

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: RETENTION STRATEGY FOR NEW MEMBERS IN THE OLD TAFO MILE 3 DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN KUMASI, GHANA.

Researcher: Ebenezer Kwarteng

Primary advisor: Gabriel Masfa, PhD

Date Completed: May 2025

The process of making disciples is not an easy task; it is a challenging and costly venture, both in terms of finance and human resources. Notwithstanding the challenges associated with making disciples, the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the Seventh-day Adventist church sacrifices its scarce resources to bring new members into the church through various forms of evangelism. Nevertheless, that apparent success in witnessing is marred by a significant number of the newly baptized converts leaving the church.

This study examined the factors influencing membership loss and retention in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District. The study utilised a descriptive survey design to collect quantitative data. A stratified random sampling technique was used to obtain 275 baptised members from the Old Tafo Mile 3 district. A questionnaire was the main

data collection instrument used in the study. Means, standard deviation, frequency, percentages, independent sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse the questionnaire data.

Results indicate that membership loss is primarily driven by lack of nurturing environments within the church community, unresolved conflicts, doctrinal disagreements, social and cultural constraints, discrimination and feelings of isolation, and external responsibilities. The study highlighted several factors that significantly enhance membership retention: engaging worship experiences, song administration, sound doctrinal teachings, warm fellowship, strong social connections within the church community, active participation in church activities, and pastoral and elder mentorship. Also, fostering warm relationships, programs that build warm relationships, and special bible study for the newly baptized church members were identified as the most effective strategies for retaining new members. Demographic insights revealed that age influences retention, whereas gender had no statistically significant effect on membership retention.

The study recommends that by prioritising nurturing warm relationships, sound doctrinal teaching, caring leadership, and active engagement, churches can foster a more inclusive and supportive church environment, thereby ensuring that new members not only join but remain committed to their spiritual journeys and the church as a whole.

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

RETENTION STRATEGY FOR NEW MEMBERS IN THE OLD TAFO MILE 3
DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN KUMASI, GHANA

A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

by

Ebenezer Kwarteng


May 2025

RETENTION STRATEGY FOR NEW MEMBERS IN THE OLD TAFO MILE 3
DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
IN KUMASI, GHANA


A thesis
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Divinity

by
Ebenezer Kwarteng


APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:




Primary Advisor
Gabriel Masfa, PhD




Secondary Advisor
Feliks Ponyatovskiy, PhD



External Examiner
Baraka Ngussa, PhD



Program Coordinator
David Odhiambo, PhD



Dean, Theological Seminary
Feliks Ponyatovskiy, PhD

Adventist University of Africa

Date: May 2025

I dedicate this research work to the Almighty God for providing me
with strength, wisdom, knowledge, and protection. This work
is also dedicated to my wife, Rachel, and my children,
Nanette, Nancy, Nathaniel, and Nelly, for their
prayers, love, patience, encouragement,
and untiring support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	viii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	5
Justification	5
Delimitations of the Study	6
Operational Definition of Terms	6
Methodology	8
Expectations	8
2. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION	10
Principles of Membership Retention in the Old Testament	10
Principles of Membership Retention in the New Testament.....	13
Principles of Membership Retention in Ellen G. White’s Writings.....	17
Summary	20
3. LITERATURE REVIEW	21
Member Retention and its Importance.....	21
Factors That Promote New Member Retention	24
People-Oriented Leadership.....	24
Positive People Relations.....	26
Discipleship.....	28
Member Involvement.....	30
Worship Services / Worship Styles	32
Factors that Work against Retention	33
Unresolved Conflicts	33
Gossip	34
Poor Leadership	34
Negative Attitudes.....	35
Lack of a Positive Nurturing Atmosphere	35
Doctrinal Reasons	36
Unfulfilled Expectations	37
The Effect of Age on Church Membership Retention	37
The Effect of Gender on Church Membership Retention.....	40

Conclusion	42
4. METHODOLOGY	43
Research Design.....	43
Targeted Population	44
Sample Size and Sampling Technique	44
Calculation of a Reliable Sample Size Using Taro Yamane Method	45
Selection Criteria	46
Instrumentation	46
Validity and Reliability	48
Ethical Considerations	49
Data Collection	51
Data Analysis	52
5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	53
Demographic Information of Participants	53
Research Question One.....	54
Research Question Two	57
Research Question Three	60
Research Question Four.....	65
Research Question Five	72
Discussion of Findings.....	76
Causes of Membership Loss in Seventh-day Adventist church in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District.....	76
Factors Contributing to Membership Retention	78
The Effect of Age on Membership Retention	84
The Effect of Gender on Membership Retention.....	88
Summary of Findings.....	91
6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	93
Summary	93
Conclusions.....	96
Recommendations.....	97
Suggestions for Further Research	100
APPENDIXES	101
A. CORRESPONDENCE.....	102
B. CONSENT FORM.....	106
C. QUESTIONNAIRE	108
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	111
VITA	116

LIST OF TABLES

1. Number of Baptisms Compared to Current New Members.....	3
2. Total Membership	46
3. Interpretation Table for the 4-Point Likert Scale	48
4. Range of Reliability and its Coefficient of Cronbach’s Alpha.....	49
5. Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender	54
6. Descriptive Statistics of Causes of Membership Loss.....	55
7. Factors that Contribute to Membership Retention of New Members.....	58
8. Three Biblical Principles that Needs More Emphasis	61
9. Program Directions that is More Important to Retain the Church Members.....	62
10. Activities More Important to Retain the Church Members?.....	63
11. Activities on Members' Welfare that is More Important in Retaining Church Members?	64
12. Activities that are Most Valuable as a Way of Retaining New Church Members	65
13. Effect of Age on New Member Retention	67
14. Multiple Comparison of Age Groups.....	68
15. Effect of Gender on Membership Retention	74

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Praise be to God for the wonderful things He has done in my life. I am thankful to God Almighty for granting me strength, protection, knowledge, and wisdom, among others, throughout this program and my education in general.

This piece of work would not have become a reality without the contributions from some individuals. I owe a very considerable measure of gratitude and appreciation to my primary advisor, Dr. Gabriel Masfa, and Secondary advisor, Dr. Feliks Ponyatovskiy, who, despite their hectic schedules, made time to help me during my research work. I am very thankful for your directions, suggestions, and encouragement that have helped to make this thesis see the light. I appreciate the Lecturers and Professors who taught me and assisted me during my studies at the Adventist University of Africa. I will never forget colleagues (MDiv - 2021 VVU Cohort) and friends at the University for their encouragement.

I do express my gratitude to the Administration of the Mid-Central Ghana Conference for their prayers and support in diverse ways. Special thanks also go to Pastor Thompson Okoffo Tachie and the elders and the entire membership of Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the Church for their prayers and support during the study period.

I give thanks to my family for their immeasurable support and love, which I have enjoyed throughout my education. To you, my lovely wife, Rachel, and children, thanks so much for your love, care, and patience. God bless everyone.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

God is love, as stated in 1 John 4:16. His love for humanity has compelled Him to allow Jesus Christ to die for us. The mission assigned to the church is merely an extension of God's initial intent, revealed in John 3:16, to bring salvation to lost humanity, the very reason Christ died. Before returning to His Father in heaven, Jesus Christ gave His followers what we commonly call the 'Great Commission,' as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20: 'Then Jesus came to them and said,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."¹

On the day of Pentecost, the first significant evangelistic effort following Jesus Christ's ascension took place, and three thousand people were baptized into the church (Acts 2:41-42). According to Luke's account in Acts 5:14, the Church grew, and more members joined. Thus, the early Christian church prioritized retention, as seen in the Book of Acts.

One would expect that retention of new members will be high, but "in recent years, records of decline in the retention of church members across the globe is on the

¹ The New King James Version (NKJV) is the primary source used for all scriptural references. The other translations (rather than the NKJV) that were utilized for the study are mentioned right after the reference, usually enclosed in parentheses.

increase. Church membership retention has become a significant challenge confronting the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide”², which Old Tafo Mile 3 District in the Mid-Central Ghana Conference is inclusive. “The first global summit on membership retention revealed the rate at which members left the church through the back door. The world church, according to the author, has lost 1 in 3 Seventh-day Adventist members in the last 50 years.”³ Again, “40,421,554 people have been members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1965. Of those, 16,240,069 have left. The net loss rate is 40 percent. This means that four of every 10 church members have left the church.”⁴ According to Sessou, in the West-Central African Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 40% of baptized members were lost between 2021 and 2024.⁵ The narrative is not different in Ghana, where, regardless of the huge investment in winning souls, retention is low.

The Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventist church members desire to obey Jesus’ great commission; they are prepared to give up their scarce resources, including their valuable time, in order to carry out evangelism in a variety of ways each year and win people to Christ. The various forms of evangelism, including public meetings (house-to-house and public campaigns) that they carry out, yield an appreciable number of new church members. But many of these members are lost.

² Nate Luong, Tom Westcott, “Coaching as a Model for Pastoral Leadership,” *Word and World* 35, no. 4, 2015), 349.

³ Angel Oliver, “At first Retention Summit, Leaders Looking at the Reality of Church Exodus,” accessed 14 May 2024, <https://interamerica.org/2013/11/at-first-retention-summit-leaders-look-at-reality-of-church-exodus/>.

⁴ G. T. Ng, “Foreword: Lose none and Disciple All,” in *Discipling Nurturing and Reclaiming: Nurture and Retention Summit*, ed. General Conference Nurture and Retention Committee (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2020), ix.

⁵ Selom Sessou, Executive Secretary of the West-Central African Division: Statistics of membership through baptism and those the church lost during the period 2021-2024 at the launch of One Million Membership of the Division on 25th May 2024 on Zoom at 5:32 p.m.

According to the District Secretary’s record, from 2018 to 2023, out of the 440 baptized members during those six years, only 202 (45.9%) still attend church services; 238 (54.1%) have either apostatized/backslidden or the church has lost contact with them and is unable to determine where they are. Table 1 below gives the breakdown of the churches’ baptisms over the years, those who still attend church (current new members), and those missing (missing new members).

Table 1. Number of Baptisms Compared to Current New Members

Church	Members Baptized						Total	Current new members	Missing new members/ Backsliders
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023			
Old Tafo Mile 3	34	42	12	17	72	37	214	98	116
Pankrono Estate	17	14	10	13	25	22	101	46	55
Ntaamu	9	8	7	7	17	12	60	31	29
Real Truth	5	4	5	3	10	7	34	17	17
Swedru	4	5	3	4	8	7	31	10	21
Total	69	73	37	44	132	85	440	202 (45.9%)	238 (54.1%)

Source: Statistics gathered from the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventist Church Secretary’s record.⁶

It is an unfortunate phenomenon that there are both high baptism rates and large membership losses. As stated by Donald Smith, “membership loss is a complex trend that all churches have to deal with, but it is important to consider that every church is unique.”⁷ Also, Smith said that “the phenomenon of church dropouts is

⁶ Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventists, *District Secretary’s records* (Old Tafo, Ghana: Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventists, 2023), 3.

⁷ Donald P. Smith, *How to Attract and Keep Active Church Members* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 17.

worse than a treadmill: the faster we run, the farther behind we get.”⁸ As a matter of fact, religious leaders in many faiths or denominations have long faced a significant challenge with membership retention, and Seventh-day Adventist is not an exception. Erica Richards says that “there is no doubt that people are leaving the Adventist Church in large numbers.”⁹ “Lost people matter to God, so if I am to be a genuine pastor and disciple of Jesus Christ, then they will matter to me as well.”¹⁰ This research intends to contribute to reducing or curbing the membership loss of new converts.

Statement of the Problem

Making disciples is challenging and expensive, concerning both money and human resources. Notwithstanding the challenges associated with producing disciples, the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventist church sacrifices its scarce resources to bring new members into the church through various forms of evangelism. Nevertheless, that seeming success in witnessing is tainted by a sizeable number of recently baptized members leaving the church. As stated in Table 1, more than half of the baptized members in the old Tafo Mile 3 District have either backslidden or apostatized. The loss of new members is a concerning and worrisome scenario. It becomes particularly difficult to get new members who stray back to the church. As they go back to their previous secular lifestyle, they tarnish the image of the church since people still identify them to be members of the church. This lack of membership retention has slowed down membership growth, discouraged evangelistic efforts, and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Erica Richards, “Drowning in a Sea of Gray,” *Adventist Review*, September 9, 2009, <https://old1.adventistreview.org/2009-1525/2009-1525-16>.

¹⁰ Joseph Kidder, *The Big Four* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011), 52.

hindered the church's ability to fulfil its mission objectives. If nothing is done to address this problem, members may continue to leave the church. Hence, a need to devise an effective strategy for retaining new members.

Purpose of the Study

This research has for its purpose of discovering/investigating causes for the loss of new members and developing effective strategy that can contribute to membership retention in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the church.

Research Questions

The main question of the research is, what is the effective strategy for keeping new church members? The study aims to address these specific questions:

1. What are the possible reasons/ causes for membership loss in the churches in the district?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the membership retention of new members?
3. What is the most effective strategy for retaining new converts?
4. What is the effect of age on new member retention?
5. What is the effect of gender on membership retention?

Justification

In John 17:12, Jesus prayed: “Those whom you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost, except the son of perdition”. Here, by providing God with an account of His disciples, Christ made maintaining church membership a key part of His mandate to the church. Hence, this research is significant and beneficial in the following ways:

In the first place, it will assist new member in remaining in the church, becoming fully dedicated disciple, staying long enough to learn everything that Christ instructed, and eventually receiving eternal life.

Secondly, new member retention approaches guarantee a more efficient use of the church's financial and human resources, provided new converts remain members. church. As a result, church members would be motivated to keep up their witnessing efforts because it is rewarding and productive for them.

Again, it will have a favorable impact on membership growth, church finances, and quality of Christian life.

Last but not least, retaining new members safeguards the church's reputation, since apostate members reverting to their previous lifestyles destroy the church's reputation and discourage others from joining.

Delimitations of the Study

This study is limited to the Old Tafo Mile 3 District within the Mid-Central Ghana Conference of the church. It focuses largely on retaining new converts who join the church through various evangelistic initiatives.

Operational Definition of Terms

The definitions of the terminologies used in this research work are as follows:

Apostasy: This is the total separation of a follower from the denomination of Seventh-day Adventists.

Assimilation: This is to incorporate new converts into the congregation's daily activities and eventually employ their spiritual gifts.

Back door: This is an expression indicating baptized members leaving church.

Backsliding: This is whereby one stops attending church because he is no longer willing to adhere to the previously established doctrine and practices.

Baptism: This is a ceremony or event that officially ushers a new convert into the church.

Church Membership: This shows the number of members of a church who have received baptism.

Church: This can be interpreted as the entire christian church, the entire Seventh-day Adventist church, or local Seventh-day Adventist congregation(s).

Company: This is a branch of the church which has not yet been officially organised, voted on, or admitted into the sisterhood of churches.

Disciple: This is a devoted follower of an esteemed religious leader or teacher; one whose way of life emulates that of the teacher.

District: This refers to several organized churches, some with companies, in a particular area.

Gender: This refers to an individual being a male or a female as created by God.

Inactive member: This is used to describe a church member who has either temporarily or permanently stopped participating in church activities due to a variety of reasons.

Membership Loss: This is the loss of church members through missing and apostasy instead of death and transfer.

New members: Here, it means those individuals who have joined the Church (in the Old Tafo District) by baptism, within the past two years.

Retention: In this study, it means to have members, especially newly baptized members, remain in the church and participate actively in its activities.

Strategy: This is a careful plan of action or approach intended to deal with the issue of keeping new members.

Methodology

This research aims at helping to prevent newcomers from leaving the Church. The research method employed here is quantitative, which involves using a questionnaire as a data collection procedure. The research design used is a descriptive survey. The methodology is described in detail in the fourth chapter. The steps listed below form the base for this study:

Chapter 1 talks about the problem, research purpose, and its justification. Also, the delimitation and definition of terms used are captured here. Chapter 2 handles theoretical underpinnings of membership retention in the Bible, together with Ellen G. White's writings. Chapter 3 is a comparative study of selected literature on membership retention. Chapter 4 focuses on a detailed description of the methodology of the work. This comprises research design, population and sampling technique, instrumentation, ethical considerations, instrument's validity and reliability, collection and analysis of data. Chapter 5 captures the results discussion. Finally, a summary of the research and its conclusions is provided in chapter 6. It also draws attention to the recommendations made in light of the research.

Expectations

The research is anticipated to assist pastors and other local church leaders in understanding and appreciating effective ways to prevent or lessen membership decline at their churches. If congregations are open to receiving the recommendations, the study will help to reshape their vision for church growth and membership retention.

Jesus states in John 13:35, “By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” The findings from this research will make available strategy to guide members to appreciate the fact that loving one another is an effective way of keeping new members in God’s church. According to Rick Warren, “love draws people in like a powerful magnet. A lack of love drives people away.”¹¹ And so church members will be advised to be friendly and loving to help retain members in the church. Thus, the maximum expectation of this research work is to bring down the rate at which new members leave the churches, especially in the Old Tafo Mile 3 district.

¹¹ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 54.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

The study's theoretical foundation is the primary concern of this chapter. Retention theology examines the Scripture and other religious texts in order to ascertain how the church can maintain and retain newly converted individuals who have been baptized through public evangelism and other outreach methods. The chapter first examines the principles of retention in the Old Testament. It then moves to retention in the New Testament, in which the concentration here is more on Jesus' example and that of Paul. The chapter also looks at membership retention in Ellen G. White's writings. A summary of some of the principles on retention is given to end the chapter.

Principles of Membership Retention in the Old Testament

God's relational nature exemplifies the Old Testament concept of membership retention. The Old Testament is filled with God's constant efforts to prevent His people from apostasy and rebellion so that salvation will be theirs as He so desires. God had to deal with matters of retention with people like Abraham and, on a collective level, with the Israelites, who were a theocratic nation chosen by God and answerable to Him. Other examples exist, such as Ruth, of the gentiles who converted to worshipping Israel's God, being retained.

Genesis, the first book of the Bible, begins by depicting creation as a work of God, a relational and retaining action. According to Terence Fretheim, the several

pieces of evidence listed below demonstrate that God wished to remain in a relationship with His creatures:

In the first place, man and woman were created, not only with God's touch (Gen 2:7), but also in His own image (Gen 1:26, 27); two, Adam and Eve were to have communion with God (Gen 2:1-3), they were to take care of His creation (Gen 2:15); three, God had commanded Adam and Eve to stay away from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, so that their relationship with God will be intact and not die (Gen 2:16, 17); four, after the fall, God prohibited them from returning to the tree of life to avoid eternal separation and painful life (Gen 3:24).¹

God thus told man of the peril and undesirable cost of life, which might result in alienation from God and His commands. In Genesis 3, God is described as looking for the lost mankind and making amends with them by introducing sacrifices to uphold their relationship.

In the Old Testament, an important way that God retains people is by calling a person or a group of individuals and setting them apart from their pagan neighbors. God called Abram in Genesis 12 to leave his homeland and the Chaldean people of Ur. Abram's spiritual development was not supported by Ur's culture. Therefore, the key lesson in Abram's calling is that, if the convert's earlier worldview and cultural practices conflict with what the Bible teaches, there should be an immediate change and separation from them, even in terms of his agnatic relationships.

God's retaining of a community is made clear to us by Israel being called out of Egypt and established in Canaan as a theocratic nation. God indeed chose the people of Israel as His peculiar nation. Just as Abram was called forth from Ur, the Israelites were gathered from among the idolatrous Egyptians (Exod 12:30, 41). In

¹ Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," *The New Interpreter's Bible (IB)*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 1:351-352.

Isaiah 43: 10, 12, “the Lord God is proclaiming Israel's global mission as His servants to make him known to the world.”²

In Deuteronomy 26:11, the Israelites were chosen by God to be a light to receive strangers among themselves. But occasionally, they had a disgusting attitude toward foreigners. For example, certain individuals were not allowed to attend their gatherings. Yahweh's assembly was not to be among the eunuchs, bastards, Amorites, or Moabites (Deut 23:1-3).

However, the Old Testament portrays a favorable view of Jews' behavior toward outsiders. As an illustration, Ruth the Moabite decided to join the people of God (Ruth 1:16-19). Once more, Malachi provides evidence that the name of God will be highly regarded by the gentiles (Mal 1:11). Zephaniah similarly anticipates a time when everyone on the earth will submit to God (Zeph 3:9). It was said that the Israelites welcomed sojourners while celebrating the Passover (Exod 12:48). They were not to treat foreigners with an exclusive attitude. Those who wished to participate with them in God's worship were to be welcomed. By performing circumcision rites, these strangers (aliens) were to be embraced religiously (Exod 12:44), and thus, become part of God's people.

God gave His law for His people to know Him among other peoples in order to keep them as His children (Lev 19:1-37). Whenever the people of Israel went astray, God asked them to come back to Him (Mal 3:7). Membership retention is so dear to God that He looked for His people. In Ezekiel 34: 11, 12, God says, “indeed I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them

² Albert W. Dock, *Keeping Ministers in the Church: A Model that Works* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 27.

from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.” God is continually seeking to bring His people together. “Gather my saints together to me” (Ps 50:5).

The Old Testament demonstrates God's constant desire to preserve His people. Despite their sins, He calls them “come now and let us reason together” (Isa 1:18), wishes to keep them under His protection, and wants them to feel safe and comfortable. God said: “I the Lord have called you in righteousness and will hold your hands; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people. As a light to the Gentiles to open blind eyes and to bring out prisoners from the prison house,” (Isa 46:6-7). Also, in Micah 4:6-7, God declares His interest in gathering and retaining His people, a remnant of Israel. And so, it can be deduced from the above search that God is particular about His people and He calls, keeps, and retains them.

Principles of Membership Retention in the New Testament

The New Testament writers and Jesus Himself were very concerned about membership retention. They gave much attention to this subject of retention because they were aware of the difficulties in converting people and the great cost, the blood of Jesus, that had to be paid in order to do so (Acts 20:28). This truth illustrates a scriptural idea that the New Testament makes abundantly clear: “The whole body, being lifted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body” (Eph 4:8). All believers must grow into useful members of Christ's body and engage in active service in order for their spiritual well-being to be maintained. This will make them valued kingdom builders for God. The approach to be considered here is that of Jesus's and Apostle Paul's relationship-based ministry. The compassion, acceptance,

and forgiveness of evildoers displayed by Jesus demonstrate His friendship and love for humanity, and Paul's care and concern for the children of God paint well some ways of retention in the New Testament. The discussion below explains that.

Jesus' relational ministry is vital for member retention. Rick Warren says that "good relationships within the church serve as a glue to hold people together."³ This portrays a picture of individuals who are so bonded that trying to split them up might face resistance, hence, a healthy relationship helps in the retention of new converts. Jesus's relational ministry is seen in the love and friendship He demonstrated through His empathy, acceptance, and pardon of transgressors, as well as His offering of Himself in order to atone for humanity's sins. The Bible says that Jesus "when he saw the clouds, He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). He loved people. He understood that since God cares for lost people, lost people are important to Him.

Ruthven Roy explains how Christ reached out to people and kept them as follows: "Christ mingled with people, showing a genuine interest in their well-being; Christ sympathized with people; Christ took time to minister to peoples' needs; Christ won the confidence of the people He mingled with, sympathized with them, and ministered to them; Christ invited His friends to follow Him. This was a challenge to be like Him who called them."⁴ Jesus Christ's strategy or method for gaining and keeping souls was to establish relationships and attend to people's needs. He sought the individuals in their everyday vocations and showed enthusiasm in assisting them in all areas of the affairs of their lives.

³ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 339.

⁴ Ruthven Roy, *A Challenge to the Remnant: Designing Our Mission Strategy to Impact the Real World* (Frederick, MD: Network Discipling Ministries, 2002), 191-192.

In John 15:16, Jesus stated, “I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, and that fruit remains.” The above text suggests that when members are won for Christ, they should be well handled so that they can belong to and stay at Christ's feet.

Nearing the end of His earthly ministry, while praying for both His present followers and those who might believe in Him by their teachings (John 17:20), He could say: “I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled” (17:12). It could be seen that Jesus claimed that the sheep the Father had given Him had remained. God cares for everybody!

The early Christians were so eager to tell the gospel of their risen Lord, and they adopted Christ’s strategy to nurture the new members in Christianity. In the book of Acts, “repeated references were made to the people accepting the word and believing in the gospel and being added to the church.”⁵

Jesus worked with a small group of twelve apostles (Matt 10:2-4) who received the Great Commission of preaching the gospel to the whole world. The passion that the apostles worked led to the small group becoming 120 before Pentecost (Acts 1:15), then after the Pentecost event (Acts 2:41), some three thousand (3000) souls were baptized into the church. Acts 4:4 says: “Many of those who heard the word believed and the number continued to be five thousand.” Again, the Scriptures say that “more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number” (Acts 5:14).

It was incredible how passionate the apostles and early church were in fostering and keeping their members. The disciples did prioritise caring for the new

⁵ Sidney W. Powell, *Where are the Converts?* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1958), 4.

members, hence according to Acts 6:7: “the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.” The members’ enthusiasm was so intense that “the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5). The oneness and fellowship that existed encouraged unity and good harmony among the early church, hence the growth.

Paul’s ministry was full of concern for membership retention. Following his conversion, Paul answered the call and began planting churches throughout Asia Minor (Acts 9; 1 Tim 1:12-14). His caution “to the leaders of the church of Ephesus, when he was about to leave them, shows not only how he was carrying an overwhelming burden for preaching the gospel to all, both gentiles and Jews, but also how he cared for the converts, to keep them from backsliding or apostasy.”⁶ In Acts 20:28-31, Paul said: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number, men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”

Throughout his letters, “Paul’s strategy to retain believers faithful to Jesus is found in different activities and procedures such as: (a) commitment in personal pastoral care to church members (Col 1:24-2:5); (b) encouragement of fellowship in house/small groups (Rom 6:5); (c) exhortation to keep one another in love and mutual consideration as brethren and as one body (Rom 12:9-21;14:13; 1 Cor 12:12- 27); (d) the efficiency of servant leadership; (e) his concern for the believers to become active

⁶ Jean Baptiste Niyonzima, “A Strategy to Enhance Church Membership Retention in Kabusunzu Seventh-Day Adventist Church, East-Central Rwanda Conference” (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2016), 17.

disciples of Christ, according to their respective spiritual gifts and true to their testimony (1 Cor 12:1-11); (f) motivation for the converts to diligent study of the Scriptures (1Tim 3:15, 6; Acts 17:11); (g) instructions on the importance of nurturing and follow-up concerns (Titus 1:5; 2:15). He constantly wrote to the churches to warn them about divisions, order, and spiritual growth.”⁷ His letters and journeys show that he was dedicated to bringing the Gospel to new areas and aiming to retain those he had already brought to the Christian message.

Principles of Membership Retention in Ellen G. White’s Writings

Ellen G. White, one of the co-founders of the church, discussed the significance of keeping members in the church in several of her writings to the church. Ellen White has offered numerous insights and recommendations regarding the church’s goal of spreading God’s word and maintaining members’ faith. Her practical counsels and instructions considered in this study are largely from the following books: *Evangelism*, *Testimonies for the Church* (volumes 5, 6), and the *Ministry of Healing*. In these books, she advised that new members should be given the needed attention through effective Bible studies, friendships, visitations, care, and love. In her book *Evangelism*, she said: “To us the commission is given. We are bidden to go forth as Christ’s messengers, to teach, instruct, and persuade men and women to fix their attention upon the word of life.”⁸ From this statement, it can be inferred that the church’s mission extends after baptism and involves continuing to teach, advise, and persuade Christians so that they might be firmly established in the church.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 15.

Also, speaking about new members in the church, Ellen White says: “Those who have newly come to the faith should be patiently and tenderly dealt with. It is the duty of the older members of the church to devise ways and means to provide help, sympathy and instruction for those who have conscientiously withdrawn from other churches for the truth’s sake, and that cut themselves off from the Pastoral labor to which they have been accustomed, and if the members of the church neglect this duty, they will be unfaithful to the trust that God has given them.”⁹ What Ellen White is saying here is that the entire church should develop strategies and approaches for retaining new believers; otherwise, the majority would go missing. She is encouraging all the church members to build a good rapport with the newcomers and assist them in developing a close connection with God, which will go a long way to cement their stay within the church.

Another significant area Ellen G. White comments about is the proper nurturing of new converts. In her book *Evangelism*, she said: “Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God’s spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those that are young in faith and experience to go to them not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, speak unto them words that are like apples gold in pictures of silver.”¹⁰ It is implied by this statement that the church should provide appropriate nurture. There is a need to give intentional care and attention to the new members to assist them to remain with the church.

⁹ White, *Evangelism* 78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 352.

Ellen White instructed that “just as God with His all-seeing eyes bears with our mistakes and is pitiful of our weakness, we are to cherish the same spirit of tenderness and forbearance.”¹¹ She writes that “true Christians will not exult in exposing the faults and deficiencies of others. They will turn away from vileness and deformity to fix their mind on what is attractive and build others up. To the Christian, every act of fault-finding, every word of censure or condemnation is painful.”¹² This implies that every Christian has to be tolerant of others who make mistakes rather than just condemning them. For new converts, this is even more true.

Again, White draws attention to the importance of visitation in membership retention. She encourages church members to visit families. “Whenever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in missionary work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood and know their spiritual condition.”¹³ The main goal of doing this is to establish relationships with people and assist newly converted people in deepening their connections with God. Proper visiting, prayer, and mutual care will help the new converts stay in the church and grow their faith.

More so, the woman of God emphasizes the need to train individual members of the church to be Bible students. She says, “Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible reading, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School Classes, how best to help the poor and care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted.”¹⁴ This will help them, especially the

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1904), 5:95.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ White, *Testimonies*, 6:296.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1905), 149.

new converts, to be well-grounded in the world of God, so as to prepare themselves and others for Christ's soon return.

Summary

This chapter discussed theological ideas from the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings on membership retention. Numerous crucial principles for retaining church members have been well enumerated. Some of these principles include: a Christ-centered practice which the new convert needs to possess through a constant devotional life that comprises frequent prayer, consistent Bible study, and consistent fellowship with church members. The new converts should be given a role to play in the church to help them feel part of the church and have their faith strengthened. Last but not least, the leaders, including other mature church members, should nurture the new members. They have to put forth a lot of effort to build loving relationships with them, meet their physical and spiritual needs, pay them a visit in their homes, and support them in times of need. These will help to sustain the interest of the new members and energize their faith in the Lord to stay in the church.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section looks at pertinent literature on new member retention across various denominations. The review contains other authors' perspectives on, definitions of, and descriptions of member retention. Thus, this literature review represents the opinions of individuals who have studied and developed concepts, as well as some who draw on their personal experiences about the issue of retention and church growth. The review consists of the following sections: member retention and its importance, factors that support retention, and those that hinder the retention of members. Also, effect of age and gender on church membership retention has been examined.

Member Retention and its Importance

Retaining members is essential for church growth because it ensures that newly baptized members will continue to live out their beliefs. According to Warren, "a member retention is a system of assimilation and keeping of new members in the faith."¹ This implies that one of the church's main duties should be to retain new members. To this end, everyone in the church should contribute to creating a friendly, comfortable, and supportive environment that will help the new members to remain. Dudley and Cummings say that "Church growth has both an internal spiritual and an external numerical quality. Both go together, and both are essential to the fulfillment

¹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 311-312.

of the Great Commission.”² Numerical growth is not enough if there is no spiritual growth of the members. This same source points out that “for the church to grow both numerically and spiritually, factors that contribute to retention should be identified and promoted, while those that are negative should also be identified and attended to. Such strategies should result in church growth.”³ Talking about retention would be worthless if the church does not grow, since there would be nothing to keep other than sustaining what already exists.

When the church is “purpose-driven, one of its major goals will be to retain its members by helping them to understand the reasons and needs for belonging to the group.”⁴ This, according to Warren, “should be a church that goes beyond just winning people into the faith, but moving a step further, that is, turning attendees into members,”⁵ and “developing them into mature Christians,”⁶ and “turning them into ministers”⁷. Therefore, “retention can be accomplished by a church that is warm through fellowship, which grows stronger through worship, and deeper through discipleship.”⁸

Jonas Arrais discusses how meetings like church boards and nomination committees can occasionally ruin individuals' reputations. A “good name in the church

² L. Roger Dudley and D. Cummings, *Adventures in Church Growth* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1983), 12.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Richard Sithole, “Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Membership Retention in the Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists” (DMin diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2010), 26.

⁵ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 309.

⁶ Ibid., 331.

⁷ Ibid., 365.

⁸ Ibid., 49.

may lead to retention, and the opposite may cause people to detach themselves from the group.”⁹ A group that loves, respects, cares for, and protects one another is one that people want to stick with. This source claims that this is feasible, particularly if “hurtful practices” are eliminated, giving people a sense of appreciation and affection.

Also, it is believed that church members stick together when there is mutual support. According to John Mallison, “Christians who positively relate to one another do various things together, such as studying the Bible together, praying together, and eventually getting acquainted with one another as friends.”¹⁰ Importantly, living a Christian life goes beyond merely believing; it also requires affiliation and group membership. By interacting with other Christians, the newly baptized should develop in their faith. Hence, they remain in the congregation to support its growth.

Paul, the apostle, also suggests that we should “be devoted to one another in brotherly love” (Rom 12:10), and that “in Christ, we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all others” (Rom 15:5). Nichol et al. make two observations on the texts. “First, they suggest brotherhood as referring to the Christian family, where tender love exists between near relatives. Second, the use of the term brotherhood is about a close bond that exists between the members of a Christian church.”¹¹ Anybody would naturally want to be a part of a group that fosters and maintains an atmosphere of love and concern for its people. It is worth noting that

⁹Jonas Arrais, *A Positive Church in a Negative World: Learning and Improving Leadership in Every Experience of Your Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 2007), 24.

¹⁰ John Mallison, *Growing Christians in Small Groups* (Scripture Union, 1989), 103.

¹¹ “Brotherly Love” [Rom 12:10], *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 6:620.

retention is very important because it is part of the reason why the church exists as the agency of God.

Factors That Promote New Member Retention

This section looks at some elements that influence the retention of new members in local churches, as portrayed by authors and other scholars. These include good relations, leadership that focuses on people, discipleship, involving members, and worship services/worship styles. The purpose is to demonstrate how putting members first, particularly their well-being (both spiritual and physical), goes a long way to influence retention, especially of new members.

People-Oriented Leadership

It is said that “people-oriented leadership is one whose focus is on members’ needs and how such needs can be met.”¹² It exhibits features that were present in Christ during His earthly ministry: “He cared for people’s needs” (Mark 8:1-9).

Ellen White cites Jesus as a model for people-oriented leadership when she says that “Jesus was not restricted to time or place, knew no compassion limits,”¹³ and “devoted more time to healing the sick than preaching, presented the gospel in the context of people’s own life experiences”¹⁴, and recognized no distinction of nationality, or rank, or creed. This illustrates that people-oriented leadership achieves success and credibility through good deeds and positive attitudes.

¹² Sithole, “Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Membership Retention,” 29.

¹³ Ellen. G. White, *The Ministry of Health and Healing*: An adaptation of Ellen White’s classic work (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

According to the Bible, “where there is no vision, people perish,” Proverbs 29:18; this verse highlights the significance of effective leadership. There is no denying that the direction our churches follow is influenced by their leadership. Pastoral leadership plays an important role in both retaining new members and providing ministry to them. A pastor is primarily responsible for the church’s direction and growth; hence, concerning new members, his best role is that of a shepherd. Yperen indicates that “shepherding requires heart and skills, in that order; shepherding is about the heart, first, not the head nor the hand.”¹⁵ Rodgers indicates, “The image of the shepherd is a powerful metaphor for God’s care for His people, and can be quite useful in pastoral care as an example of the character and nature of the compassionate and just God who intimately cares for His people.”¹⁶ Since people would always prefer to remain with a person or group that makes them feel loved and cared for, one of the traits that a pastor ought to possess is shepherding. So, if the pastor's shepherding model is the key to retention and the leadership role is to guide followers, it means leaders whose followers are lost may not be modelling this example.

Mentoring is an additional trait of a leader who focuses on people, and this, Horst asserts, “cannot be learned from a training course, but is a relationship.”¹⁷ This is a technique where a novice learns by being attached to or learning from an experienced, mature, and seasoned person or professional. Commenting about

¹⁵ James Van Yperen, *The Shepherd Leader* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2003), 23.

¹⁶ Ben Rodgers, *A Christological Reading of the Shepherd Motif for Pastoral Theology with Special Reference to Ezekiel 34*, accessed 20 June, 2024, <https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/RodgersB01.pdf>.

¹⁷ Tammyra Horst, *The Gift of Friendship: Developing and Enjoying Relationships that Last* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1999), 114.

mentorship, Fernando suggests “that time should be spent with the student who is being nurtured and trained, helping them to grow, which will result in maturity.”¹⁸ A fine example of this is how Paul raised Timothy and Silas, eventually referring to them as his children throughout their mentoring.

Another characteristic of a people-oriented leader is servant leadership. Jesus exemplifies this by “washing His disciples’ feet before the Last Supper” (John 13). Greenleaf supports this when he talks about a leadership style that helps. He believes that the most crucial thing is “for one to serve first, and then lead.”¹⁹ Leadership is implied to be service rather than rule. People who are being served by this type of leadership should be drawn to them because they understand that the leader is looking out for their best interests.

Positive People Relations

It can be taken that the newly baptized member is like a ‘new baby’ who needs special love and care so as not to die because they are spiritually helpless. Therefore, positive people relation, especially with the new members, implies the necessity of creating a loving and supportive atmosphere for those who are new to the faith. This is typified by tolerance, even when people stumble and make mistakes in their newly discovered faith. This can be accomplished by making them feel valued, expressing appreciation and encouragement, and simply extending warm greetings.

Barry Gane believes that “the dynamics of a caring and serving Christian Community fosters retention, particularly amongst the youth.”²⁰ He encourages the

¹⁸ Fernando Ajith, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 153.

¹⁹ Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 27, 29.

²⁰ Barry Gane, *Building Youth Ministry* (Riverside, CA: Hancock Center Publications, 2005), 53.

Christian community to “build relationships in which individuals are bonded together with Christ and one another. In this community, there is an atmosphere of warmth, love, and acceptance; sacrifices are made for the good of others. Spiritual growth is nurtured through the Word and the encouragement of one another.”²¹

Arrais, states that one of the reasons why people leave the church is a “lack of positive, nurturing atmosphere, which should be provided by the members.”²² He also observes that “people come to church not only to worship the Lord, but to feel part of a spiritual and loving family. The term ‘family’, according to him, implies being there for each other, sympathizing and caring for one another.”²³ Warren says that “as people fellowship and or worship together, they grow in their relationship; therefore, relationships to one another, if properly nurtured, will result in retention.”²⁴ And so, it is worth noting that establishing relationships with individuals by going to their homes, showing concern, and understanding their frustrations, joys, and dreams makes new members happy and stay in the church. Hill indicates, “the lack of connection feels even worse when surrounded by people, causing a special kind of loneliness.”²⁵ Therefore, new members should be made to feel the warmth and blessings of the positive relations we extend to them to cement their stay in the church.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Arrais, *A Positive Church in a Negative World*, 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 338.

²⁵ Glenn Paul Hill, “Addressing Reasons for Members' Non-Attendance at the Elmhurst Seventh-day Adventist Church” (DMin diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2014), 49.

Discipleship

The importance of churches not only ending on a membership-based ministry model but to a discipleship-based one cannot be overemphasized. According to Burrill, “discipleship is an acquiring of practical and theoretical knowledge.”²⁶ He explains that becoming attached to a teacher and developing a strong and warm relationship with them can help accomplish this. This idea that discipleship is relational helps to retain members. Referring to this, the Lord said to His disciples, “I no longer call you servants, but friends, for all things I have known from the Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). The Lord’s statements demonstrated how much the friendship and connection with disciples of Him had increased. When an individual has gained understanding and skills, he is confident in what he is doing, and also, once a relationship is formed, it is less probable that one will choose to distance oneself from others in the group.

If we disciple properly, according to Bailey, it will result in loyal support for Christ and His cause. This author also describes discipleship as “clinging to Christ that results from effective tutorage and mentorship, a submission and reshaping of character. Thus, it is the following of another experienced and seasoned disciple of Christ who can guide, guard, and nurture the new disciple in his crucial first days.”²⁷

James Cress says that “the product of evangelism must be disciples, not decisions. Failure to fulfill the great commission through which Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to make disciples of people, teaching them to observe all

²⁶ Russell Burrill C., *Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1996), 29.

²⁷ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15* (Saint Louis, MO: G.P.H., 1992), 20-22.

things He commanded will make it incomplete.”²⁸ Discipleship is vital for each and every Christian. Lack of discipleship in our older or more experienced church members is the root cause of the lack of discipleship in our new members. We are unable to emotionally connect with new members of our churches because of this lack of openness and compassion. And so Scazzero adds that a “Christian cannot be spiritually mature (and so help in discipling others) while remaining emotionally immature.”²⁹ Thus, in terms of both mission and character, our discipleship ought to be modeled after that of Christ, so that we can influence others to do the same. Mark Finley, commenting on the discipleship of new converts, said:

The rapid evangelistic growth necessitates a carefully thought through process of nurture to enable new believers to become strong disciples. Any approach to evangelism that focuses primarily on the number of baptized misses the mark. He said Jesus’ commission to His followers was not merely to baptize, but to make disciples, to develop faith-filled, praying Christians who are growing in grace, studying His word, worshiping with His people, and witnessing to the glory of His name.³⁰

Rainer and Geiger indicate, “If anyone knows discipleship it is Jesus. His method of discipleship was simple. Jesus drew twelve men to Himself, trained them, and unleashed the movement of the gospel through them.”³¹ While there are theological implications associated with discipleship, we must keep in mind that true discipleship is ultimately brought forth by Christ. Schwarz added to this conclusion:

²⁸ James Cress, *You Can Keep Them if You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association Resource Center General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2000), 16.

²⁹ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2003), 50.

³⁰ Mark A. Finley, “Evangelism’s Big Picture: From Baptism to Discipleship,” *Ministry*, September 2009, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2009/09/evangelisms-big-picture>.

³¹ Thom Rainer, & Geiger. E., *Simple Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing., 2011), 160.

“Evangelism has only been accomplished when disciples are made.”³² This means that if we adopt the discipleship model of Jesus Christ, and change the focus from members to disciples, it will give new members a stronger sense of belonging, which will ultimately motivate them to make more disciples and stay in the church.

Member Involvement

In the Bible, God’s church is compared to a body. God’s people are the body, and so they will eventually wear away and weaken in tone if they refuse to be utilized by God. Rainer indicates, “If a member does not become meaningfully involved in some type of ministry in the church, his or her dropout chances increase dramatically.”³³ Involvement in a program gives individuals the opportunity to experience or take part in an activity that allows them to support the cause; if that person is acknowledged or valued, they are more inclined to remain very active. The new members, if they are encouraged to join departments of their interest in the church, such as singing groups and others, will promote their active involvement or participation in the church for their retention. According to Mallion, “involvement provides an opportunity for the participants to express themselves and allows them to share problems and answers from their experiences.”³⁴ According to Logan, “mature disciples of Christ can be the result only when the new believer effectively is

³² Christian A. Schwarz, *Paradigm Shift in the Church* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1999), 199.

³³ Thom Rainer, “Four Principles to Membership Retention,” 2008, accessed 18 June, 2024, <https://www.apostolic.edu/four-principles-to-membership-retention/>.

³⁴ John Mallison, *Growing Christians in small groups* (Homebush West, Australia: Anzeta Publishers, 1989), 63.

assimilated into the mainstream of your church, using his gifts and talents to minister to others.”³⁵

New members give back to the greater community by sharing their gifts with the church. Paul backs up this claim by saying that “the purpose of gifts is to prepare God’s people for service” (Eph. 4:12). It appears from the story of the Talents that gifts are offered for some period, but that concealed gifts can be withdrawn.

“Involvement ensures repeated participation, which is useful in perfecting skills and increasing knowledge.”³⁶ This is possible in activities such as “hospital visitations, praying together, teaching, and witnessing in which one or a group is afforded the chance to participate repeatedly to the extent that they enjoy doing what is expected. Enjoyment and identification with the group could lead to members wanting to remain within the group.”³⁷

The way we trained new members in meetings also contributes to retention. People may boycott, resign, or abstain from meetings if they are not treated correctly, and contribute to their dropout. According to Tropman, “to keep the interest of members high in committees or board meetings, we should handle pre- and post-meeting tasks very well,”³⁸ and emotional elements sensitively managed.³⁹ The author claims that this leads to active attendance and active participation. People in this type of environment are given a fair opportunity to speak, their interests are supported, and their sentiments and emotions are controlled. Thus, participation makes people feel

³⁵ Robert Logan, *Beyond Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1989), 15.

³⁶ Sithole, “Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies,” 35.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ John Tropman, E. *Making Meetings Work: Achieving High Quality Group Decisions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 51.

³⁹ Ibid., 75.

they can make a significant contribution which keeps them around. In a church setting, Warren suggests that “people should be helped to talk about ‘our church’, leaving them with a sense of ownership and not mere consumers.”⁴⁰ As a result, the new converts are encouraged to use their gifts for the church’s upbuilding rather than to remain observers. This necessitates their active engagement in church events and programming.

Worship Services / Worship Styles

The purpose of worshiping God is to acknowledge His creative work and to thank Him for His salvation and blessings. A church service is a crucial gathering. Here, members come together to worship God in unison with an attitude of gratitude and praise, to listen to God’s word, to receive grace and strength to face life’s challenges, and to find the will of God for them in the process of soul conversion. And so, “the service ought to be marked by reverence, simplicity, and swiftness.”⁴¹ The new converts should experience the church service to be uplifting, happy, meaningful, and participatory, thereby helping these new members to remain in the church. “Even though newcomers may be shy coming into a new congregation in some ways, if they are encouraged, for example, to sing or share their testimony, it makes the service less of something you come to and more of what you bring.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 309.

⁴¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2020), 127.

⁴²Keith Woodard, “Strategies for Retention of New Members in the Ebenezer and Gethsemane Seventh-day Adventist Churches” (DMin., Andrews University, 2018), 39.

Factors that Work against Retention

Several factors fight against retaining new members. The following represent some of the main elements that may work against retaining new members, says Harris: “unresolved conflicts, gossip, poor leadership, negative attitudes, and lack of a positive nurturing atmosphere.”⁴³ Other factors include doctrinal reasons and unfulfilled expectations.

Unresolved Conflicts

Conflicts are bound to occur in any human institution. What makes it evil for new members to come and go is unresolved conflicts. If conflicts are not managed, it can affect new member retention and possible growth. In Ephesians 4:26, Paul says that “we should not let the sun go down while we are still angry”; thus, we should resolve issues as soon as possible, and anger should not last all day. Augsburger indicates that “conflict is natural and normal. It can turn into painful or disastrous ends, but it doesn’t need to.”⁴⁴ According to Fernando, “conflicts left unresolved, or an overreaction in the face of a crisis, rejection, or hostility can lead to unpleasantness and pain,”⁴⁵ resulting in anger,⁴⁶ and eventually, causing havoc. And so, the church should not sit unconcern and overlook conflict until situations become explosive, and destroy the entire congregation, especially new members.

⁴³ I. Harris, *Groups that Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 14, 15.

⁴⁴ David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981), 4.

⁴⁵ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

Gossip

Gossip is destructive. Arrais observes that “if issues are left unresolved, the results will be gossip, listening to and spreading rumors, and drawing unsupported conclusions about others.”⁴⁷ “Gossip is harmful in that it puts the object of gossip in a bad light, yet he does not bother to verify whether the information is factually correct or not. This is destructive to another’s reputation and may cause repulsion in the new convert to the faith.”⁴⁸ Proverbs 20:19 says, “A gossip betrays a confidence; so, avoid anyone who talks too much.” Also, Paul warns against gossip and malicious talk when he says, “If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” (Galatians 5:14,15). These could be some of the reasons why Samaan recommends “the Jesus way of loving and caring, a method which won people’s confidence and inspired the faith of those He led,”⁴⁹ this will help new member retention.

Poor Leadership

Ineffective leadership can also work against retention since it leaves the leader incapable of carrying out the tasks that need to be done, even though they are aware of what has to be done. According to Fernando, “such a person can ‘ignore’ problems and go ‘ahead with work’ as if nothing happened.”⁵⁰ Supporting this, Arrais notes that “you might end up somewhere else if you do not know where you are going.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Arrais, *A Positive Church in a Negative World*, 32.

⁴⁸ Sithole, “Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies,” 38.

⁴⁹ Philip G. Samaan, *Christ’s Way of Reaching People: The Fine Art of Relational Witnessing* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1990), 34.

⁵⁰ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 26.

⁵¹ Arrais, *A Positive Church in a Negative World*, 31.

Members, especially new converts, may become so frustrated by a leader who lacks vision and direction that they decide to leave the group.

Also, poor leadership concerns unconcern attitude towards the members even, new converts. This may cause some of the new members not to be interested in church gatherings and services, and may eventually lead to membership loss.

Negative Attitudes

If negative attitudes against each other continue, they could lead to the development of a bad environment that wards off people from staying in the church. According to Arrais, “negative attitudes among the group can repel or cause others to leave or to distance themselves from the group.”⁵² The bad or negative behavior such as hypocrisy or unfriendly attitudes by older church members, will directly or indirectly affect the individual, and eventually, he will start to go out of his way to avoid the unpleasant condition.

Lack of a Positive Nurturing Atmosphere

An atmosphere devoid of nurturing new members encourages their backsliding. Arrais ranks “lack of positive and nurturing atmosphere among the top reasons why people leave the church.”⁵³ A lack of a supportive, nurturing environment might cause the fellowship to become fractured, which can then cause members to become insensitive and cold. If this goes unchecked, the church’s reputation could be so damaged that people would wish to separate or withdraw from that kind of organization or church. Wagner advises that “caring should be a deliberate effort to retain members and that true religion takes the form of tangible actions on behalf of

⁵² Ibid, 34.

⁵³ Ibid, 11.

humanity”⁵⁴, and for it to happen, “true religion is to be expressed in deeds of compassion.”⁵⁵ Truly, real acts of love and compassion for fellow humans demonstrate to them how much they are liked, cherished, and valued.

New members should be made to experience an atmosphere that values their presence and membership. Rather than becoming a vibrant force in the church, they have a tendency to backslide if they do not experience a warm, loving, and compassionate welcome into the church. According to Warren, “a member becomes committed if the value of membership is clearly, communicated to him”⁵⁶. “There is a need also for the church to have structures to assimilate and keep those that it reaches to help them grow by involving them in ministry so that they may develop a sense of ownership.”⁵⁷ In fact, it will be pointless to engage in evangelism or anticipate significant church growth without plans for nurturing members in the church.

Doctrinal Reasons

According to Anguka one of the factors leading to membership dropout is doctrinal issues. He states that “the fundamental beliefs that the world church is grounded on are very detailed enough and in a true sense and provide the basis of what we believe in.” However, he says that “some of these fundamental beliefs such as the Trinity, Heavenly Sanctuary, Sabbath, God Head, Death, and Resurrection, are very technical and theological and require a professional interpretation”⁵⁸ for

⁵⁴ Lilya Wagner, *Caring is Not a Spectator Sport* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1986), 69.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 312-313.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 310.

⁵⁸ Charles Nyangia Anguka, “A strategy to Retain Members in MBITA Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kenya Lake Conference” (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2016), 49.

members to appreciate. He adds that if these doctrines are taught not with theological facts, but rather are forcibly and combatively put on them, they have no choice but to quit the church and look for comfort elsewhere. Also, if the new converts are not helped to understand and appreciate the relevance of these doctrines well, “they (doctrines) become too rigid to apply even the situational ethics where it could be applicable in the event of breaking any of the church doctrines and beliefs.”⁵⁹ The misunderstanding of these doctrines will lead to discouragement, which will eventually cause the individual to leave the church.

Unfulfilled Expectations

For sure people come to church because of the needs of their lives, when the church no longer fulfills their needs, they will stop to come.⁶⁰ And so, to retain these new converts the church ought to be smart enough to identify these felt needs of the newcomers and attend to them appropriately and timely.

The Effect of Age on Church Membership Retention

Age plays a role in figuring out a person’s retention of membership in a church, with younger, middle-aged, and older individuals showing different patterns of engagement. One of the most pressing concerns for religious institutions today is the declining retention rates among younger generations, particularly among teenagers and young adults. In a longitudinal study carried out in 2002, O’Connor, Hoge, and Alexander first examined 16-year-olds before surveying them once more when they were 38 years old. According to the participants, 79% of them stopped being involved

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Francis Bola Akin-John, *Closing the Back Door of Your Church* (Lagos, Nigeria: Life & Ministry Publications, 2010), 10.

with the church in their early adult years. By the time they were 21, the vast majority of them (61%) had done so. Additionally, the study revealed that over half of the participants (58%) went back to church from the middle of their twenties until they were about thirty years old.⁶¹

Kaiser in his study concerning retention highlighted the post-high school church retention crisis, “wherein a significant portion of youth ministry participants stop attending church once they enter college or join the workforce. This disengagement is often attributed to the lack of youth-centered church programs, competing social commitments, and shifting belief systems.”⁶²

Also, “connections, childhood habits, and mentorship were the main causes of young adults’ church attendance.”⁶³ For middle-aged adults, retention rates are generally higher due to life-stage factors such as marriage, parenthood, and career stability. Many individuals in this demographic view church participation as a means of moral and spiritual guidance for their children, leading to consistent attendance and engagement. According to Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite, “parents are more likely to attend church regularly to provide their children with a strong religious foundation, which in turn reinforces their commitment to the church. However, once their children become independent, some middle-aged individuals experience a decline in church

⁶¹ Thomas P. O'Connor, Dean R. Hoge and Estrela Alexander, “The Relative Influence of Youth and Adult Experiences on Personal Spirituality and Church Involvement,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 4 (2002): 723.

⁶² Travis Kaiser, “A Comparative Analysis of the Church Retention Rate of Christian High School Graduates” (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2015), 106.

⁶³ Black Wesley, “Youth Ministry that Lasts: The Faith Journey of Young Adults,” *The Journal of Youth Ministry* 4, no. 2 (2006): 23-31.

participation, particularly if their initial motivation for attending was centered on family obligations rather than personal faith.”⁶⁴

Moreover, older adults tend to have the highest retention rates, as church communities provide social support, spiritual fulfillment, and a sense of continuity. For many elderly individuals, religious engagement serves as a coping mechanism for life's uncertainties, including health challenges and loss of loved ones. Lauther notes that “seniors often rely on their church for both spiritual guidance and social interactions, making them a particularly stable demographic in church retention studies.”⁶⁵ Corcoran et al. examined Amish congregations and found that “while younger individuals are more likely to leave due to the allure of secular life, older members demonstrate steadfast commitment, valuing tradition and communal bonds.”⁶⁶

These findings suggest that retention efforts should be age-specific, focusing on youth engagement programs, family-oriented initiatives, and support systems for seniors. Strategies such as mentoring programs, flexible worship services, and intergenerational church activities could play a pivotal role in fostering long-term commitment among diverse age groups.

⁶⁴ Ross Stolzenberg, M. Blair-Loy and L. J. Waite, “Religious Participation in Early Adulthood: Age and Family Life Cycle Effects on Church Membership,” *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 1 (1995): 84

⁶⁵ Donovan Antonio Lauther, “Factors Affecting Retention of the Members of the Linden of Seventh-Day Adventists Church in New York” (PhD diss., Universidad de Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico, 2020), 112.

⁶⁶ Katie E. Corcoran et al., “Familial Ties, Location of Occupation, and Congregational Exit In Geographically-based Congregations: A Case Study of the Amish,” *Review of Religious Research* 63, no. 2 (2021): 245.

The Effect of Gender on Church Membership Retention

Gender also plays a significant role in church membership retention, influencing participation levels, leadership opportunities, and overall engagement. Historically, women have displayed higher religious commitment than men, a trend observed across multiple faith traditions. Women are often the driving force behind church community activities, playing active roles in ministries, social outreach, and volunteer work. Woolever et al. found that “women, particularly single women, tend to be more committed to church life, though they sometimes leave smaller congregations in favor of larger churches that provide more opportunities for spiritual and social engagement.”¹

However, despite their strong participation, women often face systemic barriers to leadership roles within many religious organizations. Hansen examined gender disparities in church leadership and found that “female pastors and clergy members tend to retain more female congregants, while male-dominated leadership structures show no such pattern of increased male retention.”² This suggests that leadership representation may play a role in influencing gender-based retention trends.

Men, however, exhibit lower retention rates and religious participation levels. Research reveals that men are more likely to disengage from church communities, often due to a lack of perceived relevance in their daily lives. A research study analysed disaffiliation trends and found that men are prone than women to drop out of

¹ Cynthia Woolever, D. Bruce and K. Wulff, “The Gender Ratio in the Pews: Consequences for Congregational Vitality,” *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 27, no. 2 (2006): 26.

² R. Hansen, “Gender Disparities in Church Leadership: The Impact on Congregational Retention,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 14, no. 3 (2022): 50-55.

religious institutions over time.³ The reasons for this trend vary, ranging from societal expectations that discourage emotional expressiveness to a lack of male-targeted church programs. Arguably, religious institutions have traditionally been more accommodating to female spirituality, emphasizing themes of community, caregiving, and relationship-building, values that align more closely with traditional female social roles.

The expansion of men's ministries and leadership opportunities have been found to be a possible solution to the gender gap issue. Stewart-Thomas explored the role of clergy gender in church retention and found that "male church leaders who actively engage men in leadership and community roles tend to see higher male retention rates."⁴ This suggests that tailored church programming, such as men's Bible studies, mentorship programs, and leadership initiatives, could help increase male engagement and reduce attrition.

Beyond participation rates, gender also influences the factors that contribute to church satisfaction and retention. Pimpton argues that "women's involvement in community-driven activities significantly strengthens church retention rates, as they often take on responsibilities in youth programs, fundraising, and event planning."⁵ Wilson reinforces this point, stating that while there is no significant gender

³Sharon Sandomirsky and J. Wilson, "Processes of Disaffiliation." Religious Mobility Among Men and Women, *Social Forces* 68, no. 4 (1990): 1216.

⁴ Michelle Stewart-Thomas, "Gendered Congregations, Gendered Service: The Impact of Clergy Gender on Congregational Social Service Participation," *Gender, Work & Organization* 17, no. 4 (2009): 406.

⁵ L. Pimpton, "Women's Engagement in Religious Communities: The Role of Service and Leadership," *Sociology of Religion* 71, no. 1 (2009): 62.

difference in overall retention rates, the ways in which men and women engage with the church differ substantially.⁶

Conclusion

Significant ideas about member retention have been discussed in this chapter. First of all, its significance is highlighted and examined, demonstrating how futile it would be to evangelize or anticipate significant church expansion in the absence of member retention plans. Also, several materials have been examined to identify, discuss, and recommend factors that support and ones that undermine member retention in the church. So, the chapter demonstrates that, with the right actions, members of a local church or district can be kept. Leadership in the local church should play a significant role in keeping new members. Meaningful member retention can be achieved not just through programs but also through the appropriate use of positive attitudes toward those newly baptized and love for one another. Also, retention efforts should be age-specific, focusing on youth engagement programs and support systems for seniors. Gender also influences elements that lead to church satisfaction and retention, and so there is a need for a universally welcoming environment. In a nutshell, regarding retaining new converts, the leadership of the church needs to be proactive and efficient.

⁶ Barbara J. Wilson, "The Church and the Retention of Young Adults," (D.Ed. diss., Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN, 2020), 130.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the approach that was taken to answer the questions of the study as stated in the first chapter. “Methodology in research is a systematic way of gathering data from a given population to understand a phenomenon obtained from a population.”¹ Additionally, this chapter captures a detailed discussion or explanation of the design of the work, population, sampling approach, instrumentation, ethical considerations, validity, and reliability of the instrument, data collection process, and analysis.

Research Design

The quantitative method was applied to gather data for the study through a questionnaire. A descriptive type of design was used here. The justification for using this quantitative method of research is that it helps to generate statistical information. Thus, by using statistical, logical, and mathematical procedures, it allows one to generate numerical data and hard facts. In addition, data can be collected from a large sample size.

¹ Ashley Crossman, *An Overview of Qualitative Research Methods* (New York: Dotdash Publishing Family, 2019), 15.

Targeted Population

As explained by Macionis, “the target population refers to the group being studied or researched.”² For this study, the population was baptized members of the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the church who had been in the church for two years or more. Thus, the target population was those members who had been retained in the church. The reasons are (a) they (older members) have been in the church for some reasonable time (two years and above) and can share things or factors that actually retained them. This can help strategize for new member retention; (b) Also, the older members have experienced, to some extent, factors that militate against new members' retention, since they have been new members before. This information will be helpful in membership retention.

The population was selected because the district had existed for over thirty years, nevertheless, membership retention was very low, as it has been explained in Chapter 1 above. Again, this was due to proximity since the researcher is a church leader in the district. The district had five (5) churches, with a population of 875 baptized church members who had been in the church for two years or more.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample is a segment of a population that is used to portray the entire group. Regarding this research, a sample size of 275 baptized church members was taken from the churches in the district. Yamane's sample selection formula indicated below was used to select the respondents.

² John J. Macionis, *Sociology*, 11th ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1989), 43.

Calculation of a Reliable Sample Size Using Taro Yamane Method

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where: **n** - sample size

N - population

e - margin error, which could be 0.10, 0.05, or 0.01

Therefore, the sample size of this study using the above formula was determined as follows:

Population under consideration: 875

Using 0.05 as the margin of error

$$n = N / (1 + N (e)^2)$$

$$= 875 / (1 + 875 (0.05)^2)$$

$$= 875 / (1 + 875 (0.0025))$$

$$= 875 / (1 + 2.1875)$$

$$= 875 / 3.1875$$

$$= 275 \text{ baptized church members}$$

A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to obtain participants to gather the data. The justification for choosing this technique is that, as a probability sampling method, it provides every individual of the population with the same chance to be involved in the study. Therefore, it ensures proper representation of the subgroups (churches in the districts) of the population to be part of the study.

Table 2 below gives the breakdown of the number of participants taken from each church for the study. The number of participants for each church was proportional to the size of its membership.

Table 2 below shows total membership (those who have been in the church for two years and above) of each church in the district and the number of samples taken for the study

Table 2. Total Membership

Churches	Total Membership (baptized)	Sample size
Old Tafo Mile 3	528	166
Pankrono Estate	247	77
Ntaamu	46	15
Real Truth	32	10
Swedro	22	7
Total	875	275

Source: Statistics gathered from Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventist Church Secretary's record.³

Selection Criteria

The participants sampled were those who had been baptized members of the church for more than two years. This is because those who stay longer in the church can provide more information concerning issues of retention in the church. Thus, they (older members) have experienced, to some extent, factors that work against new members' retention, and they can share elements that help to retain new members.

Instrumentation

To accomplish the study purpose, a self-made questionnaire for data gathering was made by the researcher with the help of his advisor. The self-constructed instrument for the research work was based on the literature. The questionnaire was organized into four sections. The first section covered the demographics, such as age and gender. The age groupings were guided by Erik Erikson's stages of development,

³ Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventists, *District Secretary's records* (Old Tafo, Ghana: Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventists, 2023).

each associated with specific age ranges. For this research, the age groupings considered, according to Erikson, were as follows: (18–40, 40–65, 65 and above). This framework of Erikson helps researchers understand and support individuals in their challenging situations. The rationale for grouping the ages was to ensure statistical relevance in terms of balance analysis when the study involved a large population.

The second section elicited information on factors that have sustained the interest of members to stay in the church. The items in this section were measured using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - agree, and 4 - strongly agree. The reason for using this scale is that it assists in removing neutral responses, encouraging participants to select between agreement and disagreement. This clarity enhances data reliability because it collects more precise viewpoints and makes it easier to analyse. The third section of the questionnaire was structured to elicit information on causes of membership loss, and here, too, a 4-point Likert-type scale was used to assess the items. Table 3 below gives the interpretation for the Likert scale. Section four of the questionnaire was designed to produce information on membership retention strategy. Hard copies of the questionnaire were used since it was more convenient, normal, and easily administered and answered by the participants.

The 4-point Likert-type scale: The following are detailed breakdown of the 4-point Likert-type scale, including the numeric scale, scaled responses, average weight calculation, and verbal interpretation:

Numeric Scale: The numeric value with response category is: 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - agree, and 4 - strongly agree.

Scaled Response: The scale response indicates the degree of agreement or disagreement with a statement, and is measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Scale Average Weight: To calculate the average weight of the Likert scale, we use the midpoint of the scale values as the average. The following formula can be used:

$$\text{Average Weight} = \frac{\sum(\text{Response Values})}{\text{Total Responses}}$$

The results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Interpretation Table for the 4-Point Likert Scale

Number	Values	Interpretation
1	1.00 – 1.74	strongly disagree
2	1.75 – 2.49	disagree,
3	2.50 – 3.24	agree
4	3.25 – 4.00	strongly agree

Source: Alico and Guimba⁴

Verbal Interpretation of the Scale:

1.00 - 1.74 *Strongly Disagree* (Strong negative sentiment toward the statement)

1.75 – 2.49 *Disagree* (Some negative sentiment toward the statement)

2.50 – 3.24 *Agree* (Some positive sentiment toward the statement)

3.25 – 4.00 *Strongly Agree* (Strong positive sentiment toward the statement)

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was subjected to external and internal validation. Experts from the Adventist University of Africa did the external validation of the instruments. Their contributions were incorporated as revisions in the questionnaire. Then, it was taken for a Pilot study in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District with thirty respondents. The

⁴ Jerryk Alico and Guimba Wardah, “Level and Causes of Pre-university Students’ English Test Anxiety: A Case Study on Mindanao State University,” *Researchers World-Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce* 6, no. 3 (2015): 3.

exact church of the pilot study was Pankrono Estate. In the main study, the respondents who were used in the pilot study were excluded. The internal validation underwent several statistical evaluations. Cronbach's alpha was applied to check the internal consistency using data collected from the pilot study. Cronbach Alpha results using SPSS: As a rule, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or higher is good. The pilot study results revealed a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.83, which indicated a good reliability level of the instrument for the study. Table 4 below represents this.

Table 4. Range of Reliability and its Coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha

Coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability level
more than 0.90	excellent
0.80 – 0.89	good
0.70 – 0.79	acceptable
0.60 – 0.69	questionable
0.50 – 0.59	poor
less than 0.50	unacceptable

Source: Zahreen, Ismail, and Saleh⁵

Ethical Considerations

Firstly, the research received the green light from the Theological Seminary of Adventist University of Africa. The final approval was obtained from the university's Ethics Review Committee (AUA-ISERC) before the research work started in the field. Also, authorisation was obtained from the leadership of the Mid-Central Ghana Conference of the church, where the Old Tafo Mile 3 District belonged before the study commenced. In the whole study process, ethical issues were upheld. The guidelines listed below were noted:

⁵ Khairul Zahreen Mohd Arof, Syuhaida Ismail, and Abd Latif Saleh, "Contractor's Performance Appraisal System in the Malaysian Construction Industry: Current Practice, Perception and Understanding," *International Journal of Engineering & Technology* 7, no. 3 (2018), 46.

Informed consent: Participants were not coerced into taking part in the study; instead, they were informed of its purpose. A consent form to be signed was available to all who offered to participate. Confidentiality: This was upheld during the research process. Respect and dignity: Every participant received dignified and respectful treatment. Benefits and Risks: Respondents contributed to knowledge about keeping new church members, which helped to devise a strategy to retain new members for church growth. There were no identifiable risks in participation. Intentionally, an environment where individuals or participants feel comfortable expressing their feelings and experiences were created as they answered the questionnaire.

Participants who were wounded due to church dissensions were helped in the following ways: (a) Offered or encouraged pastoral or professional counselling; (b) Encouraged wounded participants to engage in ministries or activities that align with their gifts and passions. Doing these services can help restore purpose and joy while fostering new connections within the church; (c) Connected participants with small groups, support networks, or trusted mentors within the church who can offer ongoing encouragement. A supportive community fosters healing and a sense of belonging.

Treatment and reporting of data: Responses from participants were not associated with their names. Individual involvement was not made public because the researcher was the one who has access to the raw data. The researcher worked with project expertise and knowledgeable advisor, and readers. Additionally, the researcher heeded the advice and direction they provided as they oversaw every phase of my research.

Data Collection

Permission for data collection was obtained from the Mid-Central Ghana Conference of the church, where the Old Tafo Mile 3 District is situated. Thereafter, letters were sent to the district, and the churches within were duly informed for their permission to carry out the research work. Six people were trained as data collection assistants to help in the data collection. The researcher obtained the lists or records (names and contact address and/or numbers) of the population under study from the secretaries of the churches. This was possible because each church in the district was enrolled in the Adventist Church Management System (ACMS). Then, a proportionate number of respondents from each church was randomly selected to obtain the sample.

With regard to the procedure of the sampling, codes were generated for all the names in the population to help identify members for the study. A period of five (5) weeks was used. The researcher informed the churches about the date/day and time for the exercise. Then each church was reached as scheduled or at their convenience. The consent form was explained to the participants. Also, the investigator gave an explanation of the procedure for gathering data to the respondents before the questionnaire was administered. Hard copies of the questionnaire were given out to the participants for their responses. Thereafter, the data was collected. Participants who were not available at church were contacted at their convenient places. Then, the data was processed by the investigator, and the outcomes were input into the computer. To ensure the security and confidentiality of the respondents, in addition to the questionnaire bearing no name, their information was destroyed immediately after entering the information into the computer system. Once this procedure was done, the researcher proceeded to work with the tabulated information on the computer.

Data Analysis

The Data collected was first screened to correct all errors, and incomplete data collection instrument was discarded. A coding manual was then developed, and the data obtained was entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v.26) for analysis, and the results were presented in tables. These analytical techniques were used to make it possible to evaluate the phenomenon easily and to give a foundation for evaluating the issue. The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data to assess why people leave the church, and effective and strategic ways of curbing membership loss were provided. The descriptive statistical techniques included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation, and inferential statistics such as ANOVA and independent sample t-test.

Analysis with respect to research question one: descriptive statistics – Means, standard deviation - were used to analyze the data to evaluate the reasons for membership loss. Analysis with respect to research question two: descriptive statistics – Means, standard deviation - were used to analyze the data to evaluate the reasons for membership retention. Analysis with respect to research question three: descriptive statistics – frequency, percentages - were used to analyze the data to determine the most effective strategy. Analysis with respect to research question four: ANOVA was conducted to check whether there was a significant difference between age and retention of new members. Analysis with Respect to research question five. an independent sample t-test was carried out to check whether a significant difference existed between gender and retention of new members.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's main focus is to investigate the reasons for loss of new members and develop effective strategy that contributes to membership retention in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the church. The study's findings and results are presented and discussed in this chapter. The results of the demographical features of the respondents are presented first in this chapter, followed by the representation of results following the research questions that had been posed in chapter one, and a discussion and summary of the findings close this chapter.

Demographic Information of Participants

The study sampled 275 baptised church members of Seventh-day Adventist church in the Old Tafo Mile 3 district. Table 5 shows distribution of respondents by age and gender. It also shows that out of the 275 respondents sampled, 146 were males and 129 were females. Also, 158 of the respondents were between the 18 – 40 age range, 99 respondents between 40 – 65 age range whereas 18 of the respondents were either 65 years old or above.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

Demographics		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
Age	18-40	81	77	158
	40-65	55	44	99
	65 and above	10	8	18
Total		146	129	275

Research Question One

The first study question was “What are the possible reasons/causes for membership loss in the churches in the district?” Data from section C of the questionnaire was analysed to answer this research question. Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations, which outline the causes of membership loss in the church in the Old Tafo Mile 3 district.

The data in Table 6 demonstrates why church members may choose to leave the SDA church. The data illustrates both interpersonal and structural issues within the church community. The means recorded for each of the items fall within the range of 2.50 – 3.24 which indicates that respondents agree to all the items as reasons why SDA members in the Old Tafo Mile 3 district leave the church.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Causes of Membership Loss

Causes of membership loss	Mean	S. D.
Lack of love and fellowship in the church	3.07	.92
Inadequate teaching and nurturing after baptism	2.86	.97
Lack of involvement in programs	2.91	.89
Weak church welfare activities	2.84	.92
Conflicts within the church	2.90	1.04
Lack of genuine Friendship	2.93	.85
Disagreement with some doctrines/teachings	2.85	.93
Discrimination/Feeling Isolated	3.08	.90
Work constraint (work and Sabbath issues)	3.01	.84
Family issues	2.89	.80
Cultural issues	2.62	.87
Leadership (elders) crises/issues	2.76	.99
Hurtful behaviour such as gossip of some church members	3.14	.87
Association with former friends	2.92	.91
Style of worship	2.64	1.02

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Paying attention to these individual items is very key to understanding why members leave the church unnoticed. For instance, rating *hurtful behaviour such as gossip among church members* (M = 3.14, SD = 0.87) very high, highlights the profound impact that negative interactions can have on individuals. When members feel judged or spoken about behind their backs, it can create an environment of distrust and emotional distress, making it challenging for them to remain. This indicate that emotional and social experiences within the church play a significant role in retention.

Similarly, *discrimination / feelings of isolation* (M = 3.08, SD = 0.90) and a *lack of love and fellowship* (M = 3.07, SD = 0.92) suggest that some members feeling disconnected or unwelcomed will push them to leave the church. Church is supposed

to be a fellowship where social and interpersonal interactions are very key. Hence, members will not continue to be present in a church where members are hostile and associate with only their loved ones and church authority. It makes it difficult for new converts to create a bond with existing member in the church and finally resort to leaving the church. This aligns with concerns regarding a *lack of genuine friendship* (M = 2.93, SD = 0.85), reinforcing the notion that personal relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging.

Beyond social interactions, practical challenges also contribute to membership loss. Respondents are of the view that *Work constraint (work and Sabbath issues)* (M = 3.01, SD = 0.84) pose a threat to their retention in the church and if not considered may push them to leave the church. Here, membership loss is attributed to struggle some members face in balancing their faith with professional obligations. If workplaces do not accommodate religious observances, members may find themselves in difficult positions where they must choose between financial stability and church attendance. Additionally, *family issues* (M = 2.89, SD = 0.80) also play a role, suggesting that personal responsibilities or conflicts within the household may hinder active church participation.

Another critical factor is *conflicts within the church* (M = 2.90, SD = 1.04). Disagreements, power struggles, and unresolved tensions can create an atmosphere of division, making it challenging for some members to feel spiritually uplifted. Similarly, *leadership crises* (M = 2.76, SD = 0.99) can also lead to membership loss. When church elders or leaders are perceived as ineffective, biased, or engaged in conflicts, it can erode trust and discourage continued involvement of church members.

Concerns regarding *inadequate teaching and nurturing after baptism* (M = 2.86, SD = 0.97) suggest that some members may feel spiritually lost after their initial

commitment. Without proper guidance and continued learning, new members may struggle to integrate fully into the church, making them more likely to drift away. Likewise, *disagreement with certain doctrines* (M = 2.85, SD = 0.93) indicates that theological differences can also contribute to membership loss. If members find specific teachings difficult to accept or incompatible with their personal beliefs, they may choose to leave rather than remain in a place where they feel conflicted.

While *cultural issues* (M = 2.62, SD = 0.87) and worship style (M = 2.64, SD = 1.02) received lower mean scores, they still imply that some members may feel out of place due to traditions, music preferences, or the manner in which services are conducted.

Research Question Two

The second research question was “What are the factors that contribute to membership retention of new members?” Data from the section B of questionnaire was analysed to answer this research question. Table 7 displays the means and standard deviations of all 13 items, which outline the factors that contribute to new members’ retention in the church in the Old Tafo Mile 3 district.

The data in Table 7 highlights the key factors that help retain new church members in Old Tafo Mile 3 district of the church. Majority of the means (9 items) as indicated in Table 7 fall within the range of 2.5 – 3.24, showing respondents’ agreement to each of the statements as factors that contributed to membership retention. In addition, the mean of *songs ministrations* (M = 3.51, SD = 0.62), *Church doctrines and teachings* (M = 3.49, SD = .75), *Sabbath school programs* (M = 3.46, SD = .63) and *Sound preaching or sermon* (M = 3.29, SD = .69) fall within the range of 3.25 to 4.0 depicting respondents’ strong agreement of its contribution to

membership retention. The findings indicate that both spiritual nourishment and social integration play crucial roles in ensuring long-term membership. These individual factors need much attention as their contribution to overall members retention have highlighted in this study.

Table 7. Factors that Contribute to Membership Retention of New Members

	Mean	S. D.
Church doctrines and teachings	3.49	.75
Sabbath school programs	3.46	.63
Songs ministration	3.51	.62
Sound preaching or sermon	3.29	.69
Warm fellowship among church members	3.16	.77
Membership of a group (singing, youth, etc)	3.24	.79
Strong welfare	2.94	.87
Having friends in the church	3.07	.82
Visitations	2.91	.85
Modelling by elders	3.02	.80
Pastor's mentorship and leadership	3.03	.82
The opportunity to take part in church programs	3.19	.79
The privilege to serve an office	2.96	.87

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Among other factors, *song ministration* (M = 3.51, SD = 0.62) emerges as the highest-rated, suggesting that music has a profound impact on new members. Songs serve not only as a form of worship but also as a source of emotional and spiritual connection, making members feel uplifted and engaged. Hence, it is not surprising members hold it high as one main reason which can retain them in the SDA church. Closely following this is *church doctrines and teachings* (M = 3.49, SD = 0.75),

indicating that sound biblical teachings and doctrinal clarity are essential in strengthening members' faith and commitment. A well-grounded understanding of church beliefs likely fosters a sense of purpose and conviction, encouraging long-term membership.

Sabbath school programs (M = 3.46, SD = 0.63) also play a critical role in retention, showing that structured learning and interactive discussions contribute to members' spiritual growth and sense of belonging. This factor is more in line with the earlier finding "church doctrines and teachings" since Sabbath school programs are usually tailored to explain church doctrines to members. Moreover, it creates the opportunity for new converts to further understand the church rationale behind and scriptural backing the various activities performed in the church. Similarly, sound preaching and sermons (M = 3.29, SD = 0.69) reinforce the importance of delivering meaningful, inspiring messages that resonate with members and encourage their continued participation.

Respondents agreeing to *Warm fellowship among church members* (M = 3.16, SD = 0.77) as a factor that contributes to new members retention highlights the importance of a welcoming and supportive community. When new members feel genuinely embraced and valued, they are more likely to stay. This is further supported by *having friends in the church* (M = 3.07, SD = 0.82), emphasising that personal relationships play a crucial role in a member's decision to remain. These findings are in line with earlier findings that factors such as lack of genuine friendship, feeling of discrimination/isolation contribute to membership loss. Additionally, *membership of a group (singing, youth, etc)* (M = 3.24, SD = 0.79) reflects the significance of active participation. Being part of a group within the church helps newcomers integrate more easily, develop friendships, and establish a sense of purpose within the congregation.

Opportunities for involvement also contribute to retention, as shown by *the opportunity to take part in church programs* (M = 3.19, SD = 0.79). When members are given responsibilities and feel that their contributions matter, they develop a stronger attachment to the church. Similarly, *the privilege to serve an office* (M = 2.96, SD = 0.87), though rated slightly lower, still suggests that leadership roles can enhance a sense of commitment and belonging.

Supportive structures such as *Strong welfare systems* (M = 2.94, SD = 0.87) and *visitations* (M = 2.91, SD = 0.85) also contribute to the retention of new members. Respondents are of the view that the acts of care and outreach, such as checking on members outside of church services, contribute to a feeling of being valued and at the long run sustain the membership of new converts. While these factors have relatively lower mean scores compared to others, they still play a role in strengthening the bond between members and the church community.

Leadership also plays a role in retention of new members, as seen in *pastor's mentorship and leadership* (M = 3.03, SD = 0.82) and *modelling by elders* (M = 3.02, SD = 0.80). When church leaders set a positive example and provide guidance, they inspire members to remain committed to their faith journey.

Research Question Three

Research question three was “What is the most effective strategy for retaining new converts?” Data from the Section D of questionnaire was analysed to answer this research question. Results are demonstrated by Tables 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 and discussed accordingly.

Table 8 shows results from participants respondents to the question “*Which one of these three biblical principles needs more emphasis in the church for improvement in church member retention?*”

Table 8. Three Biblical Principles that Needs More Emphasis

	Frequency	Percent
Emphasis on church doctrines	90	32.7
Emphasis on warm relationships among the church members	136	49.5
Emphasis on church involvement and integration of church members in different church activities	49	17.8
Total	275	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

When considering which biblical principle should receive more emphasis to enhance church member retention, responses were divided across three key areas. The largest portion of respondents (136 individuals, 49.5%) expressed that fostering warm relationships among church members is the most crucial factor. This suggests that many church members believe a strong sense of community and interpersonal connections are vital for sustaining church involvement. Meanwhile, 32.7% (90 respondents) pointed to a greater emphasis on church doctrines, suggesting that some members view theological teachings as a key component of retention. On the other hand, 17.8% (49 respondents) highlighted the importance of church involvement and integrating members into various activities, indicating that active participation helps members remain connected.

These findings reflect a broad understanding that both relational and doctrinal elements play a role in keeping members engaged and intact, but the highest priority appears to be on creating a welcoming and connected church environment.

Also, participants response to question “*Which of the following program directions do you think is more important to retain the church members?*” were analysed and shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Program Directions that is More Important to Retain the Church Members

Program direction	Frequency	Percent
Special sermons that explain church doctrines	88	32.0
Programs that help to build warm relationships among the church members	142	51.6
Programs on improving the quality of the Sabbath School	45	16.4
Total	275	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

When asked about the most important program direction for retaining church members, the highest percentage of respondents (51.6%, 142 individuals) favoured programs that build warm relationships among church members. This aligns with the findings from Table 8, reinforcing the idea that social connections are a key factor in church retention. Additionally, 32.0% (88 respondents) believed that special sermons explaining church doctrines should be prioritised. This suggests that while relationship-building is essential, many still value doctrinal understanding as a means of strengthening faith and commitment. A smaller percentage, 16.4% (45 respondents) indicated that improving the quality of the Sabbath School should be the focus, highlighting that while this aspect is recognised, it is not viewed as the primary retention strategy. These insights suggest that the church should balance both relational and doctrinal programmes to maintain member engagement effectively.

Moreover, participants' responses to the question "*Which one of the following do you think is more important to retain the church members?*" were analysed and the results are as presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Activities More Important to Retain the Church Members?

	Frequency	Percent
Special Bible study for the newly baptized church members	94	34.2
Involving the newly baptized church members in different church activities	90	32.7
Intensive visitation of the newly baptized church members by church leaders and others	91	33.1
Total	275	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

The responses to this question indicate that there is no single dominant approach to retaining newly baptized members, as opinions were fairly evenly distributed. 34.2% (94 respondents) highlighted the importance of special Bible study programs for newly baptised members, emphasising that continuous learning and deeper scriptural understanding help new believers remain committed.

Similarly, 33.1% (91 respondents) supported intensive visitations by church leaders and other members, pointing to the significance of personal follow-ups and pastoral care in strengthening connections with new converts. Meanwhile, 32.7% (90 respondents) believed that involvement in different church activities plays a crucial role in retention, suggesting that active participation fosters a sense of belonging. These findings indicate that an effective retention strategy should incorporate multiple approaches, ensuring that new members receive both spiritual guidance and community support.

Moreover, respondents' responses to the question "*Which of the following on members' welfare, do you think is more important to retain the church members*

(choose only ONE option from the items below)?” was analyzed and results are as shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Activities on Members' Welfare that is More Important in Retaining Church Members?

	Frequency	Percent
Improvement in hospitality or church support (material assistance) in difficult times	110	40.0
Creating social ministry (provision of food, shelter, clothing, safety, etc)	87	31.6
Effective visitations of new converts and new members	78	28.4
Total	275	100.0

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

When asked which aspect of member welfare is most important for retention, 40.0% (110 respondents) pointed to the improvement of hospitality and material assistance during difficult times. This suggests that many church members view tangible support, such as financial aid, as a key factor in feeling valued and supported by the church community. Another significant portion, 31.6% (87 respondents) selected creating social ministry that provides essential services like food, shelter, clothing, and safety, highlighting the importance of practical support in fostering a sense of belonging. These responses reinforce the idea that retention is not just about spiritual guidance but also about addressing members' real-life needs. Meanwhile, 28.4% (78 respondents), emphasised effective visitations of new converts and new members, indicating that personal connection and consistent outreach efforts can make a meaningful difference in member retention.

Table 12. Activities that are Most Valuable as a Way of Retaining New Church Members

	Frequency	Percent
Building relationships	124	45.1
Learning and spiritual growth	89	32.4
Feeling more connected to the church	62	22.5
Total	275	100

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

In considering what makes new members stay in the church in table 12, 45.1% (124 respondents) identified building relationships as the most valuable factor. This further emphasises the recurring theme seen in previous tables that personal connections and a welcoming church environment play a crucial role in retention. Meanwhile, 32.4% (89 respondents) pointed to learning and spiritual growth, showing that while relationships are essential, many also seek deeper theological knowledge and personal development in their faith journey. A smaller group, 22.5% (62 respondents), indicated that feeling more connected to the church was their top priority, suggesting that some members need a stronger sense of belonging through church structure and engagement. These findings highlight that while a strong feeling of community is key, the church should also ensure that spiritual development opportunities are readily available.

Research Question Four

The study sought to answer the question “What is the effect of age on new member retention?”. This research question focuses on finding out whether age of new member has an effect on the factors that will cause them to remain in the church. Thus, finding out whether there are differences in how respondents of different age

groups consider to be the factors that contribute to retention of new members. In that regard the means of the responses to Section B of the questionnaire were compared in terms of three different age groups (18 – 40, 40 – 65, and 65 and above). The results from the analyses as presented in Table 13 shows that the mean values of “*Strong welfare*”, “*Having friends in the church*”, “*The opportunity to take part in church programs*”, and “*The privilege to serve an office*” for each age group fall within the range of 2.50 – 3.24 showing all age group similar agreements to them as factors contributing to new member retention. On the hand, *church doctrines and teachings*, *sabbath school programs* and *song administration* were strongly agreed by all age groups. Also, there were some differences in terms of the degree of agreement among age groups. For instance, *sound preaching or sermon* was strongly agreed by 40 – 65, and 65 and above age groups whereas 18 – 40 agreed to it as a factor contributing to membership retention.

Although the means show similar agreements to these factors by respondents of different age groups, there was the need to find out whether significant difference exist in their agreement. Comparison of each factor across age group was conducted to find significant difference using one-way ANOVA. The results as shown in Table 13 depict no significance difference across age groups for all the factors except *church doctrines and teachings*, and *membership of a group* (singing, youth, etc.).

Table 13. Effect of Age on New Member Retention

Factors contributing new member retention	Age			Sig.
	18-40	40-65	65+	
	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Church doctrines and teachings	3.38	3.62	3.78	.013
Sabbath school programs	3.45	3.44	3.67	.354
Songs ministrations	3.53	3.47	3.47	.713
Preaching or sermon	3.20	3.40	3.39	.063
Warm fellowship among church members	3.15	3.12	3.44	.258
Membership of a group (singing, youth, etc)	3.33	3.08	3.35	.046
Strong welfare	2.97	2.84	3.22	.183
Having friends in the church	3.15	2.94	3.11	.129
Visitations	2.90	2.86	3.35	.081
Modelling by elders	3.02	2.95	3.44	.53
Pastor's mentorship and leadership	3.06	2.92	3.33	.108
The opportunity to take part in church programs	3.23	3.10	3.22	.44
The privilege to serve an office	3.05	2.80	3.00	.074

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Significance level $p < 0.05$

Post hoc test was conducted using Tuckey test. The results as shown in table 14 show significant difference between 18 – 40 age group and 40 – 65 age group for *church doctrines and teachings*, $p=0.032$; and *Membership of a group (singing, youth, etc.)*, $p = 0.042$.

Table 14. Post Hoc Test for Multiple Comparison of Age Groups

Tuckey HSD							
Dependent Variable	(I) What is your age	(J) What is your age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Church doctrines and teachings	18-40	40-65	-.24272*	.09604	.032	-.4691	-.0163
		65 and above	-.38887	.18845	.100	-.8331	.0554
	40-65	18-40	.24272*	.09604	.032	.0163	.4691
		65 and above	-.14615	.19356	.731	-.6024	.3101
	65 and above	18-40	.38887	.18845	.100	-.0554	.8331
		40-65	.14615	.19356	.731	-.3101	.6024
Membership of a group (singing, youth, etc)	18-40	40-65	.24570*	.10137	.042	.0068	.4846
		65 and above	-.02391	.19941	.992	-.4939	.4461
	40-65	18-40	-.24570*	.10137	.042	-.4846	-.0068
		65 and above	-.26961	.20538	.389	-.7537	.2145
	65 and above	18-40	.02391	.19941	.992	-.4461	.4939
		40-65	.26961	.20538	.389	-.2145	.7537

The results from both Table 13 and Table 14 are considered and interpreted below.

The relationship between age and church member retention reveals interesting patterns in how different generations connect with the church. Younger, middle-aged, and older members each have similar as well as distinct priorities when it comes to what keeps them engaged and committed.

Church doctrines and teaching is factor that support new membership retention that shows age group differences. The ANOVA test showed significant difference among age groups. The post hoc test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between 18 – 40 and 65 and above ($p = .100$), 40 – 65 and 65

and above ($p = .731$), however, there was statistically significant difference between 18 – 40 and 40 – 65 ($p = .032$). The results show that older members were more interested in church doctrines as compared to younger ones.

Sabbath School programs are valued similarly by all age groups, but the highest appreciation comes from older members, who rated it at 3.67. This suggests that structured biblical learning plays a key role in retention as people age. However, no significant difference among age groups as shown in Table 13 also highlights that even though differences exist the emphasis is similar across all age groups. Similarly, *song ministration* is consistently appreciated across all age groups, though younger members (18-40) find it slightly more engaging with a rating of 3.53, however, there is no statistically significant difference among the age groups. Worship through music – *songs ministration* - remains a unifying factor for the church, regardless of age ($p = .713$).

Sound preaching and sermons seem to grow in importance as people age. While younger members rated this factor at 3.20, middle-aged and older members placed greater emphasis on it, with scores of 3.40 and 3.39, respectively. This could indicate that as people mature in their faith, they become more reliant on sermons for spiritual nourishment and guidance. Notwithstanding, the ANOVA test shows no statistically significant difference among age groups.

The sense of *warm fellowship among church members* follows a similar trend, with older members expressing a stronger appreciation for it. The 65-and-above group rated it at 3.44, whereas younger and middle-aged groups scored it lower at 3.15 and 3.12. This suggests that as people age, they place greater value on personal connections and community within the church. As in other cases the ANOVA test showed no statistically significant difference among the age groups, ($p = .258$).

Membership of a group (singing, youth, others) is another factor that support new membership retention that shows age group differences. The ANOVA test showed significant difference among age groups. The post hoc test as shown in Table 14 also revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between 18 – 40 and 65 and above ($p = .992$), 40 – 65 and 65 and above ($p = .389$), however, there was statistically significant difference between 18 – 40 and 40 – 65 ($p = .042$), and their means indicate that the younger (18-40) is more influence to engage in structured group activities than the older (40-65). Thus, the younger find great importance in participating in these groups as a factor to retain their membership. Those in the middle-aged category seem to value this less, which may be due to external commitments, such as work and family, which limit their ability to participate actively in church groups.

The role of *strong welfare* in contributing to new membership retention was particularly highlighted for older members with mean score 3.22 compared to 2.97 among younger members and 2.84 among those in the middle years. This highlights the increasing need for material and emotional support as members grow older. However, there was no statistically significant difference among age groups for respondents' appreciation of strong welfare ($p = .183$) Similarly, *having friends in the church* is more recognised by the younger and older members than for middle-aged individuals. Those in the 18-40 and 65 and above age groups rated this factor at mean score of 3.15 and 3.11, respectively, while the middle-aged group scored it lower at 2.94. It suggests that young members seek social connections as they integrate into the church, while older members rely on friendships for emotional support and community. However, there was no statistically significant difference among age groups, $p = .129$.

Visitations efforts also show an upward trend with age. Older members placed a much higher value on church visits, compared to younger and middle-aged members. This could be due to older members being less mobile or more in need of personal connection. A similar pattern is seen in the importance of elders modelling Christian life, with older members giving it a higher rating at mean score of 3.44. This indicates that, as people grow older, they increasingly look to church leaders for inspiration and guidance. Meanwhile age group had no significant effect on both *visitations*, $p = .081$ and *modelling by elders*, $p = .53$.

Pastoral mentorship and leadership is also more valued by older members, who rated it at a mean score of 3.33. In contrast, younger and middle-aged groups scored it lower at 3.06 and 2.92, respectively. This suggests that younger members may seek mentorship from peers or small groups rather than relying solely on pastoral guidance. It is also worth noting that the ANOVA test showed no statistically significant age differences.

The opportunity to take part in church programs was slightly more important to younger members (Mean = 3.23), though the older group still values them at 3.22. This suggests that active engagement remains a retention factor for all ages. However, when it comes to holding a leadership position within the church, younger and older members seem to be more interested, rating it at a mean score of 3.05 and 3.00, respectively, while middle-aged members gave it the lowest rating of 2.80 yet there was no statistically significant difference among the age groups.

The privilege to serve an office is more recognised by the younger and older members than for middle-aged individuals. Those in the 18-40 and 65 and above age groups rated this factor at mean score of 3.05 and 3.00, respectively, while the middle-aged group scored it lower at 2.80. It suggests that young members put great emphasis

on the positions that are given to them to showcase their leadership skills, while older members consider it as a great opportunity to share their experience and expertise with the church. However, there was no statistically significant difference among age groups, $p = .129$. Thus, the privilege to serve an office is similarly considered as a factor that supports membership retention among age groups.

Overall, the findings highlight that younger members value social engagement, music, and active participation, while older members prioritize relationships, welfare support, and pastoral care. Middle-aged members appear to place slightly less emphasis on certain aspects of church life, possibly due to external responsibilities. It is worth also to note these differences were not statistically significant with the exception of church doctrines and teachings and membership of a group. Understanding these differences can help churches create age-specific retention strategies that meet the unique needs of each group.

Research Question Five

The study sought to answer the question “*What is the effect of gender on new member retention?*”. This research question focuses on finding out whether gender of new members has an effect on the factors that will cause them to remain in the church. Thus, finding out whether there are differences in how male and female respondents consider are the factors that help retain new members. In that regard, the means of the responses to Section B of the questionnaire were compared in terms of the gender of respondents. The results from the analyses are as presented in Table 15, all the mean values, except 3 of each item for each age, fall within the range of 2.50 – 3.24, showing all age groups with similar agreements to them as factors contributing to new member retention.

The findings reveal subtle but meaningful differences in how male and female church members perceive various factors contributing to church retention. While both genders generally value the same aspects of church life, the degree of importance they assign to each varies slightly.

Both male ($M = 3.36$) and female ($M = 3.43$) respondents strongly agreed to *Church doctrines and teachings* as a factor that contributes to membership retention. This shows that church doctrines and teachings have significant contribution towards membership retention. However, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female mean scores, $p = .258$. Thus, male and female respondents place similar emphasis on church doctrines and teachings as a major contributor to their membership retention.

Sabbath School programs appear to be equally significant to both men and women, though women rated them slightly higher with mean score of 3.49 compared to men with mean score of 3.44. This suggests that structured biblical study is an essential retention factor for both genders, with a slight tendency for women to engage more with these programs. Similarly, *song ministration* is highly appreciated by both, with women (Mean = 3.52) rating it slightly above men (Mean = 3.50), reinforcing the role of music in fostering spiritual connection and engagement.

Table 15. Effect of Gender on Membership Retention

Factors contributing to membership retention	Gender		
	Male	Female	Sig.
	Mean	Mean	
Church doctrines and teachings	3.36	3.43	.258
Sabbath school programs	3.44	3.49	.542
Songs ministrations	3.50	3.52	.718
Sound preaching or sermon	3.34	3.23	.183
Warm fellowship among church members	3.18	3.15	.802
Membership of a group (singing, youth, etc.)	3.22	3.27	.622
Strong welfare	2.90	2.98	.495
Having friends in the church	3.14	2.99	.127
Visitations	2.94	2.88	.606
Modeling by elders	3.05	2.99	.568
Pastor's mentorship and leadership	3.05	3.00	.632
The opportunity to take part in church programs	3.26	3.11	.129
The privilege to serve an office	3.00	2.91	.413

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Significance level $p < 0.05$

When it comes to *sound preaching and sermons*, men (Mean = 3.34) place slightly more emphasis on this aspect than women (Mean = 3.23). This could indicate that men may rely more on formal teaching and sermons for spiritual growth, whereas women may find connection in other areas of church life. Conversely, *warm fellowship* among church members is valued almost equally by both genders, with men rating it at mean score of 3.18 and women at 3.15. This suggests that while social connection is important for both, neither gender sees it as the dominant factor in retention.

Participation in church groups, such as choirs or youth ministries, is slightly more valued by women (Mean = 3.27) than men (Mean = 3.22), indicating that women may be more inclined toward communal engagement within the church.

However, there was no significant difference between male and female participants. This pattern extends to *welfare support*, where women (Mean = 2.98) rated strong welfare initiatives higher than men (Mean = 2.90), suggesting that material and emotional support play a slightly larger role in retention for female members.

Having friends in the church appears to be a more significant factor for men (Mean = 3.14) compared to women (Mean = 2.99). This may suggest that men, who might have fewer social outlets outside of church, see friendships within the church as a stronger retention factor. Similarly, *visitations* are rated slightly higher by men (Mean = 2.94) than women (Mean = 2.88), though the difference is minimal with no significant difference, $p = .606$, indicating that personal outreach efforts are valued by both genders but do not appear to be a dominant factor in retention.

Modelling by elders, referring to the example set by church leaders, is slightly more valued by men (Mean = 3.05) than women (Mean = 2.99). This may suggest that men are more influenced by role models within the church community. Likewise, *pastor's mentorship and leadership* was rated slightly higher by men (Mean = 3.05) compared to women (Mean = 3.00), suggesting that men might look to church leaders for guidance more than women do. However, there was no statistically significant differences between male and female responses, $p = .632$.

Opportunities to take part in church programs are slightly more valued by men (Mean = 3.26) than by women (Mean = 3.11), suggesting that men may see active participation in church events as a stronger factor in their commitment. This trend is also observed in leadership roles, where men (Mean = 3.00) rated *the privilege to serve in an office* higher than women (2.91), implying that leadership responsibilities may be a greater motivation for retention among male members yet

the independent sample t-test results revealed no statistically significant difference, $p = .413$.

Discussion of Findings

The findings are discussed under subheadings. Each subheading is related to the specific research questions investigated in the work.

Causes of Membership Loss in Seventh-day Adventist church in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District

Several factors contribute to membership loss in the Old Tafo Mile 3 district, including a lack of love and fellowship, inadequate nurturing, unresolved conflicts, doctrinal disagreements, and social or cultural constraints. These challenges create an environment where members, particularly new converts, struggle to feel a sense of belonging and purpose within the church community.

A key reason for membership loss is the lack of a nurturing atmosphere within the church. Respondents' agreement to this factor reveals that when members do not experience warmth and compassion, they feel disconnected and eventually drift away. This aligns with the survey results, where "lack of love and fellowship" was rated as a significant cause of membership loss. These further stress that church leaders should engage in tangible acts of care and compassion to reinforce a nurturing environment. This agrees with Wagner who believes that deeds of compassion will create positive atmosphere and lack of it is a discouragement to new member retention¹

Additionally, conflicts within the church have been identified as a major cause of attrition. Members of the SDA church in the Old Tafo Mile were of the view that unresolved disputes and negative experiences can lead to frustration, discouragement,

¹ Wagner, *Caring is Not a Spectator Sport*, 69.

and eventual disengagement. The study findings reflect this concern, as church conflicts received a mean score of 2.90, indicating a moderate but significant impact on retention. This finding is in line with that of earlier studies by Fernando, who indicates that “conflicts left unresolved, may cause hostility and lead to unpleasantness and pain”², causing loss in new members in the church. Furthermore, gossip and negative attitudes among church members have also been cited as contributors to church dropout, supporting the idea that a hostile church environment can alienate members.

Doctrinal disagreements also pose a significant challenge. This result is consistent with past studies by Anguka³. Complex theological beliefs, particularly those concerning the Sabbath, resurrection, and sanctuary doctrine, can be difficult for some members to comprehend and accept. When these teachings are not presented in a relatable or accessible manner, members may feel overwhelmed or disconnected, leading them to seek spiritual fulfilment elsewhere. The study findings confirm this, with “disagreement with some doctrines/teachings” receiving a mean score of 2.85.

Furthermore, social and cultural issues also contribute to membership loss. The findings indicate that discrimination and feelings of isolation (mean = 3.08) are among the highest-ranked causes of dropout. Cultural barriers may prevent certain individuals from fully integrating into the church, making them feel like outsiders. This sentiment is echoed by studies which asserts that people remain committed to a church when they feel their membership is valued and their presence is acknowledged.

² Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry*, 26.

³ Anguka, “A strategy to Retain Members,” 49.

Work constraints and family-related issues further complicate retention efforts. The study shows that job-related conflicts with Sabbath observance (mean = 3.01) and family responsibilities (mean = 2.89) are common reasons for membership loss. When members feel that church attendance conflicts with their professional or personal obligations, they may gradually disengage.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that membership loss is not caused by a single factor but rather by a combination of relational, doctrinal, and socio-economic challenges. To address these issues, the church must foster a more inclusive and nurturing environment, improve doctrinal teaching methods, and develop supportive programs that help members integrate into the church community. As Warren emphasizes, a new member retention requires intentional efforts to properly nurture relationships⁴, create a warm fellowship, strengthen discipleship, and provide opportunities for service.

Factors Contributing to Membership Retention

The study's findings show the benefit of both spiritual growth and social integration in ensuring that new church members remain committed and engaged. It is evident that a combination of worship experiences, doctrinal teachings, warm fellowship, leadership mentorship, and active participation in church activities plays a crucial role in retention.

One of the key significant factors identified was the role of music in worship. Song ministration emerged as the highest-rated factor, emphasising the deep emotional and spiritual connection that music fosters within the church community. Worship through music not only inspires but also creates an environment where

⁴ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 338.

members feel uplifted and closer to God. The Bible frequently highlights the power of music in worship, as seen in the Psalms, (Psalm 96:1-6, Psalm 150:1-6), where believers are encouraged to sing and make joyful noises unto the Lord. Also, in Ephesians 5:19 says “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Many members find spiritual strength and encouragement through music, making it an essential tool for engagement and retention.

Closely following this is the importance of sound doctrinal teachings. Members who have a strong understanding of the church’s beliefs are more likely to remain committed to their faith. Doctrines provide a sense of direction and purpose, reinforcing the decision to stay within the church. This finding aligns with biblical teachings, particularly in the Great Commission, where Jesus commands His disciples to teach new believers to obey everything He has taught (Mathew 28:19,20). When members are well-grounded in their faith, they are less likely to drift away due to uncertainty or external influences.

Sabbath school programs and preaching also play a critical role in member retention. These provide structured learning opportunities where members can deepen their understanding of scripture and reflect on its application in their daily lives. Interactive discussions in Sabbath school create an avenue for spiritual growth, fostering a sense of belonging. Sound preaching, on the other hand, serves as a means of inspiration and guidance, shaping the spiritual journey of members. A well-delivered sermon has the power to strengthen faith and encourage consistent church attendance.

Beyond spiritual teachings, social connections within the church community significantly influence retention. Warm fellowship among church members creates an

atmosphere of love and acceptance, making new members feel welcome. When individuals establish strong friendships within the church, they develop a deeper attachment to the congregation. The early Christian church provides an excellent example of this in the book of Acts, where believers devoted themselves to fellowship, prayer, and communal living. The sense of togetherness played a key role in strengthening their faith and keeping them committed to the church. This finding agrees with the study by Gane,⁵ who reported similar findings.

Participation in church activities and ministries further enhances retention. This result is strongly supported by Rainer, who found out that “if a member does not become meaningfully involved in some type of ministry in the church, his or her dropout chances increase highly.”⁶ Members who are actively involved in singing groups, youth ministries, or other church departments tend to feel a greater sense of purpose. Being part of a smaller, supportive group within the church allows individuals to integrate more easily, develop friendships, and contribute meaningfully to church life. Opportunities to take part in church programs and hold leadership roles also increase commitment levels. When members feel that their contributions matter, they are more likely to stay and continue serving.

The study also highlights the role of pastoral leadership and mentorship in membership retention. Church leaders, including pastors and elders, serve as spiritual guides, shaping the faith and commitment of members. When leaders lead by example, provide mentorship, and show genuine care for their congregation, they inspire members to remain steadfast in their faith. The apostle Paul emphasized the

⁵ Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 53.

⁶ Thom Rainer, “Four Principles to Membership Retention,” 2008, accessed 18 June, 2024, <https://www.apostolic.edu/four-principles-to-membership-retention/>.

responsibility of church leaders to watch over their flock (Acts 20:28), a principle that remains relevant in today's church. Strong leadership creates a supportive environment where members feel nurtured and encouraged in their spiritual journey.

Also important to membership retention is acts of care and outreach, such as visitations and welfare support. Members who receive personal visits from church leaders or fellow members feel valued and appreciated. A church that cares for the welfare of its members fosters a sense of security and belonging. This aligns with biblical teachings, particularly in the book of James, where believers are encouraged to look after one another, especially those in need. While doctrinal teachings provide the foundation, tangible acts of kindness strengthen the emotional and social connection that members have with the church.

Overall, the findings suggest that membership retention is not dependent on a single factor but rather a combination of spiritual, social, and leadership-related elements. While doctrinal teachings and worship experiences lay the foundation, relationships, involvement, and mentorship ensure that members stay. The early church thrived because it focused not only on teaching but also on fostering a supportive community where believers supported one another.

For the Old Tafo Mile 3 District to improve its retention rates, efforts should be made to deepen relationships among members, encourage active participation in church life, and strengthen pastoral mentorship. Worship experiences, especially through music and structured teachings, should continue to be a priority, while programs that promote fellowship and personal engagement should be reinforced. By creating a church environment that is both spiritually enriching and socially supportive, new members will not only join but remain committed to their faith and the church community.

Effective Strategies for Membership Retention

Church membership retention is a process that requires intentional efforts in fostering relationships, providing spiritual support, and ensuring active participation. The findings highlight that while doctrinal teachings are important, they alone are insufficient to keep members engaged. Rather, a sense of belonging, meaningful church involvement, and strong pastoral care emerge as the key elements of retention.

A recurring theme in the study is the importance of warm relationships in the church. The findings indicate that newcomers are more likely to remain committed when they feel welcomed and integrated. This aligns with the work done by Warren⁷ with assertion that churches must provide a supportive environment where individuals experience genuine care and connection. It can be that many who leave do so because they fail to find the love and fellowship they anticipated. This result suggests that a church that fosters relational bonds and strong communal ties experiences higher retention rates, as members develop a sense of belonging and purpose.

Closely related to relationships is the need for active member involvement. When individuals are encouraged to participate in church activities, whether through small groups, ministries, or outreach programmes, they develop a greater attachment to the church. In other words, people stay where they feel needed, and that involvement fosters ownership, making it less likely for individuals to drift away. The study findings support this, indicating that participation in church life is an essential strategy for sustaining long-term commitment.

Spiritual growth through structured teaching and discipleship also plays a pivotal role in retention. New converts often require post-baptismal teaching and guidance to navigate their faith journey. This finding is consistent with Ellen White's

⁷ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 338.

admonition that “every church should be a school for its members and they should be taught how to give Bible reading, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School Classes, how best to help the poor and care for the sick.”⁸ This study notes that inadequate doctrinal instruction can lead to confusion and disengagement, particularly when members struggle with complex theological concepts. Paul’s ministry in the early church underscores this need, as he consistently provided scriptural teaching and mentorship to ensure believers remained grounded in their faith (Colossians 1:24-2:5). The study findings affirm that structured discipleship, including Bible study programmes and mentorship initiatives, significantly contributes to retention by equipping members with the knowledge and confidence to remain engaged.

Another critical factor in retention is pastoral mentorship and effective visitations. Ellen White agrees with this finding and says that the church especially leaders should visit the members and know their spiritual condition and other concerns.⁹ This emphasises that church leaders must take an active role in nurturing new members through personal engagement and spiritual guidance. This suggests that many who leave do so because they lack personal connection with church leadership. The study reinforces this perspective, showing that pastoral care and consistent follow-ups help new members feel valued and supported in their faith journey.

Additionally, church welfare and hospitality contribute to membership retention. This highlights the role of practical Christian service in strengthening faith and community bonds. When churches actively support members in times of difficulty whether through material assistance, hospitality, or personal visits they create an environment where individuals feel cared for beyond their spiritual needs.

⁸ White, *Ministry of Healing*, 149

⁹ White, *Testimonies for the Church* vol. 6, 296.

The study findings affirm that tangible acts of kindness and concern significantly enhance church retention, making members feel that they are part of a compassionate community.

The Effect of Age on Membership Retention

Age is a critical factor influencing how individuals engage with the church and the contributors to their retention. The findings reveal a complex yet insightful relationship between age and church membership retention. While individuals across all age groups generally concur regarding the fundamental factors that contribute to maintaining membership in the church, the variation in emphasis indicates that individuals interact with their faith in distinct manners corresponding to different life stages. This underscores the significance of considering age-related dynamics when developing church retention strategies, ensuring that members feel both spiritually fulfilled and socially connected in a manner that aligns with their evolving needs.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the findings is the collective appreciation for core elements of church life, such as worship, fellowship, and participation in spiritual programs. This widespread agreement indicates that faith remains a fundamental aspect of life. People's lives regardless of age, reinforcing the idea that the church serves as a place of stability and support across all generations. The strong consent to Sabbath School programmes as retention factor across age groups, with the highest appreciation coming from older members, suggests that structured biblical study plays an essential role in long-term faith retention. However, the fact that there was no statistically significant difference between age groups indicates that the importance of Sabbath School is not limited to any particular generation, but rather remains a foundational element of spiritual growth for all. Similarly, song ministration was widely appreciated across all age groups, reinforcing its role as a powerful and

unifying form of worship. Music, often seen as an emotional and deeply personal aspect of faith, appears to be a retention factor that transcends generational preferences, with members of all ages experiencing a connection to God through worship in song.

Despite this overarching agreement, the findings highlight key age-related differences in how members prioritise certain aspects of their church experience. One of the most striking differences is the way younger and older members place significantly more emphasis on participation in church groups, such as choirs and ministries, compared to those in the middle-aged category. The post hoc test revealed a statistically significant difference between the 18–40 and 40–65 age groups, suggesting that as people move into middle adulthood, they may find it more difficult to engage in structured group activities.

This trend is understandable, given that middle-aged individuals often have increased family responsibilities, demanding careers, and external commitments that limit their availability for church involvement. Unlike younger members, who may see participation in church groups as an opportunity for social bonding and identity formation, middle-aged individuals might experience competing demands that make it challenging to sustain active participation. Older members, on the other hand, may return to group engagement after their work and family obligations lessen, using these church communities as sources of companionship and continued spiritual fulfilment. This finding suggests that while participation in ministries remains a key retention factor across all ages, the church may need to provide more flexible involvement opportunities for those in the middle years, such as part-time or seasonal engagements that accommodate their responsibilities.

Another significant difference is in the emphasis placed on church doctrines and teachings, where middle-aged and older members expressed stronger agreement on its importance compared to younger members. The post hoc test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the 18–40 and 40–65 age groups, suggesting that as individuals mature in their faith, they develop a deeper commitment to doctrinal understanding. This finding is consistent with the result by Lauther who reported that older people often rely on their church for both spiritual guidance and social interactions, making them a particularly stable demographic in church retention studies.¹⁰ Younger members, in contrast, may be more drawn to the experiential and relational aspects of church life, valuing worship, fellowship, and engagement with peers over formal doctrinal instruction. This is consistent with broader research suggesting that younger Christians tend to approach faith in a more community-driven and interactive way, whereas older members often seek theological depth and structured religious study as they continue their faith journey. The findings indicate that while doctrinal instruction remains a core aspect of church retention, churches should consider tailoring their teaching methods to suit different age groups, perhaps by making theological discussions more interactive and relevant to younger members while maintaining deeper, more structured study opportunities for older congregants. Kaiser’s research supports this finding when he revealed that lack of youth-centered church programs can discourage them from church attendance.¹¹

Beyond these statistically significant differences, the findings also suggest gradual shifts in how certain aspects of church life are valued as members age. For example, older members placed slightly more importance on pastoral mentorship,

¹⁰ Lauther, “Factors Affecting Retention of the Members,” 112.

¹¹ Kaiser, “A Comparative Analysis of the Church Retention Rate,” 106.

visitations, and welfare support, suggesting that as people grow older, they may increasingly rely on the church for spiritual guidance, companionship, and practical assistance. While these factors were not significantly different across age groups, the trend is notable, as it reflects the changing needs of church members at different life stages. Older members, who may face physical limitations or reduced social networks, might find personal visits and pastoral care more crucial to their continued engagement in the church. This suggests that churches should strengthen their outreach efforts for older members, ensuring that they receive consistent pastoral support and feel included in the church community.

Meanwhile, friendships and social interactions were valued by all respondents, but younger and older members placed slightly more emphasis on them compared to middle-aged individuals. This suggests that young members rely on friendships to integrate into the church, while older members view social relationships as essential for emotional support and continued engagement. Middle-aged individuals, by contrast, may feel more independent in their faith journey or may find social fulfilment in spaces outside the church, such as work and family life. While these differences were not statistically significant, they reinforce the idea that churches must intentionally foster community-building efforts that appeal to different age groups, ensuring that all members, regardless of life stage, feel connected and valued.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the fundamental elements of faith and church commitment are valued across all generations, there are meaningful differences in how these factors are prioritised as members move through different life stages. Younger members are drawn to social engagement, music, and active participation in ministries, whereas middle-aged members show a greater emphasis on doctrinal teachings but may struggle with external responsibilities that limit their

involvement. Older members, in turn, rely more on pastoral care, strong relationships, and structured learning to sustain their faith. These variations suggest that church retention strategies should be dynamic and adaptable, ensuring that members of all ages have access to worship experiences, social connections, learning opportunities, and support systems that align with their specific needs and life circumstances.

Recognising these generational distinctions allows the church to create an environment where all members, regardless of age, feel supported, engaged, and encouraged in their spiritual journey. By fostering a balance between doctrinal instruction, social engagement, pastoral care, and active participation, the church can cultivate a strong and inclusive faith community where members remain committed at every stage of life.

The Effect of Gender on Membership Retention

The findings suggest that while there are slight variations in how men and women engage with the church, these differences do not translate into statistically significant distinctions in what contributes to their retention. This implies that, rather than adopting gender-specific retention strategies, churches should focus on fostering a universally welcoming and engaging environment that addresses the shared needs of all members. Both men and women prioritise key aspects of church life, such as spiritual growth, active participation, strong social connections, and pastoral care, underscoring the importance of a holistic approach to member retention.

One of the most notable findings is that both men and women rated Sabbath School programmes, song ministration, and preaching highly, suggesting that structured spiritual learning and worship play an essential role in retention across genders. This aligns with White's admonition that "men and women should be

instructed and persuaded to purge upon their attention the word of life,”¹² and that all believers, regardless of gender, require continuous spiritual nourishment to remain steadfast in their faith. Spiritual instruction provides individuals with a solid foundation in doctrine and biblical principles, reinforcing their commitment to church life. Consequently, churches that invest in well-structured teaching and discipleship programmes tend to experience higher retention rates, as they equip members with the knowledge and confidence necessary for a sustained faith journey.

The universal appreciation for warm fellowship and social connections further reinforces the idea that a strong sense of belonging is a fundamental factor in church commitment. Both men and women value being part of a community where they feel welcomed, included, and supported. This finding highlights the church’s role as not only a place of worship but also a social and emotional support system. Relationships within the church foster a sense of accountability and encouragement, which in turn strengthens retention. Studies have consistently shown that individuals who develop deep friendships within their religious community are less likely to disengage. The implication of this is that churches must actively foster a culture of inclusion, hospitality, and relational engagement, ensuring that every member, regardless of gender, feels connected and valued. Initiatives such as small group ministries, mentorship programmes, and community service activities can help create such an environment.

Another critical area of agreement between men and women is the importance of pastoral mentorship and leadership engagement. Both genders valued strong church leadership and opportunities for personal growth, suggesting that mentorship should

¹² White, *Evangelism*, 15.

be made accessible to all members rather than being tailored to a particular demographic. This supports Paul's teachings in Ephesians 4:12, which emphasize the need to equip all believers for ministry, reinforcing the idea that leadership within the church should be inclusive and empowering for everyone. Churches that develop structured mentorship programmes for both men and women not only strengthen individual faith journeys but also cultivate future church leaders who can contribute to long-term growth and retention. This means that rather than making assumptions about leadership preferences based on gender, churches should create pathways for spiritual development, skill-building, and ministry involvement that are open to all. However, Djupe in his research work found that church leaders who actively engage men in leadership and community roles tend to see higher male retention rates.¹³

The role of church welfare and material support in retention was also similarly rated between men and women, indicating that both genders equally appreciate churches that provide practical support during difficult times. This finding underscores the fact that Christian service extends beyond spiritual instruction to include meeting the practical needs of church members, such as assisting during personal crises, illness, or economic hardship. Acts of generosity and care reflect Christ's love in tangible ways, strengthening members' emotional and social ties to the church. The implication here is that welfare programmes should be a central aspect of church retention efforts, ensuring that members, regardless of gender, receive the necessary support to navigate life's challenges while remaining connected to their faith community.

¹³ Stewart-Thomas, "Gendered Congregations, Gendered Service," 407.

Overall, the findings suggest that rather than focusing on gender-specific retention strategies, churches should prioritise a holistic, inclusive, and relational approach to member retention. Both men and women remain engaged in the church when they experience strong spiritual nourishment, meaningful relationships, mentorship opportunities, and practical support. These factors transcend gender differences and highlight the universal human need for faith, belonging, and community. The most effective retention strategies will therefore be those that create an environment where all members feel spiritually fulfilled, socially connected, and empowered to contribute meaningfully to church life.

Summary of Findings

The study on membership loss and retention in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District identified several interrelated factors influencing both outcomes.

Membership loss is significantly driven by a lack of a nurturing environment. When members, especially new converts, do not experience warmth and compassion, they feel disconnected. Unresolved conflicts and negative interactions among members create frustration and alienation, adversely affecting retention rates.

Additionally, doctrinal disagreements, particularly regarding complex theological teachings, can overwhelm members when these concepts are not presented in an accessible manner, leading them to seek fulfilment elsewhere. Social and cultural constraints, such as discrimination and feelings of isolation, hinder integration, making some individuals feel like outsiders in the community. External responsibilities, including work and family obligations, further complicate participation in church life.

On the other hand, membership retention is supported by several key factors. Spiritual growth and engaging worship experiences, particularly through music, foster

deep emotional connections and commitment among members. Warm fellowship and strong relationships within the church create a vital sense of belonging. Active participation in church activities and ministries enhances members' attachment and ownership of their faith community. Furthermore, strong pastoral mentorship and personal engagement from church leaders help nurture members, making them feel valued and supported.

The findings also reveal important demographic insights. Younger members prioritize social engagement and active participation, while older members seek leaders or pastoral care, visitations and structured learning. Middle-aged individuals often face competing life responsibilities that impact their involvement. Interestingly, both men and women place equal importance on spiritual nourishment, social connections, and pastoral mentorship, suggesting a need for a universally welcoming environment.

In conclusion, effective membership retention relies on addressing relational, spiritual, and leadership dimensions. By fostering an inclusive community that meets the diverse needs of all members across different ages and backgrounds, the church can enhance commitment and integration, ensuring a vibrant and supportive faith community.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter gives an overview of the study by revisiting the purpose of the study, research questions, and significant findings. It clarifies the study's contribution to the broader spectrum of retaining and expanding membership, particularly focusing on its implications for membership retention in the Old Tafo Mile 3 district of the church. Additionally, it puts forward suggestions for further research to enhance the conclusions drawn from the study.

Summary

This study explored the factors contributing to membership loss and retention in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the church. It aimed to identify factors that contribute to membership loss and retention, identify effective strategies that can be adopted to ensure membership retention, and finally assess the role age and gender play in their effects on the factors that contribute to membership retention. To achieve these objectives, a descriptive survey design was used to investigate the questions of the study.

Regarding the first research question, the study found that membership loss is primarily driven by a lack of nurturing environments within the church community. Participants emphasised that feelings of disconnection often arise when compassion and warmth are absent, particularly for new converts who seek belonging and affirmation in their spiritual journeys. The presence of unresolved conflicts, ranging from interpersonal disputes to negative attitudes among members, exacerbates this

sense of alienation. The study found that such conflicts not only frustrate members but also create a hostile atmosphere that discourages engagement, participation and retention.

Doctrinal disagreements emerged as another significant factor contributing to membership loss. The complexity of certain theological teachings, particularly those related to the Sabbath, resurrection, and sanctuary doctrine, can overwhelm individuals who struggle to comprehend these concepts. When teachings are not presented in an accessible and relatable manner, members may feel lost or disconnected from the church's core beliefs. This disconnect may lead them to seek spiritual fulfilment elsewhere, undermining the church's efforts to maintain a committed congregation.

Social and cultural constraints further complicate the landscape of membership retention. Discrimination and feelings of isolation were identified as prevalent issues that hinder the integration of members, particularly those from diverse backgrounds. The inability to fully participate in the church community can lead to a diminished sense of identity and belonging. Additionally, external responsibilities, including work commitments and family obligations, often conflict with church activities, creating barriers that prevent members from fully engaging in the church's daily activities.

Conversely, in response to the second research question, the study highlighted several key factors that significantly enhance membership retention. Engaging worship experiences, particularly through music, foster deep emotional connections and provide spiritual nourishment. Participants reported that music not only uplifts their spirits but also creates an atmosphere conducive to worship and community bonding. Furthermore, sound doctrinal teachings play a crucial role in reinforcing

members' commitment to their faith. When members possess a strong understanding of the church's beliefs, they are less likely to drift away due to confusion or uncertainty.

Warm fellowship and strong social connections within the church community emerged as vital components of retention. The study demonstrated that when members feel welcomed and included, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and attachment to the congregation. Active participation in church activities, such as singing groups, youth ministries, and outreach programs, enhances this sense of purpose and fosters deeper relationships among members.

Pastoral and elder's mentorship were identified as critical element in nurturing member engagement. Church leaders who provide personal support and guidance play a pivotal role in helping members navigate their spiritual journeys. The findings underscored the importance of strong leadership in creating an environment where members feel valued and encouraged.

Moreover, the findings from the research question three regarding effective strategies for retaining new converts indicate that fostering warm relationships within the church community is paramount, with many of respondents emphasizing its importance. The data suggest that while doctrinal teachings and involvement in church activities are also valued, building interpersonal connections significantly enhances member retention. Programs designed to strengthen these relationships were favoured by large number of participants, reinforcing the notion that social bonds are crucial for sustained engagement. Additionally, responses revealed that various strategies, such as special Bible studies, intensive visitations by church leaders, and improved hospitality during difficult times, are essential in supporting new members. Overall, the study highlights the need for a multifaceted approach that prioritizes

relationship-building, spiritual growth, and practical support to effectively retain new converts in the church.

Lastly, demographic insights revealed that age posed by research question four significantly influence engagement and retention. Younger members prioritize social interactions and active participation in church activities, while older members tend to seek pastoral care, visitations and structured learning opportunities.

Interestingly, the findings to research question five revealed that both men and women shared similar priorities regarding spiritual growth, social connections, and mentorship, suggesting that retention strategies should adopt a holistic and inclusive approach.

Conclusions

The findings of this study underscore that membership loss and retention are not isolated issues but rather interconnected challenges influenced by a variety of relational, doctrinal, and socio-economic factors. A nurturing environment is essential for fostering member retention; addressing conflicts and promoting strong relationships within the church community are critical for creating a supportive atmosphere. The complexity of doctrinal teachings necessitates thoughtful and clear presentations to prevent members from feeling overwhelmed or disconnected.

Moreover, social inclusion and active participation are vital for instilling a sense of belonging among members. The study concludes that effective membership retention requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates spiritual growth, social integration, and strong leadership. By recognizing the diverse needs of members across different age groups and backgrounds, the church can create an environment conducive to both personal and communal spiritual growth. Since men and women

shared similar priorities regarding spiritual growth, social connections, and mentorship, retention strategy should adopt a holistic and inclusive approach.

The implications of this study extend beyond the Old Tafo Mile 3 District, offering insights that can be applied to other congregations facing similar challenges. The findings encourage that churches need to develop comprehensive strategies that address both the emotional and spiritual needs of their members. This approach not only enhances retention but also promotes a vibrant community where members feel connected and engaged.

Furthermore, the study shows the significance of continuous evaluation and adaptation of church programs and practices. As society evolves, churches must be willing to reassess their strategies to remain relevant and supportive. This adaptability will ensure that congregations can effectively meet the changing needs of their members, fostering an environment of growth and stability.

In summary, the study illustrates that a holistic understanding of membership dynamics is crucial for effective church management. By prioritising nurturing relationships, sound doctrinal teaching, and active engagement, churches can create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages lasting commitment among their members.

Recommendations

Considering on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance membership retention in the church:

1. **Foster a Nurturing Environment:** Church leaders should actively cultivate a warm and compassionate atmosphere that encourages connection among members. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, small group discussions, and social events can enhance relationships and reinforce a

sense of belonging. Regular check-ins with members, especially new converts, can help identify their needs and provide necessary support.

2. **Address Conflicts Constructively:** It is essential to implement conflict resolution strategies to address disputes among members effectively. Workshops or training sessions on effective communication and conflict management will equip members with the skills needed to navigate disagreements constructively. Creating a culture of open dialogue can foster understanding and reconciliation.
3. **Build warm relationships:** Building warm relationships within the church through creating a welcoming atmosphere, developing a strong follow-up system, and developing small groups for deeper connections will help retention since people stay where they feel valued and accepted. Also, celebrating and appreciating members by recognizing their birthdays, anniversaries, and achievements will show new members they are valued; hence, they develop a deeper attachment to the congregation.
4. **Enhance Doctrinal Teaching:** Simplifying and contextualizing doctrinal teachings can make them more accessible to members. Engaging Bible study programs that encourage questions and discussions can help demystify complex theological concepts and foster deeper understanding. Utilizing diverse teaching methods, such as visual aids and group discussions, can cater to different learning styles.
5. **Promote Social Integration:** Developing programs that encourage social interaction among members is crucial. Community service projects, fellowship events, and interest-based groups can help strengthen relationships and create a supportive network. Church retreats and social

gatherings can also provide opportunities for members to connect outside of regular worship services.

6. **Encourage Active Participation:** Creating flexible opportunities for members to engage in church activities, accommodating the varying availability of different age groups, is essential. This may include part-time involvement or seasonal activities that align with members' schedules. Encouraging members to lead initiatives or participate in planning events can also enhance their sense of ownership and retention.
7. **Strengthen Pastoral Leadership:** Ensuring that pastoral care is proactive and personal is vital. Regular visitations and outreach initiatives can help members feel valued and supported in their spiritual journeys. Church leaders should prioritize building relationships with congregants, fostering an environment where members feel comfortable seeking guidance and support.
8. **Utilize Feedback Mechanisms:** Establishing channels for members to provide feedback on their experiences within the church is essential for continuous improvement. Regular surveys, suggestion boxes, and open forums can help leaders understand members' needs and make necessary adjustments. This practice not only empowers members but also fosters a culture of inclusivity and responsiveness.
9. **Cultivate a Culture of Inclusivity:** Recognizing and celebrating diversity within the church community is paramount. Initiatives that promote inclusivity, such as cultural awareness programs and events that highlight different backgrounds, can help mitigate feelings of isolation among

members. The church should strive to create an environment where all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, feel valued and included.

By implementing these recommendations, the church foster a more inclusive and supportive church environment. This approach will not only enhance new member retention but also promote a vibrant and engaged faith community, ensuring that new members not only join but remain committed to their spiritual journeys and the church as a whole.

Suggestions for Further Research

Considering the findings, several areas for further research emerge that could deepen our understanding of membership within religious communities, specifically in Seventh-Day Adventist churches. First, qualitative studies exploring the individual experiences of members who have left the church could provide valuable insights into the specific factors that drive their decisions. Understanding these narratives may help churches develop more effective retention strategies.

Additionally, comparative studies examining membership retention strategies across different denominations or religious organisations could reveal best practices and innovative approaches that could be adapted to the context of the church. Such research could also highlight how cultural and socio-economic factors influence retention in diverse congregations.

Finally, longitudinal studies that track membership trends over time could help identify patterns and shifts in engagement, particularly in response to specific interventions or changes within the church community. Such research could inform ongoing efforts to create a vibrant and supportive environment for all members, ensuring that the church remains a relevant and nurturing space for spiritual growth.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter to the Conference for Research Authorisation

Seventh-day Adventist Church
P. O. Box KS 3795
Kumasi
December 10, 2024.

The Executive Secretary
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Mid-Central Ghana Conference
P. O. Box KS 9742
Kumasi, Ghana

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA ON A RESEARCH WORK

I am Master of Divinity (Mdiv) Student at Adventist University of Africa. I humbly request your permission to conduct my research work in your Conference specifically, Old Tafo Mile 3 District. The topic of my research is **“Retention Strategy for New Members in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana”**.

The research has for its purpose of investigating reasons for the loss of new members and developing effective strategy that can contribute to membership retention in the church. I intend to use questionnaire and members will assist in the provision of responses which will be treated confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for your usual cooperation.

God bless you.

Yours faithfully,



.....

Ebenezer Kwarteng

(Tel: 0245323223)

Letter of Authority from the Conference to Conduct the Research

Seventh-day Adventist Church
Mid-Central Ghana Conference

P.O. BOX KS 9742
KUMASI, GHANA
GPS: AK-408-6477
Tel: +233 200 268 343
Email: mcgc2015@yahoo.com
mcgcsda@gmail.com



December 16, 2024

Ebenezer Kwarteng
P. O. Box KS 3795
Old Tafo Seventh-day Adventist Church
Kumasi

Dear Ebenezer,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

In response to your letter requesting our permission to conduct a research in our territory as part of your academic study titled "Retention Strategy for New Members in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana," the conference has granted you the approval to conduct your academic research.

The administration will assist you in any way possible to make your research successful.

We wish you the best in your academic pursuit.

Yours sincerely,

PASTOR FRED OPOKU AGYEMANG
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



Cc: The Officers, MICG

Letter to the Old Tafo Mile 3 District to Request to Conduct Research

Seventh-day Adventist Church
P. O. Box KS 3795
Kumasi
December 10, 2024.

The Secretary
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Old Tafo Mile 3 District
P. O. Box KS 3795
Kumasi, Ghana

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA ON A RESEARCH WORK

I am Master of Divinity (MDiv) Student at Adventist University of Africa. I humbly request your permission to conduct my research work in the churches in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District. The topic of my research is **“Retention Strategy for New Members in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana”**.

The research has for its purpose of investigating reasons for the loss of new members and developing effective strategy that can contribute to membership retention in the church. I intend to use questionnaire and members will assist in the provision of responses which will be treated confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for your usual cooperation.

God bless you.

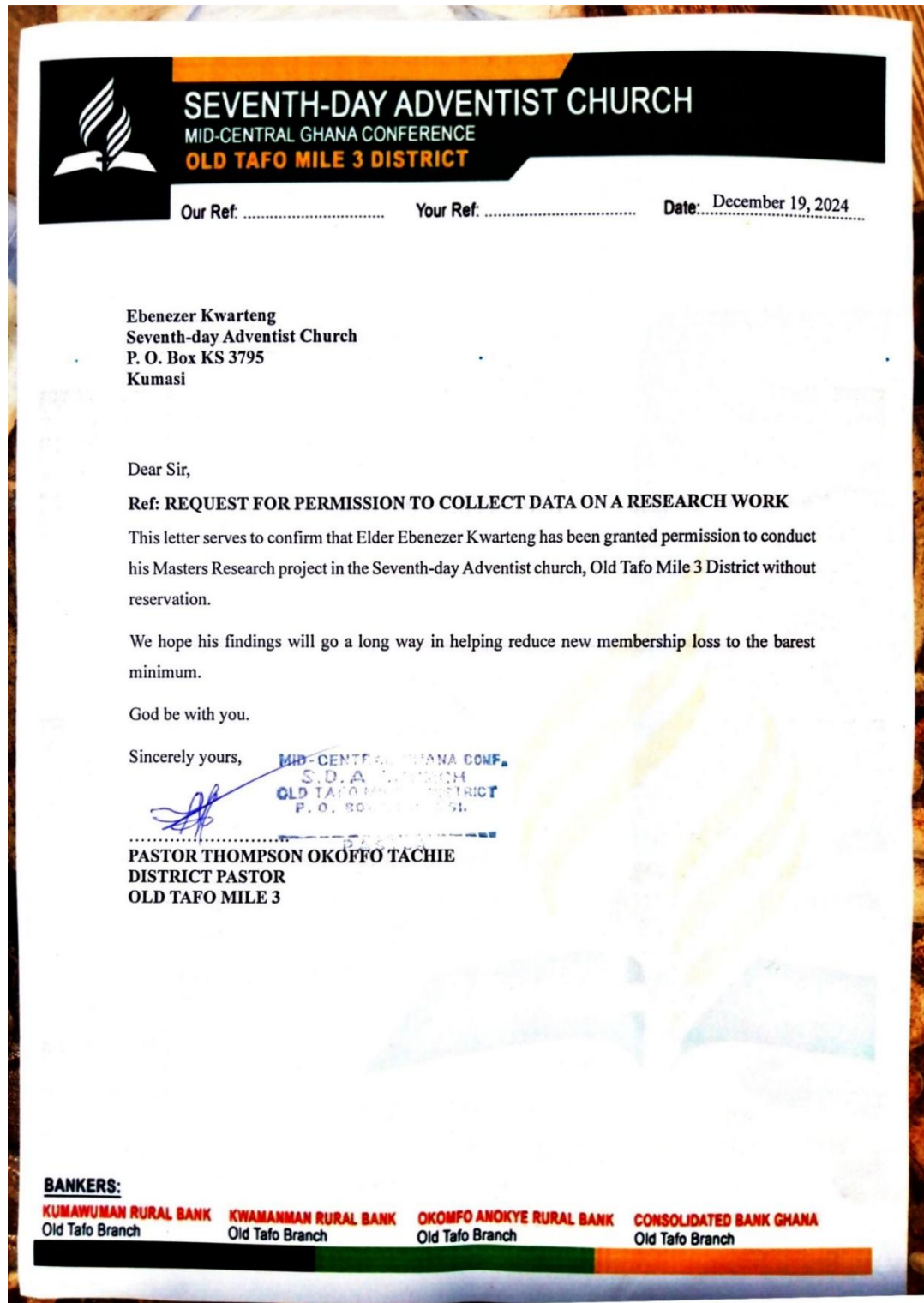
Yours faithfully,



.....
Ebenezer Kwarteng

(Tel: 0245323223)

Letter from the Old Tafo Mile 3 District granting request to Conduct Research



APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

Adventist University of Africa

You are welcome to take part in a research work titled: **Retention Strategy for New Members in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Kumasi, Ghana.**

The following details what is involved in the research and the task that you will be expected to perform. You may ask anything that you may have regarding the study for clarification.

Purpose: The research has its purpose of discovering/investigating causes for new member loss and developing an effective strategy that may help maintain the membership of church members in the Old Tafo Mile 3 District of the church.

Participation: You will be required to complete a questionnaire consisting of twenty-six (26) items. Answering the questionnaire will take about twenty (20) minutes.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: It is entirely voluntary for you to participate in this study. Your consent to participate in the study is shown by your signature at the bottom of this form. You can stop filling out the questionnaire and hand it to the researcher. Your questionnaire will never be used, and there are no penalties for not participating.

Benefits and Risks: You will advance our understanding of how to keep new converts if you take part, which may help to devise a strategy to retain new members for church growth. Participation carries no known risks.

Confidentiality: You are assured that your information will be kept private. Your identity will not be disclosed because your name will not be written on the questionnaire. The data will be saved on a password-protected computer and will only be accessible to the researcher.

Questions: Please use the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of this form to contact the researcher for any questions.

I have read this form and comprehended all of the contents. All of my concerns were satisfactorily answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature of participant....., date.....
Signature of researcher....., date.....

If you need further information, contact the supervisor of the research:
(David Odhiambo, PhD. Email: odhiambod@aua.ac.ke)

Thank you.

Ebenezer Kwarteng
Master of Divinity
Tel: +233245323223
Email: kwartenge@aua.ac.ke

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Respected Respondent: The purpose of the questionnaire is to help the researcher develop effective strategy for membership retention in the churches in the Old Tafo mile 3 district to help reduce membership loss to the barest minimum. Your responses will be handled confidentially. Your cooperation will be highly appreciated. **The questionnaire is for baptized church members in the Old Tafo mile 3 district only.** Thank you.

Please respond to the following statements and, by the instructions provided, tick (✓) the relevant portion.

Section A: Demographic information

1. **Name of your local church:**
2. **Which gender are you?** Male Female
3. **What is your age group?** 18-40 40-65 65 and above
4. **Former denomination before SDA:** Pentecostal/Charismatic , Orthodox , Catholic , Islamic , Traditional , others
5. **How did you become an Adventist?**
 - a. I was raised in the church from birth
 - b. I attended a crusade
 - c. Through personal witnessing
 - d. Through the reading of Adventist books
 - e. Through listening to Adventist music
 - f. Through television/radio/online broadcast
 - g. Through invitation
 - others (please specify)
6. **If you join the church through a public/indoor crusade, who invited you?**
 - a. No one invited me
 - b. A friend
 - c. family member
 - d. A neighbor
 - e. A colleague worker
 - others (please specify)
7. **For what length of time have you been an Adventist?** 1-9 ; 10-19 ; 20-29 ; 30-39 ; 40-49 ; 50 and above
8. **For what duration have you been part of your current church?** 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 ; 31-35 ; 36 and above
9. **What is the frequency of your church attendance?** Weekly , fortnightly , monthly
10. **Membership of a department:** Singing group , Youth , Welfare , Lay activity , AMM , Women ministries , Sabbath school , others (please specify)
11. **Are you holding any position in the church?** Yes No
12. **If yes to question number 11, indicate your position:** Elder , Dept. Leader , Secretary of a Department , Patron , others

Section B: This section focuses on factors that sustain interest of members to stay in the church.

13. On a scale of 1 to 4, indicate your level of agreement to the following as factors that have sustained your interest and have made you to stay in the church up until now.

(Note: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4 Strongly Agree)

Factors	Scale			
	1	2	3	4
a. Church doctrines and teachings				
b. Sabbath school programs				
c. Songs ministrations				
d. Sound preaching or sermon				
e. Warm fellowship among church members				
f. Membership of a group (singing, youth, etc)				
g. Strong welfare				
h. Having friends in the church				
i. Visitations				
j. Modeling by elders				
k. Pastor's mentorship and leadership				
l. The opportunity to take part in church programs				
m. The privilege to serve an office				

14. In your experience, how do SDA members relate to one another?

Cordial [] Friendly [] Caring [] others (Please specify).....

15. In your church, how often are people baptized?

Monthly [] Quarterly [] as the need arises []

16. Does your church have a special class for newly baptized people?

Yes [] No []

17. Do you know how many new converts your church has received since last year? Yes [] No []

18. After baptism, what number out of ten new converts do you think stay or remain in your church? 1 []; 2 []; 3 []; 4 []; 5 []; 6 []; 7 []; 8 []; 9 []; 10 []

Section C: This section focuses on factors that cause new membership loss

19. On a scale of 1 to 4, indicate your level of agreement to the following as factors that lead people to leave the church after their baptism.

(Note: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4 Strongly Agree)

Factors	Scale			
	1	2	3	4
a. Lack of love and fellowship in the church				
b. Inadequate teaching and nurturing after baptism				
c. Lack of involvement in programs				
d. Weak church welfare activities				
e. Conflicts within the church				
f. Lack of genuine Friendship				
g. Disagreement with some doctrines/teachings				
h. Discrimination/Feeling Isolated				
i. Work constraint (work and Sabbath issues)				
j. Family issues				

k. Cultural issues				
l. Leadership (elders) crises/issues				
m. Hurtful behavior such as gossip of some church members				
n. Association with former friends				
o. Style of worship				

Section D: This section focuses on membership retention strategy

20. How do you rate the level of readiness of the church to retain new members?

Very low [], low [], high [], very high []

21. Rate your personal involvement to retain new members in the church

Very low [], low [], high [], very high []

22. Which one of these three biblical principles needs more emphasis in the church for improvement in church member retention?

a. Emphasis on church doctrines []

b. Emphasis on warm relationships among the church members []

c. Emphasis on church involvement and integration of church members in different church activities []

23. Which of the following program directions do you think is more important to retain the church members? (choose only ONE option from the items below).

a) Special sermons that explain church doctrines

b) Programs that help to build warm relationships among the church members

c) Programs on improving the quality of the Sabbath School.

24. Which one of the following do you think is more important to retain the church members?

a) Special Bible study for the newly baptized church members

b) Involving the newly baptized church members in different church activities

c) Intensive visitation of the newly baptized church members by church leaders and others

25. Which of the following on members' welfare, do you think is more important to retain the church members (choose only ONE option from the items below)?

a) Improvement in hospitality or church support (material assistance) in difficult times

b) Creating social ministry (provision of food, shelter, clothing, safety, etc)

c) Effective visitations of new converts and new members

26. Which one of the following do you find most valuable as a way of retaining new members in the church?

a) Building relationships

b) Learning and spiritual growth

c) Feeling more connected to the church

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akin-John, Francis Bola. *Closing the Back Door of Your Church*. Lagos, Nigeria: Life & Ministry Publications, 2010.
- Alico, Jerryk and Wardah, Guimba. "Level And Causes of Pre-University Students' English Test Anxiety: A Case Study on Mindanao State University." *Researchers World-Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce* 6, no. 3 (2015): 1-10.
- Arof, Khairul Zahreen Mohd, Syuhaida Ismail, and Abd Latif Saleh. "Contractor's Performance Appraisal System in the Malaysian Construction Industry: Current Practice, Perception and Understanding." *International Journal of Engineering & Technology* 7, no. 3 (2018), 46.
- Arrais, Jonas. *A Positive Church in a Negative World: Learning and Improving Leadership in Every Experience of Your Church*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 2007.
- Augsburger, D. *Caring Enough to Confront*. Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981.
- Bailey, Kenneth E. *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15*. Saint Louis, MO: G.P.H., 1992.
- Burrill, Russell C. *Radical Disciples for Revolutionary Churches*. Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1996.
- Corcoran, Katie E., Rachel E. Stein, Corey J. Colyer, and Brittany M. Kowalski. "Familial Ties, Location of Occupation, and Congregational Exit in Geographically-based Congregations: A Case Study of the Amish." *Review of Religious Research* 63, no. 2 (2021): 245-268.
- Cress, James. *You Can Keep them if you Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000.
- Crossman, Ashley. *An Overview of Qualitative Research Methods*. New York: Dotdash Publishing Family, 2019.
- Dock, Albert W. *Keeping Ministers in the Church: A Model that Works*. Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008.
- Dudley, R. L., & Cummings, D. *Adventures in Church Growth*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983.

- Fernando, Ajith. *Jesus-Driven Ministry*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002.
- Finley, Mark A. "Evangelism's Big Picture: From Baptism to Discipleship," *Ministry*, September 2009.
- Fretheim, Terence E. "The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," *The New Interpreter's Bible (IB)*. Edited by George Arthur Buttrick. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994. 1:351-353.
- Gane, Barry. *Building Youth Ministry*. Riverside, CA: Hancock Center Publications, 2005.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2020.
- Greenleaf, Robert K. *Servant Leadership*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977.
- Harris, I. *Groups that Work*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967.
- Hill, Glenn Paul. "Addressing Reasons for Members' Non-Attendance at the Elmhurst Seventh-day Adventist Church." DMin diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 2014.
- Horst, Tamyra. *The Gift of Friendship: Developing and Enjoying Relationships that Last*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999.
- Jenson, Ron, and Jim Stevens. *Dynamics of Church Growth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992.
- Kaiser, Travis. "A comparative analysis of the church retention rate of Christian high school graduates." PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2015.
- Kidder, Joseph. *The Big Four*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2011.
- Lauther, Donovan Antonio. "Factors affecting retention of the members of the linden of Seventh-day Adventists Church in New York." PhD diss., Universidad de Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico, 2020.
- Logan, Robert. E. *Beyond Church Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell Publishing, 1989.
- Luong, Nate and Tom Westcott. "Coaching as a Model for Pastoral Leadership." *Word and World* 35, no. 4 (2015): 349-357.
- Macionis, John. *Sociology*, 11th Ed. New York: Prentice Hall, 1989
- Mallison, John. *Growing Christians in Small Groups*. Homebush West, Australia: Anzeta Publishers, 1989.

- Ng, G. T. "Foreword: Lose none and Disciple All," in *Discipling Nurturing and Reclaiming: Nurture and Retention Summit*, ed. General Conference Nurture and Retention Committee. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2020.
- "Brotherly Love" [Rom 12:10]. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Edited by Francis D. Nichol. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-1980. 6:620-621.
- Niyonzima, Jean Baptiste. "A Strategy to Enhance Church Membership Retention in Kabusunzu Seventh-day Adventist Church, East-Central Rwanda Conference." MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2016.
- Nyangia, Charles Anguka. "A Strategy to Retain Members in MBITA Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kenya Lake Conference." MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2016.
- O'Connor, Thomas P., Dean R. Hoge and Estrela Alexander. "The Relative Influence of Youth and Adult Experiences on Personal Spirituality and Church Involvement." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 4 (2002): 723-732.
- Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventists. *District Secretary's Records*. Old Tafo, Ghana: Old Tafo Mile 3 District of Seventh-day Adventists, 2023.
- Oliver, Angel. "At First Retention Summit, Leaders Looking at Reality of Church Exodus." Accessed May 2024, <https://interamerica.org/2013/11/at-first-retention-summit-leaders-look-at-reality-of-church-exodus/>, 2013.
- Peter Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually, Changes Lives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
- Pimpton, L. "Women's Engagement in Religious Communities: The Role of Service and Leadership." *Sociology of Religion* 71, no. 1 (2009): 61-68.
- Powell, Sidney W. *Where are the Converts?* Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1958.
- Rainer, Thom, & Geiger. E. *Simple Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H., 2011.
- Rainer, Thom. "Four Principles to Membership Retention." Accessed 18 June, 2024, <https://www.apostolic.edu/four-principles-to-membership-retention/>, 2008
- Richards, Erica. "Drowning in a Sea of Gray," *Adventist Review*, September 9, 2009,
- Richter, Philip, and Leslie J. Francis. *Gone But Not Forgotten*. London: Darton, 1999.
- Rodgers, Ben. "A Christological Reading of the Shepherd Motif for Pastoral Theology with Special Reference to Ezekiel 34." Accessed 20 June, 2024, <https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/RodgersB01.pdf>.
- Roy, Ruthven. *A Challenge to the Remnant: Designing Our Mission Strategy to Impact the Real World*. Frederick, MD: Network Discipling Ministries, 2002.

- Samaan, Philip. G. *Christ's Way of Reaching People: The Fine Art of Relational Witnessing*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1990.
- Sandomirsky, Sharon, and Wilson, J. "Processes of Disaffiliation: Religious Mobility among Men and Women." *Social Forces* 68, no. 4 (1990): 1211-1229.
- Schwarz, Christian. A. *Paradigm Shift in the Church*. St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 1999.
- Sithole, Richard, "Assessing Retention Patterns and Implementing Strategies for Membership Retention in the Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists." DMin diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2010.
- Smith, Donald P. *How to Attract and Keep Active Church Members*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992.
- Stewart-Thomas, Michelle. "Gendered Congregations, Gendered Service: The Impact of Clergy Gender on Congregational Social Service Participation" *Gender, Work & Organization* 17, no. 4 (2009): 406-432.
- Stolzenberg, Ross, M. Blair-Loy and L. J. Waite. "Religious Participation in Early Adulthood: Age and Family Life Cycle Effects on Church Membership." *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 1 (1995): 84-103
- Tropman, John E. *Making Meetings Work: Achieving High-Quality Group Decisions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003.
- Wagner, Lilya. *Caring is Not a Spectator Sport*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1986.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growing Without Compromising Your Message and Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.
- Wesley, Black. "Youth Ministry That Lasts: The Faith Journey of Young Adults." *The Journal of Youth Ministry* 4, no. 2 (2006): 23-31.
- White, Ellen G. *Evangelism*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946.
- _____. *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 Vols. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948.
- _____. *The Ministry of Healing*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1905.
- _____. *The Ministry of Health and Healing*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005.
- Wilson, Barbara J. "The Church and the Retention of Young Adults." D.Ed. diss., Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN, 2020.
- Woodard, Keith. "Strategies for Retention of New Members in the Ebenezer and Gethsemane Seventh-day Adventist Churches." DMin diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2018.

Woolever, Cynthia, Deborah Bruce, Keith Wulff, and Ida Smith-Williams. "The Gender Ratio in the Pews: Consequences for Congregational Vitality." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 27, no. 2 (2006): 25-38.

Yperen, James Van. *The Shepherd Leader*. St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2003.

VITA

BACKGROUND / PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: Ebenezer Kwarteng
Email: kwartenge@aua.ac.ke
Date of Birth: 21st September, 1977
Citizenship: Ghanaian
Marital status: Married

EDUCATION

Institution	Period	Qualification
Adventist University of Africa	2021- 2025	Master of Divinity
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	2013 - 2017	Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Agricultural Economics
University of Cape Coast	2004- 2008	Bachelor of Science in Agriculture
Offinso College of Education	1998-2001	'3'-Year Post Sec. (Cert 'A')
Asanteman Senior High School	1994 -1996	S.S.S.C.E, Science option

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Organization	Position	Year
Asanteman Senior High School	Teacher	2008 -
Old Tafo SDA Junior High School	Teacher	2003 - 2004
Nsuta-Atonsu SDA Senior High School	Teacher	2001 - 2003

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Organization	Year	Qualification/Experience
Ghana Education Service (GES)	2023 -	Deputy Director
Asanteman Senior High School	2010 -	Form master
Asanteman Senior High School	2014 – 2018	Member, Guidance and Counseling team
Asanteman Senior High School	2016 - 2018	Sectional head - Biology

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE (Seventh-day Adventist Church)

Ghana National Association of Adventist Students (GNASS) – Offinso College of Education	2000 – 2001	President
Ghana National Association of Adventist Students (GNASS) – University of Cape Coast	2007 – 2008	Leader, Personal Ministries
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) - Old Tafo mile 3 District, Kumasi	2011	Youth secretary
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) - Old Tafo mile 3 District, Kumasi	2013	Education Secretary /Personal Ministries secretary
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) - Old Tafo mile 3 Church, Kumasi	2013	Church Secretary
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) - Old Tafo mile 3 District, Kumasi	2014	Youth leader
Mid-Central Ghana Conference of Seventh -day Adventist Church	2015 – 2018	Youth Secretary
Mid-Central Ghana Conference of Seventh -day Adventist Church	2015 – 2023	Member, Youth Council
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) - Old Tafo mile 3 Church, Kumasi	20014 / 2017-2021	Church Elder
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) - Old Tafo mile 3 District, Kumasi	2018 - 2021	District Elder
Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) Old Tafo mile 3 Church/District	2023 – 2025	Spirit of Prophecy Coordinator