Jerusalem, but very soon his activity was exercised in the towns around the holy city (Acts 5:16). Then the preaching of the apostles, of the evangelists Stephen and Philip, of Barnabas, and of Paul was heard in remote parts of Judea, in Samaria, Damascus, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Cilicia, Syrian Antioch, and in other regions (Acts 8-14). The apostle Paul founded churches on the shores of the Aegean Sea. He introduced the gospel in Europe and arrived at Rome though as a prisoner (Acts 16-28).

There is nothing surprising in this rapid extension of the church. The apostles and all believers were full of zeal. They were tireless in their desire to go further in their mission field. Thus early in the mission of the church, evangelization was to be taken to all humankind. Jews and non-Jews were admitted on an equal footing into the one and only church Christ had established. Evangelism was the greatest and holiest work of the church.

Principles of Church Growth through Evangelism

God's Word has principles outlined that enable the church to grow if they are adhered to. God's desire is to see His church grow quantitatively.

1. Growth is the work and will of God. The apostle Paul sought to set before the people the true position of the worker of God. He said:

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase (1 Cor 3:5-7).

The worker is simply a servant seeking to lead his fellow men to salvation as this Commentary explains.

Men are only the means employed by God in soul-winning work, and all the credit for the conversion of sinners must be given to Him. Those who believe through their ministry should center their affections on Jesus and not on those

through whom the gospel was imparted to them. ... Men must not ascribe to themselves the glory for their success.²⁷

Human instrumentalities are responsible for sowing the truth through evangelism but it is the Lord who makes it grow and gives the increase.

2. Growth is the nature of the gospel. Wherever in the world the good news about Jesus is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, there it “is bringing forth fruit” (Col 1:16). Church growth is the result of evangelism.

3. Growth is characteristic of the churches of the New Testament. Churches in the first century grew in all kinds of circumstances. They grew in times of great revival and renewal as depicted in Acts 2:41; in periods of tension and persecution (Acts 4:4; 8:1-4). They also grew in periods of inner church problems (Acts 5:14; 6:1, 7) and in times of civil and religious peace (Acts 9:31). Churches continued to grow as a result of spontaneous witnessing (Acts 11:19-21); as a consequence of organized teaching (Acts 12:24); and as a result of planned effort (Acts 19:10, 20). The growth of the church must always be quantitative in nature.

4. Prayer was an important weapon for growth in the early church and so it is today. Prayer was and is indispensable to the growth of the church. The book of Acts clearly shows the place of prayer in the growth and expansion of the early church.

Thom S. Rainer correctly observes that:

The principle of united prayer, or prayer with one mind and purpose, is a thread that runs throughout the book of Acts (Acts 1:15; 4:13). When Herod plotted to destroy the evangelistic impetus through persecution, the church united in prayer (Acts 12:5).²⁸

²⁷“1 Corinthians,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1978), 6:675.

²⁸Thom S. Rainer, *Church Growth & Evangelism in the Book of Acts* (Birmingham, AL: 1990), 60.

Prayer was mainly done in connection with the evangelistic thrust which was going on in the early church.

5. The principle of God's sovereignty is essential to the achievement of church growth through evangelism. Despite the many conflicts, setbacks and problems to the early church, Luke the writer communicates so clearly that God is in control of the situation and He is ultimately the final victor. The killing of Stephen for example (Acts 7:54-60) did not make the church stop growing. To the contrary, the persecution that broke out as a result of Stephen's death scattered the church throughout Judea and Samaria. For we read in God's Word that "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). The persecuted church became the proclaiming church, thus the gospel was spread to new areas.

The book of Acts is a narrative of the mighty works of God amidst persecution and other evil forces arrayed against the church and her mission. Though the church is the agent to communicate the gospel, the strength and the power to do so come from God, the owner of the church. Even in times and places of opposition, God's work will move on. This is clearly revealed in the book of Acts.

6. Strategy is characteristic of the apostles and the church in the New Testament. The Book of Acts teaches us that power provides us with the comfort that He is in control of all things including His work and church. We are also reminded that human effort and cooperation is a vital necessity to the growth of the church through evangelism.

The ministry of the apostle Paul provides a clear example of an evangelistic strategy which usually resulted into church growth. J. N. Vaughan stresses that:

Paul's strategy not only included a definitive place and plan, but also an extended period for ministry. As a church planter, the apostle's tenure at each location was significant—two years at Corinth; three years at Ephesus. Church growth writers understand the importance of leadership longevity, citing

pastoral tenure as one of the highest correlative factors in growing churches. The principles of leadership longevity and tenacity in Acts are certainly normative for our churches today.²⁹

Strategy is of paramount importance if evangelism is to succeed and result in growth of any church.

Ellen White on Evangelism as the Means of Church Growth

Ellen G. White is considered by the Seventh-day Adventists as one of the founders of their Church. She is also viewed as an inspired messenger for the church in the last days. She has written extensively on Church growth through evangelism.

Evangelism as the Reason for Church Organization

For Ellen G. White, the church was organized for the similar purpose as that of Israel and that is evangelization of the world. “The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.”³⁰ The proclamation of the gospel to the whole world, making disciples of all nations, is the main business of the church. This is to occupy more of the time of God’s servants. The principal task of the church is to communicate effectively a divine message to the world. This will bring human beings into a living relationship with Christ by faith. Ellen White applied the church growth principles to her church:

Christ’s last words to His disciples were: ‘Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.’ ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations.’ Go to the farthest bounds of the habitable globe, and know that wherever you go my presence will attend you. ... To us also the commission is given. We are bidden to go forth as Christ’s messengers, to teach, instruct, and persuade men and women,

²⁹J. N. Vaughan, “*Trends among the world’s Twenty Largest churches*,” *Church Growth: State of the Art* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1986), 131.

³⁰Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1947), 11.

to urge upon their attention the word of life. And to us also the assurance of Christ's abiding presence is given.³¹

The organizational structure of the church together with its supportive educational, medical, publishing, and other institutions are to provide the means and support in reaching the church's objective. She states that "The very life of the church depends upon her faithfulness in fulfilling the Lord's commission."³² If the church loses this vision, it loses its reason for existence. The church lives or dies in its relation to evangelism.

The church needs many workers both clergy and laity in the proclamation of the gospel, for time shall not always be with her. The time of salvation is now. In 1903, she urged:

Time is short. Workers for Christ are needed everywhere. There should be one hundred earnest, faithful laborers in home and foreign fields where now there is one. The highways and byways are yet unworked.³³

In regard to not doing much in reaching the unentered areas, Ellen White wrote in 1881:

We are not, as Christians, doing one twentieth the part that we might do in winning souls to Christ. There is a world to be warned, and every sincere Christian will be a guide and an example to others in faithfulness, in cross-bearing, in prompt and vigorous action, in unswerving fidelity to the cause of truth, in sacrifices and labors to promote the cause of God.³⁴

The interest need to be manifested in evangelizing, working in areas where the gospel is not fully heard. Sponsoring efforts so that people in spiritual darkness can

³¹Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 17.

³²Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1937), 825.

³³Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Education* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1903), 488.

³⁴Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 12.

know Christ should absorb the plans of the church. In fact, Ellen White insists that: “The real character of the church is measured, not by the high profession she makes, not by the names enrolled upon the church book, but by what she is actually doing for the Master, by the number of her persevering, faithful workers.”³⁵ Elsewhere she urges the church to: “Never lose sight by the fact that the message you are bearing is a worldwide message. It is to be given to all cities, to all villages.”³⁶

The vision of the church for Ellen G. White must be as broad as the world. All must be reached, for “the church is to go into all the world, conquering and to conquer.”³⁷ New places are the best places for evangelism.

The places in which the truth has never been proclaimed are the best places in which to work. The truth is to take possession of the will of those who have never before heard it. They will see the sinfulness of sin, and their repentance will be thorough and sincere. The Lord will work upon hearts that in the past have not often been appealed to, hearts that heretofore have not seen the enormity of sin.³⁸

The entire world is our field, for all are creatures of God and are entitled to hear the gospel.

The field of labor is to be extended. The gospel message is to go to all the parts of the world. The most unpromising fields must receive earnest, determined labor. The sons of God, earnest, true, unselfish, must use all the knowledge they possess in managing this important work. There are blessings of working with Christ in witnessing.³⁹

³⁵Ibid., 12.

³⁶Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 7:35.

³⁷Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1943), 725.

³⁸Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 21.

³⁹Ellen G. White, *Manuscript* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1907), 87.

Impact of Evangelism on the Church

Evangelism has great impact upon the church and members involved in it.

Here are some:

1. Strong and more churches result from churches involved in the fulfillment of preaching the gospel. “That church only is strong that is a working church, whose members feel an individual responsibility to act their part in strengthening, encouraging, and building up the church by their personal efforts.”⁴⁰

2. Spiritual strength, growing in Christ and the understanding of His sacrifice, His work, and the value of souls come by working. For “The only way to grow in grace is to be disinterestedly doing the work which Christ has enjoined.”⁴¹ Every converted Christian is called to serve. None is saved to do nothing, but to be involved in the great task of gospel proclamation. Ellen G. White states that: “All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellowmen. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ.”⁴²

3. Working develops character: “Those who have sought the development of Christian character by exercising their faculties in good works, in sowing the seeds of truth beside all waters, will, in the world to come, reap that which they have sown.”⁴³ Christ established His church for a missionary purpose. It is through missionary

⁴⁰Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1878), December 12.

⁴¹Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947), 80.

⁴²Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1937), 822.

⁴³Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1879), January 12.

endeavors that the church grows. God has claimed for His own the members of the church whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light to proclaim the message to the world.

In conclusion, Ellen G. White envisioned the church growing in the whole world, reaching all nations and ethnic groups. Every church member is called to take part in this grand evangelism. The church was established for the purpose of witnessing and in so doing growing the church of God in the world.

Seventh-day Adventist Proponents

Seventh-day Adventist theologians have written on the subject of church growth through evangelism, emphasizing some areas worth taking note of. For example, Raoul Dederen emphasizes the nature of the church and the purpose for its existence. He writes:

The church is the body of Christ. Yet it has not been called to exist as an end in itself, but to fulfill God's purpose, i.e., to carry on the Lord's ministry in the world, to do what He would do if He were still on earth. This explains why, from that perspective, the church does not merely have a mission, the church is mission.⁴⁴

Throughout the Bible, God is seen as a sending God. He is a God of mission. In order to save His people, God is always in the business of sending messengers to speak to His people. Burrill, another Seventh-day Adventist theologian, emphasizes the product of the Great Commission. The sending of the apostles should result in the making of the disciples of all nations.

According to the commission, it is the making of disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them all that Jesus commanded. The mission described in this commission centers around these three works: disciple making, baptizing, and teaching. Mission is not complete until all three works have been

⁴⁴*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 549.

accomplished. Only as the church follows this three-fold mandate can it claim to be fulfilling the gospel commission.⁴⁵

The members of the church have been called out of the world and sent into the world on mission with the message. The church grows as members go on errands of the Lord proclaiming the everlasting gospel to all people in the world. Actually, “Mission is the heartbeat of the church. If it stops, the church ceases to be. Each institution, every program, and any activity of the church has meaning and a right to exist only if it participates in mission.”⁴⁶

If the church loses this vision, it loses its reason for existence. The vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church should be as broad as the world. The entire earth should be taken into account in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. Love for the lost is determined by the degree of love for God. V. W. Schoen speaks of this passion so eloquently:

A Loving, irresistible, and spiritual passion, driven by the Holy Spirit, was, and still is, the motivating, and energizing power and unyielding strength for God’s worldwide church to take Christ across the street to the neighbors and across the oceans to all the peoples of the world. Such Christians love the Lord and are busy about their Father’s business.⁴⁷

The Seventh-day Adventist Church came into existence as a missionary movement. Seventh-day Adventists are convinced that they have been divinely ordained to carry on the prophetic work started by William Miller. They seek to proclaim the Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14:6-12 to all peoples. Mission is central to their identity. Mission gives birth to the church and is its mother. The very essence or nature of the church is mission. If the church ceases to be missionary, it

⁴⁵Russell C. Burrill, *The Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 1998), 11, 12.

⁴⁶Gottfried Oosterwal, *Mission Possible* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1972) 15.

⁴⁷V. W. Schoen, *God’s Need* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1976) 36.

does not only fail in its task, but ceases being the church. For it is through the preaching of the gospel that the church grows. Clearly, evangelism and church growth are intimately related, for evangelism leads to the numerical growth of the church. Church growth falls under the auspices of evangelism, for the growth of the church is a natural consequence of evangelism.

Other Protestant Theologians on Church Growth through Evangelism

Other Protestant Theologians searched to emphasize the point that the goal of evangelism is to persuade men and women to become disciples of Jesus Christ. They should also become witnesses for Him in the community. The growth of the church is intimately related to the fulfillment of the evangelical mandate. God wants the church to grow, bringing people from darkness to light.

There are many good things the church can do and should be doing. However, there is only one important thing the church must be doing and that is pursuing Christ's Great Commission, to go and proclaim the gospel and make disciples. William James Abraham states the importance of evangelism in the early church and the power behind its accomplishment:

Evangelism in the early church was rooted in the eschatological activity of God which was inaugurated in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and continued in the acts of the Holy Spirit. Given what had been done in and through Christ and the Holy Spirit, it was only natural that Christians should proclaim the mighty acts of God in salvation and liberation, and that they should found communities committed to celebrating all that God had done. They were propelled by a wellspring of joy and love that was at once irrepressible and contagious.⁴⁸

⁴⁸William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism*, para. 93, accessed 21 July 2009, [http:// www.churchgrowth.net](http://www.churchgrowth.net).

The focus of evangelism is winning souls to Christ and, by this, the church is growing. Lack of evangelism stagnates the church. Donald A. McGavran, considered as the founder of the Church Growth Movement in America, states that:

Evangelization intends the redemption of individuals and the multiplication of Christ's churches. ... The congregation which is not engaged in proclaiming Christ to men and women, persuading them to become His disciples and responsible members of the church, may be a religious club, but it is not the body of Jesus Christ. His body is filled with His Spirit and engaged in finding lost men and women.⁴⁹

McGavran continues to say: "Church growth is basically a theological stance. God desires it. It looks to the Bible for direction as to what God wants done. ... Church growth rises in unshakable theological conviction."⁵⁰ Another Church Growth scholar stresses that: "When the evangelistic mandate is being implemented, men and women, in fact, believe and obey, and they thereby add to the number of people who belong to existing churches and participate in the establishment of new churches."⁵¹

Church growth requires the church trusting God for its growth. Growth cannot be produced by human beings. Only God can make the church to grow. Only He can bring life in lifeless creatures. As Paul pointed out at the church at Corinth, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" (1 Cor 3:6). Human beings must do their part, but it is God who causes the growth to take place.

Trusting God for the future growth of local churches and for the multiplication of new churches throughout a geographical area or among a certain people is a crucial part of church growth strategy. Proclaiming the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing men and women to faith in Christ and reconciliation to God through Him, incorporating them as responsible members of local

⁴⁹Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), 46.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 8.

⁵¹C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (March, Europe: British Growth Association, 1981), 57, 58.

churches and multiplying this activity over and over again is part of Christian discipleship.⁵²

The church was not created to be stagnant. Nor was the church created to be secure in not working. When any activity undercuts the church's ability or willingness to risk, to push itself toward its biblical demands, growth in its many forms ceases. For Church growth is our Lord's intent, it is His purpose. And it must be the goal, the call of every follower.

The need of church growth through evangelism is obvious. The human race is being lost. In God's ordering of things, evangelism is a necessity if anyone is to be saved, for people are saved by hearing and believing the gospel. An exploding population makes it imperative that Christians face up to the fact that millions will continue to die without Christ unless there is an evangelism explosion.

God saves people through the church, for His methodology of salvaging society is still bound up in the role of the church. The church should realize that when God sends her to evangelize, He sends her to act as an important link in the chain for the purpose of the salvation of the world. The church can only survive and grow as it reproduces herself by proclaiming the everlasting gospel to the whole world.

Drummond articulates the issue of the church's survivor well when he says:

Although its reason for witnessing is not self-motivated, to survive in the world, the church must grow. It must be propagative. The life of the church and its hope for the future lie in its reproductive power. Church expansion (growth) is a continuation of redemption in the heart of God from eternity, revealed in His Son. The purpose of growth is to extend the kingdom of God. The church is but the vehicle upon which God carries his kingdom into the world.⁵³

⁵²Bob Waymire and C. Peter Wagner, *The Church Growth Survey Handbook*, Third edition (Milpitas, CA: 95035, Global Church Growth, 1984), 31.

⁵³Lewis A. Drummond, *Leading your Church in Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1972), 23.

Our creator works on having people back to Himself. “God is on a mission of world redemption and His basic plan for world evangelization is the use of the instrumentality of the church.”⁵⁴ For John Havlik:

The church would be the nerve ends through which Jesus could touch all generations. Jesus’ church would be, simply, the lighthouse to point sinful men and women to spiritual safety through a course chartered in Him. The church grows when believers recognize that none are exempt from carrying out the Great Commission.⁵⁵

The Great Commission concerns itself with the outreach of the church into the world of the unchurched people, whoever and wherever they may be found. It is the great charter for world evangelism and the growth of the body of Christ, His church. George Peters, professor of World Missions at Dallas Theological Seminary, for many years in discussing the supreme task of the church, says:

The preservation, interpretation and the intelligible and persuasive communication of the good news, with the fixed intent of leading men to knowledge of Christ as the only Savior and a resolute commitment to Him as Lord, remain forever the church’s supreme and primary task. Here is the heart of Christian missions.⁵⁶

The church is a purposive creation of Jesus Christ. She is the body of Christ for the accomplishing of the purpose of God in this world. Evangelism brings about immense numerical church growth.

It is not an imposition upon the church for it belongs to her nature. ... A mission flows from the inner constitution, character, calling and design of the church. God is a God of missions. He wills missions. He commands missions. He made missions possible through His son. He made missions actual in sending the Holy Spirit. Biblical Christianity and missions are organically interrelated.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Lewis A. Drummond, *Leading your Church in Evangelism*, 23.

⁵⁵ John F. Havlik, *The Evangelistic Church*, (Nashville, TN: Convention, 1976), 116.

⁵⁶ George W. Peter, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972), 210.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 200, 346.

Jesus expects His church to reproduce. He intended for the disciples to produce His likeness in and through the church being gathered out of the world. For He said to them: “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16). Through the disciples and those who would come after them, the church would continue to expand. Robert Coleman observes that:

Jesus did not expect that everyone would be saved, but He did foresee the day when the gospel of salvation in His name would be proclaimed convincingly to every creature. Through that testimony His church militant would someday be the church universal even as it would become the church triumphant.⁵⁸

The church must strive to reach all with the gospel. This is the means of church growth, and the way of saving the lost. Rick Warren points out that: “As long as there are lost people in the world, the church must care about quantity. We must count people because people count. Numbers represent people Jesus died for.”⁵⁹ Teddy Levron equates church growth with Kingdom growth. This growth is accomplished through the work of evangelism.

Kingdom growth is our true goal. When new souls are added to the Kingdom of God through evangelism efforts, the angels rejoice. Our goal as Christians doing the work of an evangelist is to lead lost souls into a relationship with Jesus Christ. ... True church growth is only accomplished by winning souls. Church growth should be the same as kingdom growth. Church growth is a by-product of winning souls and making disciples. We grow God’s kingdom by learning to be better at sharing the gospel.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1972) 97, 98.

⁵⁹Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 52.

⁶⁰Quote by Teddy Levron, accessed 25 June 2009, <http://www.effective-evangelism-training.org/churchgrowth.html>.

It is important to note that Churches grow when they are faithful stewards of the gospel; Faithfulness consists in setting goals and accomplishing them. McGavran explains that:

Faithfulness to the great commission includes not only sowing the seed of the gospel but also reaping the harvest, not only searching for the lost in all nations, races and peoples but also finding them, adding them to the fold and nurturing them.⁶¹

The human element in the growth of the church through evangelism is vital because God has given human beings the work of going to proclaim the gospel. God has no feet but the human feet. Taking part in the fulfillment of the Great Commission enables human beings to grow in the faith and in the knowledge of the word of God. The church must be willing to see the church grow and the lost found. Peter Wagner discusses this issue further when he states that: “The pastor and the people must want the church to grow and be willing to pay the price. ... Church growth urges pastors to mobilize the laity and to motivate them to become active in the mission of the church.”⁶²

The church is the body of Christ. This entails that the members of the body of Christ must be responsible by being aware of the unsaved, those living without Christ and His salvation. Church growth is not optional, it is commanded by God. Church growth through evangelism also emphasizes the importance of the church knowing the community in which it lives and works. Various communities have their own cultures, languages, ideas, etc. The church should be:

Conscious of the homogeneous units characterized by culture, race, language, or even political ideals. People understand the gospel better when it is

⁶¹Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980) 40.

⁶²C. P. Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1981) 47.

presented by their own kind of people. They prefer to join churches whose members look, talk and act like they do.⁶³

Failure to know the community in which the church operates makes the church appear foreign to the community and hard to reach the people with the message of salvation. The use of the local language of the area, interest in the activities of the community, publication of material in the indigenous language opens up the community for outreach.

Church growth emphasizes the importance of planning. In any enterprise and organization, planning is essential if good results are to be realized. It is essential if the church is to carry out the great commission as God intended it to be done. The Project Wittenberg on Evangelism and Church growth done in 1987 states that:

Good planning requires that one knows the facts. This implies analyzing the existing situation in a congregation, setting up goals and objectives, developing a strategy which will outline what a congregation should do to meet its goals and finally, evaluating the results to determine whether the church is moving ahead. ... Strategies must be developed that will be compatible with the local situation and that will work. When a strategy or method is not effective, it should be abandoned and a new one developed.⁶⁴

Pastors and congregations should develop church growth eyes. According to McGavran and Arn the term “church growth eyes” has been defined as “a characteristic of Christians who have achieved an ability to see the possibilities for growth and to apply appropriate strategies to gain maximum results for Christ and His church.”⁶⁵ A person with church growth eyes will see churches where there are no

⁶³Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980), 198.

⁶⁴*The Project Wittenberg on Evangelism and Church Growth*, accessed 17 July 2009, <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/mosynod/web/evangelism.oi.html>.

⁶⁵Donald McGavran & W. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 127.

churches today. He or she will definitely see the world as human beings to be won to the Savior.

As church growth advocates put it, a person with church growth eyes will see the world from God's perspective knowing that God loves the world. He wants His children brought back to the Father's house. Such a Christian will see the hand of God working in the world. There is a reason for optimism. He will take seriously the responsibility which God has placed on the church "to make disciples of all nations. He or she will see the need for developing effective strategies for church growth.⁶⁶

Church growth through evangelism should see to it that people are reached with the gospel in their different local settings and contexts. Jones Scott, says that:

The gospel must be contextualized. The gospel takes shape from the local setting or else it cannot be understood by people in the particular culture. One of the hallmarks of Christianity is that it is capable of being planted in different cultural contexts.⁶⁷

The process of contextualization is not new. Our Savior Jesus Christ used it heavily in His ministry. For one theologian states that

What amazes one again and again is the inclusiveness of Jesus' mission. It embraces both the rich and the poor, both the oppressed and the oppressor, both the sinners and the devout. His mission is one of dissolving alienation and breaking down walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries between individuals and groups.⁶⁸

Every human being is a historical creature, living and working in a particular culture and place. Contextualization shows the love the church has for the people they

⁶⁶C. P Wagner, *The Growing Church*, cassette # 1, July, 2009.

⁶⁷Jones J. Scott, *The Evangelistic Love of God—A Theology of Witnessing and Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 121.

⁶⁸David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Missions* (Mary Knoll, New York, NY: Orbis, 1991), 28.

serve. It's the church's desire to work with the people in ways the church would be understood. Scott puts it well that

Loving a person well means knowing as much as possible about that person. One must know the language and which dialects they speak. One must know the person's unspoken assumptions and patterns of social interactions, questions about level and type of education, political and social issues, views on nature and its patterns, musical and artistic tastes, employment histories, food preferences, competing religions and all of the other factors that make up a person's culture, must be taken into consideration if one is to love a person well.⁶⁹

Evangelism, if it is to bring growth to the church, should adapt itself to different contexts. Evangelism is relational in nature. Be it public or personal evangelism, it must begin with an invitation of a person who loves God and has a relationship with Him to love another person. That love should be so much that there is a genuine invitation to the other person to also love God and receive the gospel as presented. There is no substitute for loving people. If the church is to grow through evangelism, meeting people where they live, loving them and knowing their contexts is cardinal.

In summing up chapter 2, as a living organism, the church must grow in membership and be able to produce baby churches. God's will is for His church to grow, for growth is of God. The Old Testament election by God of Noah, Abraham, and the nation of Israel was for service. Those chosen had a missionary task. They became agents to communicate God's message to the nations. At the heart of the Christian church in the New Testament, is evangelization of the world. Evangelism is the reason for the existence of the church. It's also the means of growing God's church. The organizational structure of the church together with its supportive educational, medical, publishing, and other institutions are to provide the means and support in reaching the church's objective of evangelizing the world.

⁶⁹Jones J. Scott, *The evangelistic Love of God & Neighbor—A Theology of Witnessing & Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 126.

Church growth is not optional. It is commanded by God. Church growth through evangelism sees to it that people are reached with the gospel in their different local settings and contexts.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL SETTING

Description of Zambia

The country of Zambia is located in Southern Africa with Lusaka as its capital. It lies on the geographic coordinates 15 00 S, 30 00 E. It has ten (10) administrative divisions called provinces. These are Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, Luapula, Northern, Northwestern, Southern, Western, Muchinga, and Lusaka. Zambia gained its independence from Britain on 24th October, 1964. It runs a republican type of government.

Geography and People

Zambia has a total land area of 752,614 sq km and 11,890 sq km of water body. It is a landlocked country bordered by Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.⁷⁰ Zambia has a population of 11,862,740. Ninety-nine point five percent (99.5%) of the population is African which includes the following tribes: Bemba, Tonga, Chewa, Lozi, Nsenga, Tumbuka, Ngoni, Lala, Kaonde, Lunda, and other African groups. The other 0.5% includes Europeans, Asians, and Americans according to the 2000 Census. English is the official language. The major vernaculars are Bemba, Kaonde, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale,

⁷⁰The description of Zambia is taken from “*Description of Zambia*,” accessed 2 June 2009, <http://www.cia.gov/library/publication>.

Nyanja, Tonga, and about seventy other indigenous languages. The country has 80.6% literacy rate.⁷¹

Economy and Religion

Zambia's economy has experienced strong growth in recent years, with GDP growth in 2005-08 of about 6% per year. Copper mining is the major earner of the Zambian economy. Privatization of Government-owned mines in the 1990s relieved the Government from covering huge losses generated by the industry and greatly improved the chances for copper mining to return to profitability. Zambia experienced a bumper harvest in 2007, which helped boost GDP and agricultural exports and contain inflation.

Although poverty continues to be a significant problem in Zambia, its economy has strengthened, and featuring single-digit inflation, a relatively stable currency, decreasing interest rates and increasing levels of trade. The mining industry is the largest employer. Other industries deal in construction, foodstuffs, beverages, chemicals, textiles, fertilizer, and horticulture. The unemployment rate as at 2000 estimate stood at 50%.⁷²

Christianity is the major religion of the country with 50%-75% of the population claiming to be its adherents; Muslims and Hindus are next with between 24-49%, while the Indigenous beliefs has 1% of the population.⁷³

⁷¹The description of Zambia is taken from "*Description of Zambia*," accessed 2 June 2009, <http://www.cia.gov/library/publication>.

⁷²Patrick Johnstone & Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*, 685.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 685.

Mwinilunga District Analysis: Area in which the Church Is Found

Mwinilunga is one of the seven districts in the Northwestern Province of Zambia. The district lies in the extreme Northwest of the province and covers an area of 20,910 square kilometers and shares borders with Solwezi in the east, Mufumbwe and Kabompo in the south, Angola to the north and Democratic Republic of Congo in the northeast. The district lies 872 km from Lusaka, Zambia's capital and about 290 km from Solwezi, the provincial capital of Northwestern Province.⁷⁴

Climatic Conditions

The district has a relatively moderate climate that is determined by the humid Congo Air Mass and the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) that brings rain from October to April. It is characterized by two major seasons, winter—cool and dry season, summer—wet and hot season. Winter—June to August, summer—November to March, pre-rainy season—September to October and post-rainy—April and May. The rains usually begin in September and reach their intensity between December and March. The average annual rainfall is 1,386 mm. On the average, there are 119 rainy days. The climate is mild with an annual mean temperature of 6°C in June to 15°C in September and October. The mean annual maximum temperature is 28°C and varies from 24°C in June to 32°C in December. The annual mean temperature range is 17°C. Zambezi River, the largest and longest river in Southern Africa, has its source in Chief Ikelenge's area in Mwinilunga district.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Mwinilunga District Situation Analysis: District Planning Unit, April, 2008. 5. The information for this section is taken from a document entitled "*Mwinilunga District Analysis; District Planning Unit*, April, 2008.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 6, 7.

Demography, Culture, and Politics

There are nine male traditional rulers representing the nine gazetted chiefdoms in the district, among which two are senior chiefs. Traditional rulers are the sole custodians of the cultural customs and traditional norms. They act as arbitrators in terms of disputes as well as judges when crimes of a traditional or cultural nature are committed. They are cardinal in the success of any developmental initiative as they already have existing physical and social infrastructure to mobilize and implement a program at community level (for example in the fight against poverty). Their influence is also in religious matters, in that, the religion and church they accept flourishes in their areas. They also have influence in the Council in matters of policy through nominated chiefs' representatives.⁷⁶

Mwinilunga has been growing steadily in population. The district had a total population of 67,423 people during the 1980 census and 81,899 during the 1990 census representing a growth rate of 2.8%. Currently, the total population is 131,515 representing a growth rate of 3.4% according to the census of population and housing of 2000. The majority are females totaling 66,384 and males 65,131. The population of people aged 15+ years is high and encouraging as it represents the potential human resource. The percentage distribution for males and females in the district is 49.52 and 50.48% respectively.⁷⁷

The majority of the people in the district are Lundas who migrated from the Luba-Lunda Kingdom of Mwatayanmvwa in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the 16th Century. One of the defining cultural features of the Lunda people is the

⁷⁶Mwinilunga District Situation Analysis: District Planning Unit, April, 2008. 9. The information for this section is taken from a document entitled *Mwinilunga District Analysis; District Planning Unit*, April, 2008.

⁷⁷Ibid., 10.

Kwalamisha and Kutembwisha ceremonies. These are ceremonies for initiating boys into manhood and girls into womanhood respectively. There is one traditional ceremony that is recognized by the government of the Republic of Zambia, the Chisemwa Cha Lunda which is an annual event celebrated at Senior Chief Kanongesha's palace.

Traditionally, the people respect their chiefs very seriously to such an extent that the chiefs have major influence when it comes to matters of development, politics, and to some extent, even religion for any religion or religious group not accepted by the chief hardly survives. The chiefs delegate some of their powers to village headmen/women who preside over village conflicts.

Politically, the district is divided into two constituencies, East and West represented by two members of parliament who have their respective offices at the civic center and across the Lunga River which is the boundary of the two constituencies. Through these offices, the electorate has an easy access to their representatives in parliament. This is to ensure that the electorate participate in the decision making process of parliament. There are twenty political wards in the district, eight in the west constituency and twelve in the east constituency.⁷⁸

Economic Activities.

Agricultural production is the mainstay of the population of Mwinilunga district and is the main source of cash income for the people. Statistical figures indicate that almost 90% of the population is employed in the agricultural sector. In terms of income, more than 62% of it comes from agriculture, therefore making the

⁷⁸Mwinilunga District Situation Analysis: District Planning Unit, April, 2008. 10. The information for this section is taken from a document entitled *Mwinilunga District Analysis; District Planning Unit, April, 2008.*

sector the most important economic activity for the district in terms of number of people involved and income generation.⁷⁹

The district has potential for tourism. Some of the sites of attraction include the source of the Zambezi River which is surrounded by a natural forest (Mavunda), a number of rapids in the Lunga and Kabompo rivers which offer attractive sites for camping, and the Lunga national park with potential for game and bird viewing. The district has three air strips; at Kawiko (Government owned), Kaleni, and Sakeji (Christian Missions in Many Lands Mission owned).⁸⁰

The major formal employer in the district is the government. Employment is done through various government ministries and departments. The private sector employs a sizeable population in the form of sales persons in shops, house servants, etc. The agriculture sector employs the largest population in the informal sector. The mining sector, on the other hand, employs a negligible number of people as the sector is still undeveloped due to poor infrastructure and unreliable supply of power. The current supply of power in the district cannot sustain the operations of a big industry.

The remoteness of Mwinilunga district makes it difficult for to create more employment. The latest poverty figures indicate that the district poverty levels stand at 68.6%. The district is characterized by sporadic hunger periods that are experienced every year and the coping strategy to these hunger periods is always collection of wild fruits such as mushrooms and collection of caterpillars which are usually sold to raise funds to purchase food stuffs. The amounts so realized are insufficient as the items

⁷⁹Ibid., 11.

⁸⁰Mwinilunga District Situation Analysis: District Planning Unit, April, 2008. 54. The information for this section is taken from a document entitled *Mwinilunga District Analysis; District Planning Unit*, April, 2008.

sold during that time flood the market at the same time thereby reducing the demand and consequently the price.⁸¹

In summary, Mwinilunga district is endowed with vast natural resources and an excellent climate. The district lies in the high rainfall region of the province and has a long rainy season beginning in September and ending in April. The climate is suitable for agricultural produce. The district has vast forests that support beekeeping and honey production which is an important economic activity. The district is the source of major rivers of Zambia mainly the Zambezi, Kabompo, and Lunga. In addition, it has a network of suitable rivers which could be dammed for irrigation, in order to promote agriculture, as well as construction of mini hydro plants for power to supply the existing potential for economic development. Mwinilunga district has tourism potential with some beautiful monuments, the Zambezi source, waterfalls and most amazing landscape, rich bird species, and a number of traditional ceremonies to attract tourists.

Despite all these, the district is devoid of meaningful development. It is characterized by poor infrastructure in terms of roads, electricity supply, and water reticulation. Lack of industries, undeveloped tourism potential, very few people employed in the formal sector is part of the social-economic scenario of the district.

Description of Mwinilunga Central SDA Church

The church began as a company of believers by Literature Evangelists in 1981, and was organized into a church in 1982 under West Zambia Field. The church moved to the Copperbelt Field in 1988 when there was realignment of Fields in the Zambia Union territory. Mwinilunga Central Seventh-day Adventist Church comprised mainly of government workers such as teachers, nurses, clinical officers, agricultural

⁸¹Ibid., 56.

personnel, and other civil servants who had been sent to work there from different districts and provinces of the Republic of Zambia. To date, the composition of the church is the same, there are more people from outside the district who are members of the church than locals (the Lunda speaking believers).

Up to now, 27 years after organizing the church in Mwinilunga, a district with a population of 67,423 comprising nine chiefdoms, there is only one church, signifying that there is very slow church growth of adding new members and congregations to the existing one. This is a source of concern. The membership of the church comparing data since 2006 as provided by the Secretariat of the Copperbelt Field is as follows:

December 2006:	412
December 2007:	404
December 2008:	308
March 2009:	365

The leadership attributes the big drop of membership between 2007 and 2008 to the massive exodus of Angolan believers who returned to their home country during the repatriation exercise after the end of the civil war in that country.⁸² But still, the church in Mwinilunga district is not growing as expected, especially considering the number of years the church has been in existence in the area. This requires an in-depth study of the causes.

Low church growth in Mwinilunga Central SDA Church: Church Interviews

In order to find out the reasons for low church growth in Mwinilunga Seventh-day Adventist Church, I designed two methods/instruments, questionnaires and church

⁸²Abel Koti, Copperbelt Zambia Field, *Executive Secretary's Statistical Reports for 4th Quarter 2006, 4th Quarter 2007, 4th Quarter 2008 & 1st Quarter, 2009.*

interview. For this purpose, I traveled to Mwinilunga Seventh-day Adventist Church on the weekend of 23-25 January, 2009. I met the district pastor and church elders and arranged the meetings with the church. On the Sabbath and Sunday of 24-25th January, we had a meeting at Mwinilunga Church with the church members discussing reasons of slow church growth in Mwinilunga district considering the duration the church had been in existence in the area. The church members advanced several reasons:

1. The church has failed to see the importance of cultural differences. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga is mainly composed of Government workers in various departments and ministries who are sent there to work from various provinces of Zambia. These civil servants and other workers, who are not the indigenous of the area come to Mwinilunga with their culture and often times fail to fit in with the Lunda culture they find there. Therefore, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the area is viewed as a foreign church which has failed to reach the indigenous people.

2. There is the language barrier. The church has not done much in the process of reaching people where they are in terms of language and printed materials in Mwinilunga district. The use of the Lunda language which is cardinal to the reception of the message is only heard in sermons. However, hymn books, study guides, and any other publication are found in other languages such as English, Tonga, Bemba, Lozi, etc. The growing denominations in Mwinilunga district such as The Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML) and the Roman Catholic Church have hymn books, guides, and many of their church materials in Lunda, the widely spoken local language. All their services are conducted in the local language. This makes it easier for these churches to identify with the local people and to win them to their congregations.

3. There is a lack of involvement in leadership of the local people. Since most of the local leaders in the church are the workers who have come from outside, the district or province, and the local people are not found in leadership roles of the church, those outside church feel that this church is not for them. People like to join churches where they feel they belong by seeing some of their own leading out.

4. There is lack of trained ministerial personnel from the Lunda speaking people. There is no trained pastor from Mwinilunga area in the Seventh-day Adventist Church serving at the present anywhere in Zambia Union Conference, neither is there any in training. Locals feel that, if none among them is in service, then they cannot identify themselves with this foreign church which does not recognize their people in ministerial field.

5. Lack of enough attention paid to the area by the Copperbelt Field Office. Lack of visits, seminars, evangelistic campaigns by Copperbelt Field personnel has contributed to slow growth through evangelism. A place which is rarely visited and ministered to by the concerned leadership can't grow as expected because church members also need to be encouraged in the work. When they cannot have it for too long, they tend to relax.

6. There are no supporting Institutions such as church schools or hospitals. There are no medical Institutions such as clinics, hospitals, or even hospices run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District neither are there any schools—primary, secondary, or even tertiary education operated by the church. No publishing work or even Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) has any presence in the territory under discussing. Denominations such as The Christian Missions in Many Lands which runs Kaleni Hills Mission Hospital and Kaleni School of Nursing, and the Roman Catholic Church who runs Ntambu and Luwi mission

hospitals have grown tremendously since their entrance in this area. He who touches the lives of people medically and educationally makes it easier for them to become receptive to the gospel.

7. There is a failure by the Local Church to put Evangelism as the number one Priority. The church rarely has evangelistic meetings, personal witnessing in the community, or even community service programs. This has contributed to the church not to be known much in the society of Mwinilunga area.

8. There is lack of follow-ups for the few campaigns (Public Efforts) conducted in the area by visiting preachers. For example, two evangelistic campaigns were conducted by the Lusaka Adventist Hospital team in 2007 and the treasury team from Zambia Union Conference in 2008. No tangible follow-ups have been carried out to find out on what has been going on with the new converts after the evangelistic campaigns. This weakness leads to many converts returning to their former ways. There seems to be no nurturing strategy for new believers when the public campaigns are over.

Low church growth in Mwinilunga Central SDA Church: From Questionnaires

A survey was conducted in the church to determine the reasons for low church growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District and suggestions of how the church can grow were put forward. Twenty Church elders, mothers, men, and youths of the church were given the questionnaires to answer. At the end of the exercise, fifteen managed to answer the questions by filling in the questionnaires.

Appendix I contains the questions and answers as given by the members. Here is a summary of the reasons of slow church growth discovered from the questionnaires:

1. Resistance to change by those preached to despite knowing the new truth, especially concerning the Sabbath.
2. Fear of breaking old traditions of religion.
3. Language barrier, especially the Seventh-day Adventist Church is perceived as a church for English, Tonga, Lozi, Bemba, and Nyanja speaking people.
4. Most Seventh-day Adventist Church members do not endeavor learning the local language (Lunda). They think learning Lunda is a sheer waste of time because they will not use the language anywhere except in the Northwestern Province. Owing to this, local people feel so low of themselves.
5. Lack of leadership skills especially among the local people.
6. Inadequate support from the Copperbelt Zambia Field Mission who manage the area, to put up a deliberate policy to erect church structures in the district. This also includes material to give the poor.
7. No support from the higher office (that is The Copperbelt Field Mission) in matters of Evangelism since this is an unentered area with the Adventist message.
8. Lack of Evangelism by church members.
9. The locals have a negative attitude toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CHAPTER 4

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

This chapter proposes a strategy that will answer the causes of low church growth in Mwinilunga Seventh-day Adventist Church, taking into consideration the church interviews and questionnaires discussed in chapter 4. Since the main cause for low growth in Mwinilunga Central Seventh-day Adventist Church is lack of evangelism, this chapter will stress more on the strategy of church growth centered on evangelism. For the church to grow through evangelism in Mwinilunga district, the following suggestions need to be implemented

Growth from the Questionnaires

1. The use of the local language (Lunda) in church meetings and literature will help in breaking the barrier of communication.
2. Send church workers such as pastors to the area who are conversant with the local language.
3. There is need for support and attention from the Copperbelt Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
4. There is need to improve the church building.
5. The church needs to be trained, thus equipped for evangelistic work in the district.
6. There is great need for more evangelistic campaigns and Bible studies to be conducted in the territory.

Putting the points together from the church interviews and questionnaires, reasons for slow church growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District range from lack of administrative attention to lack of local elected leaders and include language barrier, lack of supporting Institutions, and lack of local trained ministerial personnel. It is, however, obvious that the main cause for low church growth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District is lack of evangelism knowledge, motivation, and conducting of evangelistic campaigns and personal Bible studies in the area.

Growth from the Church Interviews and Authors Quoted

The following are the suggested solutions to the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mwinilunga District. These are in addition to the suggestions given in the questionnaires.

1. The Copperbelt Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church office needs to take keen interest in Mwinilunga District by visiting the place, conducting seminars in evangelism and church growth and helping in evangelism plans of the church.
2. The Copperbelt Zambia Field needs to seriously consider training and employing ministerial personnel especially pastors from the Lunda speaking people of Mwinilunga District. Language is essential to the proclamation of the gospel because it is the means of communication. People easily identify themselves with churches where their own people are leading out in pastoral activities.
3. There is need to establish supporting institutions such as primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Medical institutions such as clinics and hospitals need to be opened.

4. There is a great need for local elected leadership. Placing the local people who know the culture and language of the area in leadership responsibilities of the church will enable the church to have a favorable reception in the community.

5. There is great need to form a subcommittee to start working on the local hymn book in the Lunda language.

6. Developing the Cycle of Evangelism. There is need to develop the Cycle of Evangelism. The Cycle of Evangelism should be discussed, implemented and evaluated by Mwinilunga Church members. By revitalizing and using the Personal Ministries department of the church and involving all the members, this plan will work.

This cycle will have six phases running throughout the year 2010.

Phase 1: This will be called Spiritual Renewal time. This will be time for revival meetings, weeks of prayer, and spiritual retreats for the church. It is important to know that a church that prays is a church that grows.

Phase 2: Training the Church. This month will be dedicated to the training of the church members in areas related to evangelism such as the following: developing dynamic small groups in the church; Christ's way of reaching people with the gospel; the visitation's ministry; giving personal Bible studies; witnessing with power; how to bring people to a decision for Christ and His truth; how to reclaim the lost; sermon preparation; pre-campaign preparations; how to conduct an evangelistic campaign. In relation to evangelism, training church members in witnessing is important because a church that is trained is a church that grows.

Phase 3: Community Service. Since many people are touched through the ministry of compassion, it will be important for the church to be involved in various activities in the community. Community service is a great umbrella under which acts

of helping our fellow human beings are included. Among many acts the church should get involved in are feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, visiting the prisoners, visiting the widows and orphans, comforting the bereaved and dying, health education, and nutrition classes. The Dorcas society, Adventist men Organization and the youths should be mobilized to do this work. It is important to note that a church that answers the needs of its community is a church that grows.

Phase 4: Personal Evangelism. The church members will be divided into groups of approximately 5-8 members in order to form groups for witnessing. Each group must have a group leader and a territory will be assigned to each group where Bible studies will be conducted. The local church personal ministries leader and secretary will be responsible for the work of seeing that these groups are functional. Reports from these witnessing groups will be given to the church every two weeks. It is of value to note that a church that preaches the word of God is a church that grows.

Phase 5: Evangelistic Campaigns/Efforts. During these two months, two public evangelistic campaigns will be held in the district and preaching done publicly. At the end of these meeting, one congregation will be opened for the new believers.

Phase 6: Follow-up program. A church that has a serious follow-up program is a church that grows. This is the time to make sure the newly baptized members do not leave the church. It will be time to visit the new believers, encouraging them in the faith and helping them in any way possible.

At the end of the year, there will be an evaluation of the whole cycle. This will of course follow the quarterly evaluations which the church would have been having in the course of the year. The December evaluation will be great because it will look at the work done during the entire year. The pastor of the district will chair with the entire church in attendance.

Visiting evangelistic teams who desire to conduct evangelistic meetings in Mwinilunga District should counsel with local Seventh-day Adventist leaders. This is in regard to where meetings are to be conducted and some be helps in the knowledge of the area. In the evangelistic budget, they should include provisions for follow-up activities to use for helping new believers have a place for worship, get materials such as Bibles, study guides for their spiritual nurture and also visiting them where possible. Where possible, employ a person for at least one year to help nurture new believers.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The Bible is an evangelistic book. Genesis 1-2 is a history before sin in God's original creation while Revelation 21-22 is a period when sin is destroyed from God's creation. From Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 is a record of sin and God's intervention through evangelism to save humankind from the power and dominion of sin. God is the originator of missions and evangelism. He desires to restore His creatures to His desired image, for evangelism is the only means God uses in saving His people.

For Mwinilunga District in the Copperbelt Conference, the following is the summary of findings:

The church has failed to see the importance of cultural differences. Mwinilunga Seventh-day Adventist Church is mainly composed of members from other tribal groupings who have failed to fit in with the Lunda culture of the area. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in the area is viewed as a foreign church which has failed to reach the indigenous people with the Adventist message.

There is language barrier. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not done anything in translating church materials for use from English into Lunda, the local language, and also failure to conduct church services in the local language.

There is lack of involvement in the leadership of the church by the local indigenous people. People like to join churches where they feel they belong by seeing some of their own tribesmen and women leading out. This is not the case at Mwinilunga Seventh-day Adventist Church.

There is lack of trained pastoral personnel from the Lunda speaking people of Mwinilunga district and lack of attention paid to the area by the Copperbelt Conference shown in lack of visits, seminars, and evangelistic campaigns, thus contributing to slow church growth in the area. There are no supporting institutions such as church schools and medical facilities like clinics or hospitals run by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Conclusions

Evangelism is rooted in the Old Testament as highlighted in our study of the Old Testament characters—patriarchs, prophets, and the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel like past patriarchs and prophets was chosen by God for the sake of the world's salvation. Israel was to further the purpose of God for the nations. Israel was God's agent to communicate His message to the nations. Their call and blessings were conditioned on obedience to the fulfillment of God's plan of evangelizing the nations. Israel used a centripetal method of witnessing, that is, surrounding nations were to come to Israel to learn of Israel's God by seeing what God had done for His people. Israel was to be a *show case* of the righteous kingdom of God. Israel's failure to live up to God's standard of being the agent of reaching the world with salvation led to them being abandoned. Christ created the church—His body—to become the agent of carrying the gospel to the whole world. Finding the lost became the church's primary mission.

For the New Testament, Evangelism is God's only means of saving the lost people (Rom 10: 14-15); God's means for the Christian's personal and spiritual growth (John 21: 15-17); heaven's means of bringing joy to the heart of God (Luke 15: 7,10); God's means of building and growing His church (Acts 1:15; 2:41-47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31; 16:5; 21:20); and it is the environment in which God works miracles (Rom 9:28).

Evangelism is above all God's means of finishing the work so that Jesus could come soon (Matt 24:14). It is the most important work in the world, for no person can be saved without the gospel; it is the supreme task of the church.

Church growth is a by-product of winning souls and making disciples. Evangelism leads to the numerical growth of the church. The church, as a living organism should grow in size by increasing in membership and producing baby churches. The growth of the church is closely related to the fulfillment of the evangelistic mandate. God wants the church to grow by bringing people from darkness to light. Church growth is the work and will of God. It is the nature of the gospel and characteristic of the churches of the New Testament.

The role of Jesus during His earthly ministry was to be the missionary or the sent one and to make His people evangelistic by sending them with the Great commission.

Jesus' actions throughout His ministry were missionary in character. He showed His passion for the lost to an extent that He sacrificed for the sinners all the way to the cross. Being the greatest missionary of all times, Christ gave the church her mission in the Great Commission.

In the Great Commission is revealed the sovereignty of the Lord of the gospel, the imperative of the Christian gospel. It should be preached to every human being and the church is to get engaged in the fulfillment of the Commission, that is, taking the gospel everywhere. Unlike during the Old Testament times when pagan nations had to come to Israel to inquire of Israel's God, the Great Commission Christ gave sends the church into the world to preach the gospel. The Great Commission is not an isolated command imposed upon the Christian church. It is a natural outflow of the character of God as He is revealed in the scriptures. He is a missionary God as unfolded in the Old Testament and incarnated in the life and saving work of Christ.

In the Great Commission as in Old Testament time, God has chosen human instruments to accomplish His task of reaching humanity with the gospel. Humans do not live in isolation. They live in societies and within cultures. To find men, Christ became man. To save the Jews, He became a Jew, lived as a Jew and observed Jewish customs except where principle was involved. He did not stand apart or held Himself aloof from them. He identified Himself with the people. Similarly, Paul recognized that missions were a human task involving man in his total relationships and in his national, social and cultural identity. Therefore, he sought to identify himself with the national and social strata of mankind in order to present the gospel intelligently and acceptably. For the gospel to go to the entire world, emulating our Savior Jesus Christ and imitating the method of the apostle Paul will bring many into the kingdom. Mwinilunga District needs this method to be fully evangelized.

It is important for the church to grow through evangelism as revealed in the book of Acts. Church growth through evangelism is the work and will of God; it is the nature of the gospel and characteristic of the churches of the New Testament. For churches to grow through evangelism: prayer, trust in the sovereignty of the Almighty God, strategizing for the work, and contextualizing the message—that is reaching people where they are—must be put into action. For thus grew the churches in the New Testament times. The organizational structure of the church together with its supportive educational, medical, publishing, and other institutions are to provide the means and support in reaching the church's objective, which is, evangelism—for the survival of the church depends upon her fulfillment of God's commission.

By doing the work which Christ gave her—evangelism—strong and more churches result, church members receive spiritual strength to grow in Christ, they understand better His sacrifice, His work, and the value of souls. Working also

develops character. Christ established His church for a missionary purpose. It is through missionary endeavors that the church grows. God has claimed for His own the members of the church, the people whom He has called out of spiritual darkness into His marvelous light to proclaim the message to the world. Mwinilunga District needs all the discussed principles of evangelism to be implemented if the district is to be reached with the gospel.

The following are the drawn conclusions for slow church growth in Mwinilunga District:

1. Language barrier. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has most of its members in the area who cannot speak the local language. This makes communication with the indigenous people very difficult, hence hampering the mission of the church which is evangelism.
2. Lack of locally translated materials. Mwinilunga District is mainly rural in its setup. Without local spiritual material written in the Lunda language, it is a difficult task to evangelize with materials in foreign languages.
3. Inadequate support from the Copperbelt Conference management in training church members in areas of evangelism and church growth and embarking on translating church materials in the Lunda language.
4. Lack of church infrastructure such as schools, clinics, and hospitals which should be entry points to the people in hearing the advent message.
5. No trained pastor or local evangelists in the area. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is perceived as foreign, whose message they are not prepared to accept and follow. This has made most local people to have a negative attitude towards the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Recommendations

1. The use of Lunda—the language of the area—in all church meetings. Besides church literature should be promoted in order to help in breaking the barrier of communication.
2. The Copperbelt Conference of Seventh-day Adventists should send Lunda speaking people to train as pastors and evangelists and upon their completion of training send them to work in Mwinilunga District, for these would be conversant with the local language and culture.
3. There is need to put up supporting institutions of the church such as a church school and a clinic or hospital in the area.
4. Current members of Mwinilunga Seventh-day Adventist Church need to be trained and equipped for evangelistic work. This should lead to more evangelistic campaigns and personal witnessing to be conducted in the territory. This training needs to be conducted by the Copperbelt Conference officers and departmental directors.
5. There is great need for the translation and printing of church materials such as hymn books, Sabbath school study guides, and evangelistic materials in Lunda—the local language.

APPENDIX

CHURCH GROWTH QUESTIONNAIRES

1. As a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, how do you describe the Mwinilunga Seventh-day Adventist Church in terms of Church Growth?

.....

2. For how long have you been a member of this church? Please state whether you are a local settler or just “came in for work” settler?

.....

3. How did the church start in the district? If you are vested with the dates to the question please highlight.

.....

4. Where did it come from and by whom was it started?

.....

5. What kinds of people were found in the church then?

.....

6. Make a comparison of the kind of Christians then and the kind of Christians now?

.....

7. Are there workers who are sent here and leave?

.....

8. Are there any locals found in the church? If there are, how do they treat new comers or “came in to work” members?

.....

9. Is there any form of traditions that affects the church members and subsequently the church growth? If yes, what do you know about these traditions?

.....

10. Give reasons for slow church growth in the district:

.....

11. As a in the church, what do you think you are not doing that could have led to the slow church growth in this area? Please indicate the category you fall under either as adult or youth, came in for work or local resident.

.....

12. What do you think can be done by the church to change the trend?

.....

13. Now that you have given the reasons for slow church growth, what do you think is the way forward in terms of church growth?

.....

Church Growth Questionnaire

Members of the church—adults and youths—were asked questions. The numbers recorded under columns of adult and youth shows those who responded to the questionnaire.

Questions	Adults	Youth
As a member of Mwinilunga SDA Church how		
do you rate your church in terms of growth?	2	5
For how long have you been a member of this Church?	2	4
How did the church start in the district?	1	1
By whom was the church started?	1	
Any other information you can give about the		
beginning of the church?		
What kinds of people were found in the church then?	5	4
Make a comparison of the kind of Christians		
then and the kind of Christians now	2	3
Are they workers who are sent here and leave?	3	
Are there any locals found in the church? If there are,		
how do they treat the new comers or		
“Came in for work” members?	3	
Is there any form of tradition that affects the		
Church members and subsequently church Growth?	2	5
Give reasons for slow church growth in the District	6	2
What do you think can be done to change the trend and make the church grow		
in Mwinilunga district	10	2

The appendix gives the questions and answers as given by the members. Here is a summary of the reasons of slow church growth discovered from the questionnaires

1. Resistance to change by those preached to despite knowing the new truth, especially concerning the Sabbath.
2. Fear of breaking old traditions of religion.
3. Language barrier, especially the Seventh-day Adventist Church is perceived as a church for English, Tonga, Lozi, Bemba, and Nyanja speaking people.
4. Most Seventh-day Adventist Church members don't endeavor learning the local language (Lunda). They think learning Lunda is a sheer waste of time because they will not use the language anywhere let alone North- Western Province. Owing to this, local people feel so low of themselves.
5. Lack of leadership skills especially among the local people.
6. Inadequate support from the Copperbelt Zambia Field Mission who manages the area, to put up a deliberate policy to erect church structures in the district. This also includes material to give the poor.
7. No support from the higher office (that is The Copperbelt Field Mission) in matters of Evangelism since this is an unentered area with the Adventist message.
8. Lack of Evangelism by church members.
9. The locals have a negative attitude toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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