

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Doctor of Ministry
Emphasis in Mission

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

TITLE: DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO INCREASE RETENTION OF YOUTH IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST TOWNSHIP CHURCH, UMUOKAHIA, ABA EAST CONFERENCE, NIGERIA

Researcher: Hilary Udonso Anaba

Faculty Advisor: Samuel Larmie

Date Completed: November 2016

According to a report given at the 2014 first quarter Church board meeting that was conducted in the Seventh-day Adventist Township Church, Umuokahia, it was observed that up to 9 percent of baptized youth drop out of the Church each year owing to lack of a retention strategy. This condition could also be experienced in other sister Churches within the Conference, which is not a healthy development if the mission of the Church is to be sustained in this generation.

The current nurturing programs in the Church have to be reviewed to determine what would be the effective way forward. Focus group interviews and questionnaires were the instruments used for data collection aimed at obtaining clearer information of the situation. The data collected were analyzed and led to the design of an intervention program that provided a strategy to increase the retention of the youth in the Church. The seminar and workshop materials for intervention were

drawn from the Bible, the writings of E. G. White, and other Christian writers. This necessitated training for Church workers and youth leaders.

The project was an evaluation of the implementation in the local Church and revealed a positive result. First, a branch Sabbath school has started in a proximal government secondary school. Second, fifty-two of the youths have returned to the Church. Third, loss of Church membership has reduced to 4.2 percent thereby increasing the youth retention of the Church by 3 percent given the membership analysis of the last quarter of 2016. Fourth, there is a renewed zeal for evangelism among Church members, especially the youth. Fifth, teaching the young people as a process for baptism is going on.

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO INCREASE RETENTION
OF YOUTH IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST TOWNSHIP
CHURCH, UMUOKAHIA, ABA EAST CONFERENCE,
NIGERIA

A dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Hilary Udonso Anaba


November 2016

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO INCREASE RETENTION
OF YOUTH IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST TOWNSHIP
CHURCH, UMUOKAHIA, ABA EAST CONFERENCE,
NIGERIA


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

by
Hilary Udonso Anaba

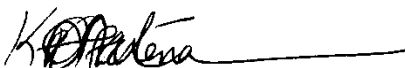
APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:



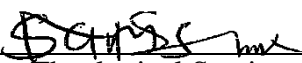
Advisor: Samuel Larmie, DMin



Programme Director, DMin
Kelvin Onongha, PhD, DMin



Reader: Kefa O. Matena, DMin



Dean, Theological Seminary
Sampson Nwaomah, PhD

AUA Main Campus

Date: July 2017

This work is dedicated to my wife, Rossy, and my children, Precious and Emmanuel, for their prayers, love, patience and untiring support. To the Adventist Youth in Aba East Conference and beyond. It is also dedicated to Elder Solomon U. Anaba of the blessed memory whose vision for my life has unfolded positively.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xiii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Description of the Ministry Context	2
Statement of the Problem	3
Statement of Purpose	3
Justification.....	4
Delimitations	4
Description of the Dissertation Process	5
Expectations	6
Definition of Terms.....	6
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION.....	9
Study of Youth Apostasy in the Old Testament	9
Principle of Obedience	9
Cain and Abel.....	9
Nadab and Abihu.....	10
Hophinai and Phinehas.....	10
Rehoboam.....	11
Principle of Teaching.....	12
Abraham and his household.....	12
The Shema.....	12
Principle of Marriage.....	13
Israel.....	14
Samson.....	14
Causes of Apostasy in New Testament.....	15
Reflection of Apostasy in the Writings of Ellen White	16
World Wide Open Rebellion	17
Attack on the Commandments of God	18
Power Behind.....	19
Complete Overthrow Envisaged	20

Safe Condition.....	21
Principles of Retention in the Old Testament.....	22
Principles of Retention in Exodus.....	22
Principles of Retention in Leviticus.....	22
Principles of Retention in Numbers.....	23
Principles of Retention in Deuteronomy.....	23
Principles of Retention in the New Testament.....	24
Principles of Retention in Mathew.....	24
Principles of Retention in Mark.....	25
Principles of Retention in John.....	25
Principle of Retention in Acts.....	25
Principles of Retention in Galatians.....	27
Principles of Retention in Philippians.....	28
Principles of Retention in Hebrews.....	29
Principle of Retention in James.....	29
Principles of Retention in Ellen G. White’s Writings.....	29
Principles of Retention in Other Christian Literature.....	34
Summary.....	36
3. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	37
SDA Literature on Retention.....	37
Retention through Social Meetings.....	37
Retention in Church Community.....	40
Retention in Youth Ministries.....	46
Youth retention programs.....	47
Other Christian Literature on Retention.....	50
Small Group Retention Principle.....	50
Secular Community Retention Principle.....	56
Youth Participation.....	58
Literature on Secular Retention.....	60
Principle of Parental Socialization.....	60
Principle of Religious Socialization.....	62
Retention in Secular Youth Clubs.....	63
Summary.....	65
4. A STRATEGY FOR YOUTH RETENTION.....	66
Description of the Macro Context of Aba Metropolis.....	66
Description of Micro Context of Aba Metropolis.....	66
Landscape and Climate.....	67
Demography.....	68
Economy.....	68
Brief History of Seventh-day Adventist Township Church, Umuokahia.....	70
Research Design.....	71
Research Authorization.....	71
Type of Research.....	72
Rationale for Selection of the Research Method.....	72
Appropriateness of the Study.....	72
Population and Sample of Participants.....	73

Criteria for Sampling Procedures and Selection	73
Instrumentation	74
Data Analysis.....	75
Focus Group Discussion	79
Focus Group Discussion Questions.....	80
Analysis of Respondents Responses to Questionnaire	81
Designing of the Intervention	86
Objective of the Training/Workshop Seminar	86
Limitations.....	87
Summary	87
 5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	 88
Project Preparation.....	88
Brief Description of the Theological Foundations	90
Brief Description of Literature Review	91
Brief Description of Project Context.....	92
Description of Findings from Focus Group Discussion	93
Implementation Steps.....	95
Program Implementation	97
Project venue.	97
Permission.	98
Sensitization meeting.	98
Visitation team.....	98
Welfare group.	99
The one week program.....	100
Attendance.....	103
Participation.....	103
Visitation.	104
Post seminar/workshop programs.....	106
Singles program report.	107
Evaluation.....	110
Findings	111
Project Report.....	112
Summary	113
 6. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	 115
Summary	115
Final Evaluation	115
Lessons Learned	118
Conclusion.....	119
Recommendations.....	119
 APPENDICES.....	 121
A. CORRESPONDENCE	122
B. QUESTIONNAIRE.....	126
C. CONSENT FORM	127

D. FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION GUIDE.....	128
E. YOUTH AND MISSION.....	129
F. BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP	131
G. NURTURING AND RETAINING NEWLY BAPTIZED MEMBERS..	134
H. SPIRITUAL FORMATION	137
I. SIGNIFICANCE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH	138
J. YOUTH AND MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP	139
BIBLIOGRAPHY	145
VITA.....	151

LIST OF TABLES

1. Sex Distribution of Respondents	75
2. Age Distribution of Respondents	76
3. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, Membership growth 2011-2015	76
4. Analysis of Church Membership Growth from 2011-2015	78
5. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia Financial Pattern for Four Years	78
6. Church Attendance	79
7. Focus Group Discussion Participation.....	80
8. Evidence of Good Understanding of Adventist Doctrine	81
9. Possibility of Having Sound Teachers amongst Church Leaders	81
10. Evidence of Considering the Need for Young People in Church and Deliberations	81
11. Possibility of Considering Young People in Church Deliberations	82
12. Evidence of Emphasis on Spiritual Growth	82
13. Evidence of Effective Attendance by Young People in Prayer Meetings	82
14. Increase in Study Guide	83
15. Possible of Increase in Study Guide	83
16. Evidence of Satisfactory Answers to Questions.....	83
17. Possibility Satisfactory Answers to Questions.....	84
18. Summary of Analysis of Respondent Results	85
19. Focus Group Discussion Participation.....	93
20. Visitation Participation	99
21. Seminars/Workshop Material Development	100
22. Imitating the Servant of Servants Program	102

23. Record of Program Attendance	103
24. Church Membership after Program Implementation	104
25. Analysis of Church Membership Growth after Implementation.....	105
26. Singles Program.....	108
27. Health Seminar Program.....	110

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Map of Aba, the Enyimba City, showing Umuokahia..... 70
2. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, Membership record between 2011–2015.... 77
3. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia Financial Pattern for Four Years 79

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	Aba East Conference
AYM	Adventist Youth Ministries
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I acknowledge the Almighty God for such a divine graceful adoption into this academic endeavor. He initiated, sustained and empowered unto the completion of this work.

My special thanks go to the administration of the Adventist University of Africa represented by Dr. Kelvin Onongha and Dr. Emmanuel Takyi. I am also grateful to Dr. Samuel Larmie and the family of Pastor (Dr.) GausUmahi for their love and indefatigable roles played for the accomplishment of this project.

My gratitude goes to church administrations of West-Central Africa Division, Eastern Nigeria Union Conference, and Aba East Conference for various levels of empowerments.

I also appreciate and thank Babcock University for hosting and supporting this program. My roommates, classmates, relatives and colleagues who are too numerous to mention have been sources of inspiration.

My appreciation would be incomplete without recognizing the unflinching supports of Elder & Mrs. Stanley Ikpeoha, Professor & Mrs. Lawrence Nwaneri Chigbu, Elder N. T. Nwogu, Sis. Chizoba Akara and Deacon & Mrs. Goodhope Nwaeze.

Finally, my gratitude goes to my beloved wife, Rose and my wonderful children, Precious and Emmanuel. In all, I say to God be the glory for His infinite wisdom that has propelled me thus far.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral observation indicates that the Seventh-day Adventist Township Church, Umuokahia, in Aba East Conference has been having a decrease in the retention of her youth for some years now. The church is concerned about this trend which could adversely affect its growth. The International Labor Organization (ILO) observes that youth are assets that no nation can afford to lose.¹

More so in the African continent with a large youth population, the young people present a great opportunity for the capacity building if attended to because the youth of today are better educated than they have been in the past.² For the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) youth are to be at the forefront of advancing the mission of the church. The loss of the young people, therefore, may hinder the effort of the church in advancing the cause of the kingdom. Ellen White, in recognition of the importance of the youth in the Church, states: “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world.”³

¹ International Labor Organization, *Youth Employment*, accessed 22/06/2016, <http://www.ilo.org/youthmakingithappen/youthemployment/index.html>.

² African Economic Outlook, “Migration,” accessed 22/06/2016, <http://africaneconomicoutlook.org>.

³Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 555.

Description of the Ministry Context

Numerous challenges faced by young people are causing most of them to leave their faith. These challenges could be spiritual, physical, economically, socially or otherwise. These young people are found in many institutions outside of the Seventh-day Adventist Church system including public secondary schools, and tertiary institutions with overwhelming adverse effect.

In one of the researches that were carried out by Dudley, an observation was made that up to 46 percent of young people in America leave the church at teenage age.⁴ This seemingly global phenomenon in Christian churches has adversely affected the growth of the Churches as many youths have dissociated from the community of faith, which has led them into nefarious acts to the detriment of their individual families, Church, and society at large. Also, some parents have been embarrassed by the behaviors of the backslidden youth, resulting leaving their homes to other places for safety and peaceful living. Most of those in urban places hardly remember coming back home owing to social unrest caused by apostate youths. More so, the human community experiences ravage effect of poverty, sickness and socio-economic upheavals resulting from nefarious activities of apostate youth.

Furthermore, Amanze states that since the 1960s, there has been an increase in the number of social unrest owing to the religious status of the youth.⁵ Observably, apostate youths have become a disgrace to families, the church and any community they found themselves. Besides, most abused young people have apostatized from the church, succumbing to the alluring comforts and distractions of the present world. The

⁴ Roger L. Dudley, Indicators of Commitment to the Church: A Longitudinal Study of Church Affiliated Youth. *Adolescence*, Spring 1993 Issue.

⁵Ruth and Philemon Amanze, *Give me Children* (Lagos, Nigeria: Jamiro Press, 2009), 153.

lifestyles of the youth that have left the Church to pose a serious threat to life in a normal society. Possibly, young people are more involved in leaving the church rather than the aged. There are notable cases of resentment by the youth against adult authority making many Christian parents to request for prayers on behalf of their sons and daughters whose moral behaviors have assumed dramatic twist. Akpa observes that:

There is no much that adults can do to stop the young people at this stage from behaving the way they do. Any stringent measure applied to check their activities often leads to rebellion and violence. Most of them leave their homes for an unknown destination.⁶

Statement of the Problem

A review of the statistical membership record from SDA Township Church, Umuokahia , shows a loss of her youth membership to the tune of 8% within the period under review. This trend amounts to the decrease of the youth population of the Church. This affects the zeal and vibrancy which are usually injected by the young people into the church life.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this in-ministry dissertation is to develop and implement a strategy that would increase youth retention in SDA Township Church, Umuokahia thereby reducing the rate of apostasy among this population of the church.

⁶Amanze and Amanze, *Give Me Children*, 153.

Justification

It has been affirmed that the youth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are its greatest asset and hope.⁷ The young people who have left the Church stand the risk of being vulnerable to evil, which will lead to loss of their salvation if not addressed. More so, it would result to disunity in a family relationship as there would be contentions between the young people and their parents. Therefore, the youth population is of viable human resources in the church and their retention is important for continuous Church growth and development. The retention of the youth would be a positive response to Jesus' commission in Mathew 28:19, 20.⁸

Delimitations

The study would focus only on the Seventh-day Adventist Township Church Umuokahia in Aba East Conference because the high rate of youth loss noticed in the Church. The category of the young people to be highly considered would be adolescents without gender bias. This stage is a combination of late adolescence and young adulthood characteristics.⁹

Although there are 95 churches in the Conference, this study will be confined to SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, chosen by the researcher, so that the implementation of the work would be thoroughly followed. More so, the data collected and analyzed would present a one- time result that can turn out to be a learning tool for additional implementation in the other Churches and Conferences.

⁷ Bary Gane, & Steve Case, "Youth Apostasy and Recovery," *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* (June 2002) Accessed on 20/06/2016 <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2002/06/youth-apostasy-and-recovery.html>

⁸All scriptural quotations would be provided from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible, as one of the widely used version, unless otherwise stated.

⁹David L. Sills, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, NY: The McMillian and Free Press, 1968), 85.

Description of the Dissertation Process

This section presents a step by step process of the entire dissertation to actualize the goal of the project.

1. A theological foundation on retention was derived from both the Old and New Testaments alongside the writings of Ellen G. White. Through this approach, insight was gained on principles of retention.
2. A study of Seventh-day Adventist youth in SDA Township Church Umuokahia was conducted to ascertain the membership loss of the youth.
3. Contemporary Seventh-day Adventist books and articles were reviewed, with other Christian author's writings on retention, which lead to the development of the strategy to increase retention of the youth.

Based on the theological and theoretical research, the following were done:

1. Research was conducted to discover the reasons for membership loss of the youth
2. A strategy was developed to increase retention of youth in SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, Aba East Conference.
3. Upon approval by the Conference, the chosen local Church was thoroughly acquainted with this program package.
4. The implementation of this program package was done in the chosen local Church as a pilot phase using seminars and workshops.
5. The process of the program was documented.
6. The result of the implementation was monitored for three months
7. Data were gathered and analyzed.
8. The results were evaluated and presented to the AEC as recommendations.
9. All steps of the program package implementation were recorded and eventually made into a handbook and chapters for the dissertation

The approximate date for completion of this dissertation process was November 2016.

Expectations

The expectation of this in–Ministry dissertation is that after the intervention had been designed and implemented, the retention of the young would be increased while, at the same time, the membership loss would decrease. The design would be a template that could be used in other churches in Aba East Conference and beyond where similar problems are being experienced. Membership retention of the Church would increase, while zeal and vibrancy in the Church life would return.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used for the purpose of this in ministry dissertation.

Apostasy: This is the translation of the Greek word *apostasia* (ap-os-tas-ee-ah), meaning a falling away, defection, or an act of rebellion by people. It happens when one has willfully rejected his or her faith and eventually rebels against the authority of the Word of God. In this state, the identity they had at one time had been lost because of the intentional act of leaving the faith.¹⁰

A disagreement of the truth understood and practiced by the individual is acknowledged as the first step towards this condition. Apostasy is considered a willful and obstinate act of treason against God, a betrayal, and desertion of the community. It has numerous forms depicted by the act of denouncing the key Bible doctrines. More so, it is considered as a crime that is against God and his representatives on earth.¹¹

¹⁰ Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books House, 1984), 70.

¹¹Council of Ex- Muslims of Britain, “Political Legal Status of Apostates in Islam,” <http://atheistalliance.org>, accessed 20/06/2016, (2013).

Church: It is a translation of the Greek word, “ἐκκλησία” (ecclesia). It signifies the gathering of people, irrespective of age, gender, color, social and economic status for the purpose of worship and fellowship with the intention of reaching out to others with the good news heard, received and understood. The Church is known to constitute the action of God, who calls people “out of darkness into His marvelous light.”¹² The church, without doubt, is the family of God, the body of Christ (Eph1:23). Therefore, the biblical metaphors for the Church indicate that the Church must be a cohesive body reflecting the qualities of God in an alien world.¹³

Retention: This is a way of keeping those who believe in a particular faith through standardized empowerment. Its dimensions could be employment or educational enhancement in the community of faith.¹⁴ The word retention is an English word which means the steps are taken retaining or state of being retained, the ability to cling to something.¹⁵ Therefore, in the retention process, the power to hold or to be held has to be exercised.¹⁶

Youth: Youth are not the same all over because of differing experiences. The very concept of “youth” is still a subject of debate.¹⁷ It may be defined in terms of cultural markers which are distinct social status with specific roles, rituals, and

¹² Rex D. Edwards, *Every Believer the Church*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Spring, Maryland: 2013), 11.

¹³Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 148.

¹⁴J. Syed (2010), <http://www.emeraldinsight.com>, accessed 22/06/2016.

¹⁵Collins Concise English Dictionary (Collins, 2008), p. 1415.

¹⁶Random House Webster’s Dictionary (Random House, 2001), p. 105.

¹⁷Niji Akanni, *On Nigeria Youth in Conflict* (Abuja, Nigeria: Action Aid Nigeria, 2009), 7.

relationship.¹⁸ The youths have strong desire to move up the social ladder, exuberant, dynamic, have a desire for quick result and are risk takers because of their limited level of responsibility. Also, youth and young people would be interchangeably used by the researcher in respect to the stated meaning. The SDA Church recognizes 30 years of age as the peak for youth category. Approximately 60 percent of the Church membership is in this age bracket and is the major concentration of this project.¹⁹

¹⁸U.S. Agency for International Relations 2013, “Youth in Development Policy,” accessed 16/06/2016, <https://usaid.gov/policy/youth>.

¹²Patricia A. Habana, A Department of Church Ministries Publication (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993), 3.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

This chapter examines the phenomenon of apostasy as it relates to the principles in the Old Testament, New Testament, and Ellen G. White writings. Also, the principles of retention which is the antidote to apostasy would be studied from the Old and New Testaments. Some biblical characters would receive attention to illustrate these principles. The Writings of Ellen G. White and other Christian writers would also be explored to deduce more retention principle.

Study of Youth Apostasy in the Old Testament

This section considers the following principles from the Old Testament: first, obedience to God's commands; second, the teaching of God's commands to the younger generation; third, the issue of marriage between believers and non-believers. These are principles that enhance retention of Church membership which apostasy has militated against.

Principle of Obedience

The apostasy of Cain and Abel, Nadab, and Abihu, Hophinai and Phinehas, Rehoboam, who in their youth disobeyed God's commands and the consequences of their actions, would be discussed in this section.

Cain and Abel. In Genesis 4:1-15, the Bible gives a narrative of the first two earthly children Cain and Abel, who were taught the system of sacrificial offering that required the use of animal as directed by God. This was put in place; the very moment

man was expelled from the Garden of Eden.¹ Cain, being the first-born of the human race did not follow God's instruction while his brother Abel did what was right by obeying God's directives. Cain's disobedience caused his sacrifice to be rejected because it was contrary to God's plan in the sacrificial system. Consequently, his sins remained (Gen 4:7). On the other hand, God accepted Abel's offering because he obeyed. Cain's willful disobedience resulted in the first recorded murder in the history of humanity.

Nadab and Abihu. These were the sons of Aaron who were dedicated to the priestly office with their father. They knew the sacrificial rules but in defiance of God's command, according to Lev 10: 1, 2, they used strange fire to burn incense before the Lord, and they were killed instantly. This is another instance where deviation from God's revealed will—apostasy resulted in their death. Disobedience has been a phenomenon that has threatened retention of Church membership.

Hophinai and Phinehas. Children of Eli, named Hophinai and Phinehas were called sons of Belial for they were lawless and worthless which was seen in the manner they abandoned God's ordinances. "Belial or Belial in Hebrew means a worthless person. The term came to be associated with Satan and the Antichrist during the intertestamental period (200 B.C-AD 4).²

They had an illicit sexual relationship with women who came for worship at the temple; moreover, these two sons of Eli desecrated the ordinances of sacrifices

¹Francis D. Nichol ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 239.

² Timothy Perenich, "Antichrist: From Persian Dualism to Contemporary Christianity," *Ministry* (2009): 21, accessed 16/06/2016, <http://ministrymagazine.org>.

offered in the temple by selecting portions of meat. Hence, Hophinai and Phinehas were violent to the things of the Lord. They did not respect God's instructions.³

This disobedience, by the sons of Eli, resulted in Israel's shameful defeat by the Philistines. More than that, they lost their lives in that battle which led to the death of their father and consequently, a transfer of the priesthood from Aaron's lineage to Samuel who was from another tribe. Eli's parental influence was not positive in the lives of his children which resulted to apostasy.

Rehoboam. Scripture records in 1 Kings 12:1-8 that Jeroboam succeeded his father Solomon as King of Israel. When Jeroboam who ran away to Egypt as a fugitive, heard that there was a new king, he returned to Israel. He joined the assembly of Israel as a delegation to the new king asking for a fair leadership as was expected, the king Rehoboam asked for three days so that he could consult and get back to them. He called for the Elders to give their counsels and they asked him to make a promise of fair leadership which would be an improvement on his father's leadership.

Obedience to Elders' counsel was God's expectation from the king of Israel (2 Sam 23:3) which meant that they expected leadership style should alleviate the sufferings of the people, but he ignored these counsels. Rather he took that of his peer group who advised him to promise more torture and hardship to the people. Obeying the wrong counsel of his fellow young people constituted apostasy on the part of Rehoboam, which led to the division of Israel into two kingdoms. Obedience to the Lord's principles promotes peace, joy long life to the human family. Its negation

³Francis D. Nichol ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol.2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 463.

comes with consequences that may be overwhelming. Therefore, obedience to the Lord should govern all activities and apostasy will be put to check.

Principle of Teaching

The case of Abraham is teaching his household to observe God's ways and God's command to Israel on teaching their children *Shema* would be examined.

Abraham and his household. In Gen 18:19, gives an account of God's testimony concerning Abraham. The emphasis of this testimony is that Abraham will not neglect the responsibility of teaching the children the will of God. One of the ways by which Abraham might have taught his household to obey God was his exemplary life. Wherever he went, he built an altar and called on the name of God (Gen 12:8). Through his character, his family and everyone he related with understood to be a true oracle of God from whom the entire human race would be bless according to the promise of God to him.

Therefore, teaching the commandment of God is a parental responsibility that was imbibed by Abraham which comes with recognition and blessings. The substance of the teaching that God requires is His way and righteousness.

The Shema. In Deut 6, Moses reminded the people of Israel concerning the commandments of God, statutes, and the judgments which the Lord himself has commanded to make known to their children; and their children to their children or succeeding generations by saying thus:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one Lord, and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise (Deut 6:4-8).

What is involved is known as the “*Shema*.” The *Shema* is known to be the Jewish religious recitation, declaring who God is and will ever be. It was recited by every God-fearing Jew every time in the morning and evening. It is said to be the first prayer to be learned by every Jewish Child and the last prayer to be repeated when dying.⁴

What is to be taught is the eternal Word of God. This divine injunction stresses the prerogative given to parents to teach and present God’s testimonies to the young ones. His character of love should be made known to all. The words of King Solomon in Proverbs 22:6 remain timeless. Isaiah 32:30 declares that the youth of Israel did evil before the Lord. This means that they rejected the teaching of God’s law and they apostatized and suffered the predicted captivity. The Lord is never happy when people neglect the study and teaching of His Word.

The teaching of God’s word involves representation of God’s character in the family which should be done with diligence. The Lord’s way is His wisdom and goodness given to His people (Prov.2:20; 4:11).

The teaching of God’s Word by parents to the children is to be done at all time. It is a spiritual work for morning, afternoon and evening. Children should constantly be reminded the guiding principles of the word of God to mold their character by the will of God.

Principle of Marriage

Marriage is an institution, ordained and instituted by God. His directive to Israel and Samson on marriage would be examined for better insight to this principle.

⁴ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Worship in the World’s Religions* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 176.

Israel. In Deut 7: 3, 4, the Lord said to the children of Israel You shall not make marriages with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons. God by his infinite wisdom and grace chose Israel to reveal himself to her as a privileged people who will be his witness to other nations of the world. Unfortunately, Israel, not maintaining her relationship with God by going against His principles as buttressed by their actions was described as adultery or harlotry (Ezek 16:15; 23:43).

More so, in 1Kings 11:1-4, Solomon, having many wives through intermarriages with pagan nations and families resulted to apostasy as his heart turned to other gods against God's prescription to Israel. In the face of Israel's spiritual declension, Jeremiah screamed, wept bitterly and, moaned since Israel was stubborn and rebellious to the point of abandoning their faith. (Jer 6:28-30). The prophet seemed shattered because his people have abandoned their faith in a holy God. Israel's intermarriage alliance with other neighboring nations was apostasy about God's principle.

Samson. The Bible gives an account of a young man named Samson from the tribe of Dan, a Nazarene from his mother's womb, whose conception was by the power of the Holy Spirit as one who would be a judge in Israel. His mother was told not to drink wine and never to eat any ceremonially unclean food during her gestation period. Unfortunately, he could not fulfill the mission God had for him to Israel as a nation because of a marriage alliance. Judges 14:1-3, reads thus:

Samson went down to Timnah, and at Timnah, he saw one of the daughters of the Philistines. Then he came up and told his father and mother; I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah; now get her for me as my wife. "But his father and mother said to him, is there not a woman among the daughters of your kinsmen, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines? But Samson said to his father, Get her for me; for she pleases me well.

Because of the wickedness of the Philistines, Israelites were forbidden to marry from there. Samson's parents would never encourage their children to marry from such a place, a family with a poor religious status but Samson insisted that he marry her, against God's instruction. He did not consider the Philistine idolatrous way of living. Because Samson went contrary to the divine injunction, he was engrossed with infatuation, and he married a harlot who betrayed and rendered his mission useless. That marriage is a Spiritual institution, with guiding principles that have a great impact in mission accomplishment in the lives of the young people was neglected by Sampson, and the consequences followed him.

Causes of Apostasy in New Testament

Apostasy among the young people may not have been specifically mentioned, but there are some texts that trace it in the Bible. The texts to be considered in this respect are 2 Cor 6:14 and 2Tim 3:1-3.

2 Cor 6:14 states thus: "Do not be mismated with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (1 Co 5:9; 7:39; 10:21; Eph 5:7, 11). This injunction by Paul is in connection to obedience to the Lord. God requires humankind to submit to His divine principles in marriage and other activities of life. In the New Testament, Paul reminds Timothy of certain behaviors that would be experienced before the Second coming of Jesus Christ as recorded in 2 Timothy 3:1-3.

But know this that in the last day's perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good.

It is noticed that young people disobedient to their parents would be among the happenings of the end time. These characteristics account to corruption which has to do with the rejection of God's word. Timothy was told to turn away from such people and do not associate with them. This injunction is because God has never been happy when His children reject His instructions.

There is predicted falling away referred to as the signs and events of the last days. Perilous times would invoke suffering, uncertainty, and wickedness against Christians. It did happen during the early church days but will be intensified in the last days. It, therefore, presupposes that the sufferings of the last days will cause many to reject the mission of Christ, abandon righteousness, and become slaves to their passion. The New Testament pictures the condition within the professing church that would be characterized by denials of God, sound doctrine, the return of Christ, Morals, Christian liberty and authority (2 Tim 3:4-8).

Reflection of Apostasy in the Writings of Ellen White

In the writings of Ellen White, she addresses the issue of apostasy as an end time phenomenon that would be experienced in the world. She sees apostasy as worldwide rebellion, attack on God's commandment, Seducing Spirits at work. The power behind its complete overthrow and safe condition, are to be discussed in this section.

Understanding the prevailing stride apostasy is gaining, and its negative effect on the church especially in the lives of young people, the Spirit of Prophecy reflects on some of the issues, bringing to focus the biblical truth about its prevalence and the dangers of the situation as it affects the church and the society.

The present dispensation is being identified as an age of almost universal apostasy when many church members would be misled by those who claim to have the truth.⁵ The character and works of those who would become agents of this negative act would declare their unharmonious relationship with the divine truth. In their words, character and deportment would show a lack of the goodness, mercy, compassion and tenderness of the loving God.

World Wide Open Rebellion

Ellen White observes that the world would be in rebellion against the will of God as Satan would be consistent in leading people to disobey God and to destroy the efficacy of worship by blinding them to the power and majesty of the infinite God. She envisaged a pronounced infidelity in the church as biblical truth would be openly denied, undermining faith in the Bible as a revelation from God.

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, humanity seems to be in open rebellion against God as she reiterates the gross rebellion against the principle of God's kingdom in the generation that is arrogant, violent, wicked, shameless and arrogant. More so, there is pronounced lack of appreciation, thanksgiving for the divine privilege that has been graciously and volitionally extended to humanity. In reciprocation, their hearts and character disposition showcase neglect and doubt. To be candid, this generation cherishes satanic vices, performing sacrilegious acts against the divine precepts that have eternal value.⁶

The present state of spiritual declension in the world attests to this statement when the world has failed to appreciate the goodness of God and His dealings of love.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 445.

⁶Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Boise; Idaho: Pacific Press, 1948) 185.

God's work does not seem appealing to them, and they cannot bring hope and healing to the broken world. The Devil has planted the seed of doubt, envy, pride and likes in human mind. This is exactly what he did by causing Adam and Eve, the first human parents to fall. Even many church members do not return tithe which is the major fund used to care for church workers and to propagate the gospel. The great commission is for all believers.

More so, the experienced increase in global violence, abuse, dishonesty, and crimes are the result of turning aside from the path of obedience⁷. There are myriads of consequences that are evident among the youth whom the Devil uses to perpetrate evil scheming. The onerous task of educating young people in spiritual, physical, mental and social dimensions cannot be over stressed. The training received in the formative period of their lives are translated into adulthood.⁸

Attack on the Commandments of God

The nations are in unrest. Times of perplexity are upon us. The waves of the sea are roaring; men's hearts are failing them for fear and for expectation of those things that are coming upon the earth; but those who believe on the Son of God would hear His voice amid the storm, saying, "It is I; be not afraid." We see the world lying in wickedness and apostasy. Rebellion to the commandments of God seems almost universal. Amid the tumult of excitement with confusion in every place, there is work to be done in the world.⁹ Ellen White reminds God's people of the on-going unrest in every facet of human development which is caused by rebellion.

⁷<http://www.worldincrisis.org>, accessed 16/06/2016.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1930), 437.

⁹<http://www.ellenwhitedefend.com>, accessed on 16/06/2016.

It seems evident that temperance in activities seems to have eluded the present age, economy adversely affected globally; there is a message of hope. In the face of scientific advancement, there is no relative peace. Environmental and climatic changes have brought suffering, displacement, and abandonment of too many people. There are cases of landslides, flood, and drought in high frequency in many parts of the world. Geographically, natural resources for the economic building of the human populace lacks such as fresh water, minerals, energy, fertile land for agricultural purposes are in scarcity.

The Lord has made a promise to those who would hear His word and continually depend on him. They should not be afraid for in the struggles of this present human structure, those who accepts Christ's mission would continually be sustained by His grace till the ultimate restoration is realized when God would put the new heaven and earth in place. With Jesus, there is no impossibility, and all His promises must surely be fulfilled.

Power Behind

The act of falling away from faith, allowing the influence of mundane Spirits to exercise authority over some people is witnessed today. The majority of the world population would unite with Satan to work contrary to His principles. This is a matter that could be comprehended through constant Bible study and prayer.¹⁰

White's statement is quite evident in this age when there are proliferation churches, claiming the power of the Holy Ghost, but the truth is not demonstrated as the Churches use the name of Christ for merchandise. God's love is misrepresented by agents of Satan who seduces people unto believing false doctrines. God's children

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 363.

should constantly pray for God's courage to continue in the right Spirit as to represent God aright. Mundane Spirits could equally trigger negative attitudes like fear, rejection, rebellion, hatred against God.

The arch enemy of God's people has always led people in generations and epoch of human history to abandon their faith. God's invitation to Moses which lasted for forty days gave the Devil opportunity lead the majority of the Israelites to rebel against God.¹¹

The apostasy of the children of Israel when Moses went to Mount Sinai by God's invitation to receive the Ten Commandments was spearheaded by Satan. He is the unwearied Adversary of human race, who is constantly working, looking for an opening to break the human relationship with God. He is relentless in causing confusion among God's children. Considering the speed by which it happened as Aaron was holding brief for Moses could only disclose a supernatural power behind it. He initiated the counterfeit god made of gold, which was an embarrassment to Moses as he returned from the presence of God, carrying the written commandments of God on two tablets of stone, which they vowed to keep but had made a grievous mistake by worshipping an idol and this claimed thousands of them. The speed at which the loyalty of Israel who were to preserve God's Oracle, make it known to others was challenged, overwhelmed Moses.

Complete Overthrow Envisaged

Ellen White succinctly states that the arch enemy has always opposed the work of God. During the earthly ministry of Christ, he met with diverse challenges of Satan in collaboration with evils Spirits and human agents stop His mission which

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 335.

they could not do. Unfortunately, they would utterly be destroyed at the end for such opposition.¹² Christ depended on the power from the father, and all satanic attempts were destroyed through the power of the Holy Spirit. He was also resurrected through this power, and every principality was subjugated to Him.

Therefore all that would unite with Satan are bound to perish with him. There are oppositions going on in the work of God today but there is nothing to fear for the chief apostate would perish with those who are on his side and truth must surely triumph.

Safe Condition

In order not to be apostate and suffer eternal consequences of disobedience, God's provision is that humanity should reciprocate His selfless love through obedience which is evident in the selfless service of God and have a positive relationship among people. Humanity has been blessed with the revealed will of God. Human wisdom amounts to regret because it is destitute of the power of the Holy Spirit.¹³

The world with its alluring influences cannot give the desired satisfaction for the world, and everything therein is transient and awaits eschatological climax. The only safeguard is to be obedient to the commandments of God as empowered by the Holy Spirit.

¹²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA; Pacific Press, 1948), 6:407.

¹³Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 83.

Principles of Retention in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, though finding texts that address or relates to membership retention may not be so easy. But, we can discover such in Exodus and Leviticus as texts could be wisely applied to such situation.

Principles of Retention in Exodus

The book of Exodus informs the deliverance of Israel from Egypt through the leadership of God's servant Moses who also acted as a judge with the assistance of his brother, Aaron. There were numerous matters, brought by the people for Moses to preside alone (Exod. 18:1-24).

It was in the context mentioned above that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advised Moses to delegate authority. He accepted the advice and recruited and trained men as judges while Moses presided on high matters.¹⁴ Through this plan, Moses was saved from leadership burnout. More so, Israel enjoyed relative peace, unity, stability and enhanced welfare. The principle of delegation in leadership can enhance and develop unity of people, bring encouragement, reduce conflict and would lead to the growth of the church as young are delegated to serve for the benefit of all.¹⁵

Principles of Retention in Leviticus

In Leviticus 19:17, God gave the admonition concerning how those who have not behaved well should be treated. There is a need for a retention process to redeem the offender and it shall be done in love. It is a sacrificial role to be played as Christ

¹⁴ Brueggemann Walter, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 6th ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 827.

¹⁵ Ibid, 828.

example is followed by believers. The fault should be made known to the person but not to hate the person who should be saved from wrongdoing.

Principles of Retention in Numbers

In Numbers 11:16-22, it was observed that the burden of leading Israel rested wholly on Moses who then cried unto the Lord for divine intervention. God instructed him to gather seventy elders who would be invested with leadership responsibility and by doing so there would be a division of labor in the camp. This is exactly what Moses did which made retention of the people possible. Elders were chosen among functioning leaders whose highest priority was on how to meet the need of the people.¹⁶ Through the authority invested in them, they able to control and retain membership of Israel as a community.

Principles of Retention in Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 16:18-22, God gave injunction that lower courts should be set up in the towns of Israel that could appeal to the higher tribunal at the central sanctuary that would give the final verdict. This was a divine recommendation for the retention of Israel. Judges of these courts were to administer justice according to the commandment of God. This implies that the principles outlined in the commandment of God were instruments for retention. This goal was to be accomplished voluntarily and harmoniously to the glory of God.¹⁷

¹⁶ R. K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Westfield, IN: Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2008), 7.

¹⁷ Peter C. Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Metro Manila, Mandaluyong City: OMF Literature, 1997), 88.

Principles of Retention in the New Testament

In this section, texts from the New Testament dealing with membership retention would be studied in Mathew, Mark, John, Acts, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrew and James to discover approaches that would lead to increase in retention of the youth.

Principles of Retention in Mathew

According to Maslow, human needs are in hierarchical order such as physiological need, security need, affiliation need, esteem need; and need for self-actualization.¹⁸ In this order, the physiological needs require immediate attention since they are basic needs for sustaining human life. Maslow further identified these physiological needs like food, shelter, sleep, warmth, water and clothing.

Matthew 14:18-22 informs on Christ's retention approach in His ministry of saving humanity. He attended to the physiological needs of the people first. The ability to attend to the immediate need of people is very important for them to be retained in the church. Jesus stayed for a long period with those He called.

He trained them into a life rightly related to the divine Word, prayer, relationships, and mission. It was a lifetime commitment which was the fundamental ground for staying long with them in training. More so Jesus declared the importance of retention by saying: "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:14). God needs all, both old and young to be retained for His kingdom. The older generation of the Church will pass Christian heritage to the younger ones. This will only be possible by abiding by these retention principles as Jesus taught.

¹⁸ Weihrich Heinz and Koontz Harold, *Management: A Global Perspective*, 11th ed. (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 2005), 372.

Principles of Retention in Mark

Mark 1:16-20, presents this principle of retention in “follow me context.” The disciples he called followed Him, and He devoted much time to teaching them. Though they were fishermen, with varied, suitable gifts, character, and skills, they needed to be trained as to become disciple-makers themselves. These disciples demonstrated what accepting the call for discipleship is all about which is following Jesus when one has repented and believed. It calls for abandoning their occupation and follow Him continuously to form a group that will only be concerned with mission. Members of the Church who may constitute a pool for future church pastors, missionaries, teachers and dynamic disciple-making leaders need to be taught the word of God (Luke 6:13).

Principles of Retention in John

In John 1:39-46, Jesus is made an open invitation to those who were ready to labor with Him. They would freely receive His presence and favor. The first step towards encouraging people to understand or know who Jesus is in their lives and test the goodness of his sound relationship is denoted in this text.

It must be backed up with the willingness for people to be with the older members of the Church and they would observe the difference by themselves. In fact, it is the first introduction made to any person to know Jesus Christ and His work. In this respect, the Church meets its members for instruction, consolation, motivation and empowerment. They also share their joy and extend the blessings of fellowship to one another. (1 Cor. 14:3; Heb 10:24-25).

Principle of Retention in Acts

Acts 2:41-47 is a text that outlines important principles which will be discussed below: The book of the Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke to show

how fast Christianity, though was hated by the then Roman Government had spread within 30 years of its existence.¹⁹

The immediate context of Acts 2:41-47 is chapter one which speaks about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit marked a new era where Gods' message was taken to many nations through those who were present at Pentecost. After the Pentecost event, Peter stood and explained to those who were present the meaning of the event.

In his speech, Peter spoke in brief about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:22). He spoke about Christ's death and how God's purpose was fulfilled in the death of His Son (v. 23), Christ's resurrection, which was due to God's intervention, Christ's exaltation (vv. 33-36), and Christ's salvation (vv. 37-39). Peter's sermon convicted the audience, and they asked what they should do. Peter appealed to them to repent, and many of them repented and received forgiveness.

That sermon made it possible for the new community to come into existence and from there a new principle of spiritual nurture was drawn for the community. In Acts 2:41-47 the key element is the apostles' teaching of the Word which was done authoritatively.

Furthermore, retention in the book of Acts involves ministering to one another which was crucial to the spiritual nurture of new converts. The Holy Spirit that worked in the lives of the believers brought a new relationship of togetherness among them. There was unprecedented unity among them as there was no experience of segregation or class distinction among them. In their spiritual operation, there was cooperation among physically challenged as the rich, the poor, the less privileged and

¹⁹Barclay William, *The Daily Study: The Message of Acts* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1976), 1-4.

many others could fellowship and enjoy the blessings of the Lord together. Each one of them was committed to the teaching of the word of God (Acts 2:43). This made the Church as a community of faith to be vibrant and devoted in the fulfillment of Christ's mission.

In Acts 6:1-7, the number of members increased, and the needs of the members also increased which necessitated for the strategy to retain them in fellowship. The apostles were finding it very difficult to see to the welfare of everyone. Therefore, the church decided to choose some members who are full of the Holy Ghost as deacons so that they can actively take care of the organization and physical needs of others as to give the disciples the chance to effectively continue in the ministry prayer and teaching God's word. Through this strategy, the message of the risen Savior spread speedily to the surprise of the people.²⁰ The Church will always grow when devoted youth are recognized and given the opportunity to participate in the affairs of the Church according to their spiritual gifts.

Principles of Retention in Galatians

Paul gave this admonition to the group of laity who have been inspired, motivated and well trained in the word of God. These people have so grown in spiritual life that they are ready to communicate the truth to others in the bid to make more disciples. This should not be done in haste, for they need to be more empowered for labor by the master of the mission.

This is the particular group he referred to in Gal 4:19.²¹ Paul says, "Until Christ is formed in you. "And they should never be weary in doing what they have

²⁰Stott, J, *The Living Church: Conviction of a Lifelong Pastor* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 76.

²¹Hull, B, *The Disciple Making Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 1990), 216-218.

trained to do (Gal 6:9), for their labor would never be in vain. Gordon Fee, commenting on this verse, discloses a very strong principle which he discovered concerning membership retention. He explains that the new Galatians were not to deviate from the teaching of Christ.

They were to stay in Christ until Christ's image was formed in them. This goal should be given to each young person, to stay with Christ and avoid distractions or side attractions that are inordinate in nature, but to immerse their aspirations and thought in Christ, who will make every situation excellent for them.²² Again, in Gal 6:1, 2, Paul underscores this principle which should be practically experienced among Christian. There is human side of restoration that awaits the ultimate which Christ alone will perfect. This practical guide ensures and enhances togetherness, love among brethren in the Christian community.

Principles of Retention in Philippians

Paul admonishes believers in Phil 2:4-5, that they should in no way look only after their interest for everyone is important to the Lord. They should have concern for others which includes those who are leaving or have left the faith. This principle of retention upholds that believers should labor for one another. Jesus left heaven to become the incarnate Son of God, gave His life as a ransom for the sin of humanity so that we can regain what was lost through sin. The example of the unselfish life of Jesus should be impressed in the mind of believers through His Spirit as humankind will approach His humility.

²²D. G. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 231.

Principles of Retention in Hebrews

In Hebrews 10:25, Paul gave this important retention principle to avoid members from departing from the truth they have received. Absenteeism ensures the loss of spiritual warmth through prayer and fellowship. The habit of gathering together for worship makes spiritual nurturing possible, and this should not be neglected by any Christian. It enhances, strengthens and invigorates believers in the journey of faith. In fact, the love believers have for one another is not envisaged positively in verbal declaration but through gathering together in the name of Jesus who is the owner of the Church, studying and praying for the fulfillment of His imminent return which will bring all human restlessness to an end.

Principle of Retention in James

In James 5:19, 20, believers are advised to bring back the erring ones so that they will not die in their sins. This is an important retention principle which emphasizes on the restoration of one who has left the faith or backslidden. These are the people who have known the truth but due to the cares of this world or other mundane circumstances have led to such unfortunate situation. These people should not be left in that condition. Paul says that believers should do their part to bring erring ones back to the fold; it is a mission of great honor that is highly accepted by God. This is a duty that can only be accomplished by the grace of God and believers should not neglect their part for God overrules in the affair of humanity.

Principles of Retention in Ellen G. White's Writings

The newly baptized members need to be nurtured and be well trained to be retained in the Church, and these are stressed by Ellen G. White, as principles. In the nurturing process, the older members of the officers or other workers in the church

should be appointed to care for the new members.²³ This is to ensure that they are spiritually and physically nurtured as well; the new converts should not be left without doing something for God's cause. They should be involved in the service of the Lord according to their spiritual gift to enable them to grow in faith and be more equipped to the service of the Lord.²⁴

There should be sincere and diligent leaders in the church who would continually give directives and instruction to the new members so that they will not lose focus of their calling. There should be incessant and determined effort in training them in the principles of the Bible for them to be firmly established in faith not to be tossed about by another infiltrating doctrine that is being spread by the so-called minister of the present age. The new members should be trained on how to take care of themselves. The service to God and humanity require all round development of every believer. The spiritual gifts are to be utilized for the edification of God's Church. It is not a haphazard empowerment but involves unrelenting selfless service throughout the life period of the believer in positive anticipation of the ultimate perfection of God's plan of salvation.²⁵

They should understand their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and they should grow both in spiritual and physical dimensions to be qualified for God's service. Furthermore, she also emphasized that holistic education imparts for the total development of the individual, especially in facing challenges of life encountered by the young people in their academic pursuit. A healthy relationship is important for peaceful co- existence in the community of faith and beyond. Social positive

²³Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1950), 177-187.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵ White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 13.

behaviors that could help in building self-esteem would be needful. Also, a conventional program that empowers and impact the mind positively should belong for. Young people should be impacted wisely on the right approach to media, music and cultural issues in the light that comes from the Holy Scriptures.²⁶

Among other principles that are needed in the process of nurturing new members that would result to increase in retention of Church membership includes the need for the new members to experience truth in their lives. This can be achieved when older spiritually matured members of the Church devote their time to instruct them, strengthening them through their tutelage and live the principles they have taught. God is better pleased to have new converts who are thoroughly nurtured by the older members of the Church than to have a large number of professed members who are spiritual mediocre that are not truly converted.

The new members should be counseled to have friends of God's children, especially among the Church membership. In the company of those who fear God, be guided, they would also be challenged to learn more about God and at the same time be empowered for service as their faith is strengthened. More so, the Church leadership should have regular follow-up activities for these members. They should not be left as soon as they are baptized. There should be series of visitation and Bible reading programs meant for their spiritual edification.²⁷

Also, she made known that there are many temptations that are being faced by new converts and as such, there is need to help them to succeed in their spiritual journey. She counseled that the members should be placed under the care of older

²⁶ "What is Holistic Education," accessed July 12, 2016, <http://www.technology.com/teachers/methods/holistic>.

²⁷ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 334-335.

members who are experienced as to help them overcome certain temptation and opposition that may come to them. They should be reminded the constant nature of the Christian warfare, and they should incline to God for strength and never to give up.²⁸The Church leadership should constantly pray for them to discover the power of truth in their lives as they struggle to be emancipated from the power of the evil one. They should also be thoroughly taught of what baptism is all about as a spiritual exercise; it should not be seen as a mere formality.

There is need to educate them in the principles of baptism, making them to understand that they were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit and that it is a sign that they were buried in the likeness of Christ's death and raised into a new life would help in building and retaining them. There are therefore dedicated only to the Godhead and everything in the world becomes secondary matter in their pursuits for the heavenly goal. As they surrender their lives and to the hand of their maker their lives would be governed by the principles of heaven, subjecting themselves to Christ alone who will not allow them to make shipwreck of their spiritual journey.²⁹

Small groups are identified by her as another effective, reliable means of nurturing and bringing new members into the church. In a situation where there are large Church memberships, the leadership of the Church should organize small companies for worship and social meetings. Through this, they will be united to form a bond of community of faith. The Lord would inspire them to develop action plans for capacity building in terms encouraging one another through their influence and

²⁸ White, *Testimonies*, 5:183.

²⁹ White, *Testimonies*, 6:98-99.

material assistance. Some hidden talent would also be discovered as courage is gained for mission.³⁰

In the group of companies, members should assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible discovering the truth for them as the Holy Spirit inspire and guides them. Personal experiences should be narrated during meeting because it helps in bringing joy and comfort to others.

The formation of small groups is to be highly esteemed by the church because it is an ordained plan, made by God for the growth of the church and retention of her membership. The formation of small group is second to none in the advancement of the kingdom of God. This primary evangelistic structure fosters love among the small group. It promotes unity as the group members seek for the welfare of one another.

The company will also persevere in pursuit for the sustenance and advancement of the Church as the members are empowered by the Holy Spirit whose fruit keeps the Church moving. The work of the small group is not for the Church members alone but for the empowerment of the community where there are unbelievers.

The mission of the Church is central to the existence or formation of the small group. There would be an emphasis on reaching up spiritual exercise which centers on Bible study, fasting, prayer and social meetings. There should be In-reach that promotes revival and weeks of prayer program, stewardship training and fulfilled worship and Reach-out that has to do with systematic personal and Church corporate evangelism through a public campaign. As they devote their time to service, the master of Mission will increase them.³¹

³⁰ White, *Testimonies*, 7:195.

³¹ White, *Testimonies*, 7:21-22.

For the purpose of studying the word of God which is a major reason for the formation of small groups, Ellen White emphasized that living a realistic Christian of life involves constant contact and empowerment by the word of God. The word of God should be read and internalized for spiritual action that glorifies God and blesses humanity. That small Group formation impacts the Church spiritual cannot be over emphasized. These facts of small group are very practical and would help the Church in the retention of the youth.³²

Principles of Retention in Other Christian Literature

Many Christian scholars from other denominations have written on the concept of retention. Some of the principles that have been studied and analyzed in above sections are re-emphasized by these writers.

According to Kurt Johnson, a small group is an intentional face-face gathering of three to twelve people who meet on regular schedule, with the common purpose of developing spiritual relationships among the group, their meeting felt needs of group members, growing spirituality in the service of the Lord who have called as a Church, and laying plans to lead others to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives.³³ The principle of small group ministry is traced from the first verse of Genesis in the Old Testament as Moses wrote: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Hebrew word translated “God” in this biblical verse is plural; indicating that more than one divine person was involved in creation.³⁴

³² White, *Testimonies*, 7:21-22.

³³ Kurt W. Johnson, *Successful Small Groups: From Theory to Service* (Hagerstown, Review and Herald, 2011), 34.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

David Githii, in his approach to retention, sees small group principle as a successful way through which Christians could be retained in the Church. Exod. 18:13-26, is a strong biblical foundation for this principle. In this text, Jethro advised his son-in-law Moses to divide the people into small groups for effective leadership and greater achievement.

While the context was of effective leadership, the process which was geared towards keeping people together, growing together, working together, and sharing together and through this method, they were retained as the body of Christ. People in small groups can share their joys, burdens together in love as they associate with one another to the point of knowing their temperament which helps in the harmonious existence of the group or any given community. The small group is a helpful ground for the retention of the youth and others.³⁵

George Knowles *brought* to focus his suggestion of other principles that could help in keeping members in the Church, especially the young people thereby retaining their membership which includes:

1. Adopting a consistent strategy to follow up new members in loving appreciation of their willingness to serve God as members of the Church. This makes them believe that they are recognized by the older members of the Church and showcases their willingness to work together with them.
2. There should be a regular visitation plan for the new members. This will give the privilege of praying for them as well. It is through this channel that the challenges they are facing would be made known as to know the area of assistance the church could give as a community of believers who bear and share their burdens together.
3. The task of assisting new members to discover their spiritual gifts is a role that should be played by the church leadership. Through prayer, encouragement, and participation this could be achieved so that all could contribute meaningfully in God's service and there will be a positive result in Church growth. Moreover, as the members are divided into smaller groups which include old and new members,

³⁵ David Githii, *How to Grow a Healthy and Vibrant Church through Small Church Groups* (Nairobi, Kenya: Frangancia Book, 2008), 33.

the attitude of growth consciousness will be ignited among them as an aspect of mission that cannot be neglected.³⁶

Summary

In summary, this chapter has theologically identified some principles that could lead to membership loss citing biblical characters as examples. The principles that could increase retention of the Church membership have been theologically expressed as well. Teaching, involvement, fellowship, visitation, small groups are principles that are important in the process increasing membership retention. Pastors, Elders as Church leaders, have major roles to play. The newly baptized young people, as well as older members of the Church community, have their own part to play to achieve the anticipated goal of increasing membership retention.

³⁶G. E. Knowles, *How to Help your Church Grow* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1999), 48-49.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

In chapter two the theological foundation that informs retention and the principles that would lead to the membership retention increase were established from Old and New Testaments. E.G. White Writings and others Christian writers were also studied. In this chapter, SDA literature, other Christian and secular literature that deal on retention would be studied to proffer ways to increase membership retention.

SDA Literature on Retention

The various ways by which retention could be made possible are studied in this section. These are through social meetings, community, youth ministries and youth programs.

Retention through Social Meetings

Social meetings have an important role to play in retention. Regular, well planned and intelligently coordinated social meetings have a great potential to empower, equip, and transform the lives of the youth.¹ Meetings are intentionally planned and called by the leaders for the togetherness of the members with the sole aim of reasoning together and taken decisions on issues that border the institution or organization. In such meetings, newly converted people meet with others in the church and receive warmth and love.

¹C. R. Linthicum, *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform their Communities* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 150-151.

Russell Burrill observes that social meetings have played a vital role in the retention of newly baptized Church members. It was a fruitful method adopted early enough by the Church to care for her members in biblical dimensions of spiritual growth and nurture. In these meetings, members had the opportunity to share their testimonies and experiences among brethren and in the presence of the Lord. This spiritual exercise in the community of faith helped in building their faith, and more courage was received in their selfless and sacrificial service for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. These social meetings were primarily for the retention and nurturing of the Church members.²

It was a relational opportunity for every member of the church and individual were guided as the volitionally expressed their opinion for the growth of the Church. Learning that is not expressed in a practical relationship cannot be rewarding. There would be no attraction that could build the faith of the members. This positive relationship is an aspect of primitive Godliness that enhances the retention of Church members.³ The idea is not to de-emphasize sermon, but there should be a striking balance between the two for effective retention of the Church membership.

It is worthy of note that the Seventh-day Adventists has social meetings when they have their camp meetings and General Conference Sessions. These meetings afforded the members the opportunity to embrace the message of their risen savior in a new setting and are charged by the Holy Spirit to present Jesus Christ to the people as the only solution for sin and human restlessness.⁴ More importantly, members avail

²R. C. Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 1988), 180.

³ Ibid.

⁴Burrill, 188.

themselves the opportunity to render their life experiences and testimonies. In fellowship, they prayed and shared their joy, feelings and, tended to their physical needs and the meetings ended with inexplicable joy a renewed sense of mission.⁵

Burrill added that the social meetings not only nurtured members but it helped the early Adventists to develop a community of the believers that lived a hopeful life. It also accorded them the opportunity to search the scriptures, confessing their sins forgiveness and building the faith of one another through encouragement. Under listed are seven principles which are needed for retention and spiritual growth of new Church members:

1. The life of the believer is to be governed by the Spirit of God who only The Spirit of God not only gives birth to a new life, but also fosters the spiritual growth, and empowers the new member in every action as he or she walks daily with the Lord. (John 14:17; 16:13; Rom 8:14; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18).
2. There should be exemplified the life of love and unity as evidence of a life reconciled to God and the service of humanity. This eventually leads to spiritual bonding among the members of Church community and helped them to settle their differences with one another. Through the power of grace, there will be no separation, for all have become one body in the Christian community, bearing one another's burden. The love Christ has for the fallen humanity made Him pay the price of sin thereby reconciling us to the Father. Therefore, every believer is in debt of reciprocating this love in the ministry to one another (Isa 59:2; 2 Cor. 5:18; John 13:34).⁶
3. For effective spiritual growth, there must be a constant study of the word of God. Just as food and air are necessities for physical, God's word alone sustains the spiritual life. It is likened to Honey, Gold, Light, sword and milk (Ps 19:10; 119:105; Heb. 4:12 1Pe 2:2). In a broader sense, God's word is to be accepted by faith and its principles and virtues should be internalized through daily and regular study as a divine equipment in the Christian journey of faith as Paul advised in 2Timothy 3:16.
4. A life of constant prayer. What prayer is to the soul is what air is to the body. Amidst challenges, prayer takes a prominent stand in the life of every Christian. God requires that His children should establish a firm communion with him

⁵ Burrill, 186.

⁶ Paul G. Kiage, "A Strategy to Increase the Retention of members in the Nyaguta District," DMin Dissertation, Andrews University Digital Library for Graduate Research, 2014, <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>, accessed July 3, 2016.

through prayerful life especially in these changing and challenging times (Luke 18:11; Eph 6:18). Through prayer, God's will is understood which is very vital for spiritual growth. Jesus commanded the disciples to watch and pray (Matt 26:41).

5. A Christian life that gives glory and honor to God is buttressed through bearing the fruit of the Spirit as made clear in the Holy Scriptures (Gal 5:22). This, in essence, captures important virtues that create a healthy Christian community (Matt 7:20). It is a life of obedience to the will of God, and as a result of this relationship, virtues of righteousness is experienced in the Christian community life. (John 14:15, 15:4).
6. A life of spiritual warfare. The Christian journey is filled with warfare, the war between good and evil, and between Christ's people and the devil (Eph 6:12, 13; 1 Pet 5:8-9). A Christian life is both a battle and a march triumphing by the power of God, giving hope and motivation to others.⁷
7. Worship, witness, and hope are to be exemplified in the life of a Christian. In these Christian experiences, those outside this community will see the difference and be attracted to join this visible body of Christ. (Acts 2:42-47).⁸

“If the citizens of a country who are Christians will enter into vital, life-shaping relationships with God and live their faith in all of their relationships, their influence will be greater than any formalities they could get written into law.”⁹

Therefore, the researcher believes that purposeful meetings, which are regularly held would foster the Church' spiritual activities as biblical truth expressed would be understood by members. It is an avenue for reasoning together in a coherent and peaceful Christian environment with the sole aim of fulfilling God's agenda.

Retention in Church Community

GaiIn Rheenen observes that in the present dispensation, many people are now concerned about what they do to earn a living and are involved in social responsibilities of their interest. The inherent family tie and involvement is becoming

⁷ Gary C. McIntosh, *One Size Doesn't Fit All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 145.

⁸General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe, A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 155-171.

⁹ James L. Killen, Jr. *What Does the Lord Require?* (Lima, Ohio: CSS, 2004), 31.

minimized. This simply means that the expected cohesion and traditional tie experienced in many cultures is disintegrating as extended and nuclear family ties seem to break up.

The disorganization or disorientation of these social fabrics has resulted to intense loneliness in many quarters.¹⁰ This condition may not have a negative impact on the Church as a community that enhances relationship promotes the wholistic development of the Church membership and retention. Community interaction is necessary for the well-being of man. The Church is a community of believers, and the action of God among the member of the community will bring hope, joy and build the faith of others.¹¹

Generally speaking, consequences of losing a community are numerous with dimensional implications affecting the religious and social lives of the people that are involved. Young people, though there are challenges they are facing the Church community, need to exist in the community.

They should be able to exert positive influence through their behaviors and program and attract many of their mates to the Church. Therefore, young peoples' program needs to be re-designed to meet their needs in spiritual, socio-economic and physical terms to spur them into useful action for the expansion of the kingdom of God.¹²

Besides, young people would treasure program that is qualitatively structured. They may not have a flavor for an entertainment program in their bid to reach the

¹⁰ Van Rheenen, *Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, 160.

¹¹ Van Rheenen, *Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*, 161.

¹² Barry Gane, *Building Youth Ministry: A Foundational Guide* (River Side, CA: Hancock Center, 2005), 203.

unreached as agents of the revolution who are poised to cooperate with God in bringing healing and the desired justice to the sin-sick world.¹³

Social interaction, connection to locality and a common tie are appropriate elements that could define a community. Notably, many individuals consider their churches to be their community and bond with a particular religion can even supersede ties to a local area.

Burrill also suggests six points on how to grow an Adventist Church and on how to retain new members in the church:

1. New converts need friends. A Church must be based on friendships or a relational model to keep new converts in the Church without this approach there will be no encouragement to remain focused on the spiritual journey
2. New members need their lives positively changed in the new dimension of spiritual growth for them to remain in the church. The changes in life situation would remain a unchallenging testimony of who the Lord is and would ever be for them. Conversion is not an amendment re-orientation of the old, but a radical new direction, resulting from the unity of Christ and His visible body must be experienced in all facets of human development (2Cor 5:17).
3. Most new converts who are retained in the Church after baptism are the people who had established a relationship with some members of the Church before they joined and through the approaches and attitudes of their friends, they discovered an ennobling lifestyle that impacted their lives. Therefore, friendship is a vital force in the retention of new members in the Church, and when this is not evident among the old and new members, the later will eventually leave the Church because they feel unwelcomed by those who have been there before them. They cannot be in such a community as social and spiritual beings and at the same time suffer loneliness.
4. Participation in Small group programs helps in the retention of new Church members. In this group, they would form a circle of few new friends. Indeed, a person cannot be intimate with the large population of the Church. Owing to this fact, formation and promotion of small active groups is a strategy that cannot be overlooked in the process of keeping new converts for an effective population of the kingdom of God.¹⁴

¹³Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 234.

¹⁴R. C. Burrill, *How to Grow an Adventist Church Fulfilling the Mission of Jesus* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2009), 75-83.

5. There is the tendency of socio- economic influence in the retention of the new members of the Church. Socio-economic ties seem to keep members together, and this cannot be undermined in the strategy of retaining the new members in the Church. Daily interaction in economic matters and social affairs in daily matters a lot. Young people influence their age grade than the manner the older generation would do it. In evangelistic outreach, the youth draws their age grade to Christ and through their friendship, they build and retain them in the service of the Lord since their dreams, aspiration, and hope is influenced by their generational world view.
6. New converts should be kept busy in the church life by integrating them into a group and giving them assignments to perform. The Church is blessed with people of diverse gifts, and there should be room for idleness when there is much work to be done. New converts identification with the Church programs will make them not to be alien but would support the church with their resources and influence and assume to be a part of the Church community.¹⁵

The Ministers' Manual of the Seventh-day Adventist Church points out a very important aspect concerning nurturing church members. The book states that it is not just baptizing people into the Church which is important, but teaching and fellowshiping with them is also vital.

The most miraculous thing about Pentecost was not the number of people baptized in a day but that they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship. (Acts 2:42) With the Holy Spirit's aid, it's possible to enjoy both quantity and quality in church growth.¹⁶

The *Ministers' Manual* gives further information on how to establish new members. Develop a friendship system to help the new members become connected with someone whom they respect so that the person cares for them. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom 15:1). This person will act as a guardian, sponsor, under shepherd, or as a friend to the new member. This guardian

¹⁵Burrill, 75-83.

¹⁶General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 129.

will report to the pastor at least quarterly how the new convert is getting on.¹⁷

Another way of caring for the new member is to continue giving them instructions.

“As newborn babies, desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby” (1 Pet 2:2). Assign them some work and let them be trained on how to witness to their immediate friends and family members. The same method was used by Christ in Mark 5:19.¹⁸

In his book, James Cress underlines three important ingredients that are necessary to keep new members in the church: (a) they should be able to articulate and respond to doctrines of their faith (Pet 3:5), (b) they should have friends within the congregation, at least six to eight, and (c) they should be involved in meaningful group activities.¹⁹

Cress also points out another ingredient in the nurturing of new members: to open doors for them. Intellectual truth is not enough to keep the new members. We should create “communalism” with the new converts. We should not close ourselves off in “mission compounds, ” but we should try to create an environment where we can mingle with the society around us. As Adventists, we lack in this area. We need to go beyond information to lifestyle (2 Pet 3:18). Cress further explains that transformation should be witnessed outwardly like in the case mentioned in Luke 3:8, 10-14. The new members should have an experience of putting off the habits they had before accepting to follow Jesus Christ, and they should totally submit to the divine

¹⁷ General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association, *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual*, 130.

¹⁸ Ibid., 132.

¹⁹J. A. Cress, *You can Keep Them if You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 46.

authority, watching and always praying for the power to remain firm in the faith.²⁰ Furthermore, newly baptized members should be incorporated in all aspects of the church life so that they can receive the spiritual warmth that is necessary for their retention. Through their friends in the church, they can have opportunities that empower them for development which they never had before.

Cress explains further on how church members are to be kept in the church by stressing that the most important thing to do is to have meaningful relationships with them. This involves being able to win their friendship and being able to share intimate, private areas of the other person's life so that you can earn that person's trust and build some measure of relationship. This is essential in keeping him or her close to you emotionally and physically. The church may teach correct and true doctrine, but unless the new members have friends, they will not remain in the church for long.²¹

Meaningful friendship is possible by communication of love among church members especially the leaders they look forward to emulating. This buttressed by actions as members relate with one another. The preaching and teaching should center on love, and this should manifest in the daily living not only at the pulpit. The love for newly baptized members will necessitate inviting them to the houses of older members for lunch and attend to other areas of their needs. More social events should be created, like social meetings outside the church for more relational interactions.²²

²⁰ Cress, *You can Keep Them if You Care*, 55-53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

²² *Ibid.*, 69.

Retention in Youth Ministries

Barry Gane in his book, *Building Youth Ministries* states that the youth ministries of the SDA Church began with Harry Fenner and Luther Warren in 1879. They were 17 and 14 years respectively when the burning zeal to commence this ministry started in their lives. Their initial meetings were held in the home of Luther for the purpose of planning for the missionary work, raising fund for literature evangelism and promotion of temperance activities.²³ It was at a later time that the girls joined the boys in the ministry with the sole aim of spreading the gospel to the entire world. In the meetings of these young people, Luther Warren's parental role was advisory, counseling, giving direction to the small group and giving vision for organizational flavor as the young people embark on their volitional service to humanity.²⁴

This youth gathering was not destitute of opposition as experienced by Mead MacGurie who started to identify with the youth movement, 12 years after Luther's ministry take off but God used Ellen G. White to counsel the Church that young people should be organized in every local Church. The group was named Sunshine Band, under the guidance of Luther Warren and in 1901, Mrs. Flora Plumber who was in charge of Sabbath School Department was appointed by the General Conference to take care of the youth works. Subsequently, at the General Conference Session in Switzerland, M. E. Kern was elected as the Youth Leader in 1907 and the name "Seventh-day Adventist Young People's Department of Missionary Volunteers" was adopted as the name for the department that would look after the young people of the Church. Though the name has changed as decades passed by, the aim of the ministry,

²³ Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 15.

²⁴ Ibid.

which is “The Advent Message to the entire world in my generation” remains the same and the constraining love of Christ remains the compelling and motivating force that drives the Adventist youth in mission activities.²⁵

Youth retention programs. According to Neil Thompson, there are in-reach programs embarked upon by the youth which helps and nurtures them to grow spiritually. Through these faith-building activities, they deepen their commitment to Jesus Christ.

Youth in-reach could be understood as the act of leading young people into a full commitment to Jesus Christ. It is stimulating our youth to develop their full potential. It provides a means of holding the youth in the Church. In short, youth in reach focuses on strengthening the faith of the young people in the Church based on their relationship with Jesus Christ.²⁶

In reach activities for the youth help in nurturing them for survival in their spiritual journey, making them have assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ. The in-reach programs that are conducted by the young people help in strengthening their faith, love, hope in their services for the Lord. More so the youth learn and imitate the standard for Christian living as they get involved in these programs. The various talents they have are brought to limelight when they are allowed to develop and implement programs that aim at strengthening their faith. The result is a positive one because their values and self-worth are enhanced.²⁷

The in-reach programs are avenues by which the young people celebrate their faith. The act of celebration in this regard is declaring God’s love and care for them and expressing His continuous presence in their lives. The Youth Week of Prayer,

²⁵ Gane, *Building Youth Ministry*, 15.

²⁶ Neil Thompson, “Youth In-reach,” in *Getting it Right*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Youth Department, ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 105.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

Bible Conferences, Youth Day, Youth Profile, just to mention but a few are celebration opportunities for the youth. They have the opportunity to narrate their personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the midst of friends, parents, and neighbors. Through these spiritual exercises, their faith would grow and be sustained, and many of their peers would receive encouragement in their spiritual journey.²⁸

According to Roger Dudley, in a study of more than 33,000 college graduates, it was observed that dropping out from faith resulted from rebellion against status quo, secularization, and achievement orientation.²⁹ The nature of adolescence has not changed in any way but the difference is that in today's young people the prevalent condition of the world around them that has been specifically altered by technological advancement which has effects on the lives of the young people and there is need for the youth to be given the opportunity to have these spiritual in-reach programs whereby they could be supervised by the adults. The researcher sees it as a [positive dimension towards increasing the retention of the young people in the Church.

More so, for young people to remain in their faith, they desperately need to be loved and accepted in the community of faith. They place a high amount of credibility on relationships and actions. Interestingly, James in his work observed that new intellectual appreciation and powers spring up spontaneously and interest in artistic, ethical and religious matters multiply in number and depth in the lives of the young people.³⁰ Indeed, they develop either positive or negative responsiveness to issues

²⁸ Neil Thompson, "Youth In-reach," in *Getting it Right*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Youth Department, 109.

²⁹ Roger L. Dudley, *Passing on the Torch* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1986), 24.

³⁰ James Hasting, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 102.

depends on the area and approach of empowerment. Seemingly, the downward process of intellectual or moral decline or deterioration is usually experienced when the youth are not modeled. The love the Church will have for the youth will make it give them greater opportunity for rewarding activities in the bid to guide and position them for leadership position without creating leadership gap.

Young people do not like to experience alienation, irrelevance, and self-righteousness in any community they found themselves. A major theme shared by the dropouts was that they feel unaccepted by their Churches. The sad thing is that a number of these young adults at the times when they were vulnerable and seeking for love, acceptance, grace and other needs were sobered by neglect and rejection.³¹ By perceiving this attitude exhibited by the church, they disconnect from the Church since they sense that their presence is irrelevant.

It is not a welcomed phenomenon that many youths leave the church, but it does happen. It has been rightly observed that up to 20-40 percent of Adventist youths leave the church after they have been baptized.³² This happens more among those who are living in urban areas that impose much influences on them. It is less among the youths who are living in the rural setting because of environmental factor. More so, the influence of the home is observed to be a strong determining factor whether a youth will leave the faith or not.

The examples from parents that are imbibed by the children manifest continually in the developmental stage of the children unto adulthood.³³

³¹Hasting, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 61.

³²Habana, A Department of Church Ministries Publication, p. 5.

³³Albert Bandura and Richard Walters, *Social Learning and Personality Development* (New York: Rinehart and Wilston, 1963), 49.

Parents need to be very careful on the influence they exert on the young who develops their character through imitation and emulation. They imitate what the adults do. A child who constantly lives where criticism is made eventually would learn to condemn, so it is with a child who lives in hostility would eventually be arrogant to the point that he would always be fighting. On the positive note, living in the environment of encouragement builds confidence. Living in friendship environment builds love while in fairness promotes justice.³⁴

Every adult Christian leader should understand that the youth need encouragement through these in-reach programs which is a way of demonstrating their spiritual gifts. They should be encouraged to walk with Jesus through Bible study and prayer. No one should forget that Jesus' relationship with his disciples and others was a demonstration of encouragement per-excellence.

Other Christian Literature on Retention

In this section, some principles of retention which have been expounded by other Christian author are considered. Small group, community and Youth participation principles are seen as effective ways of increasing membership retention.

Small Group Retention Principle

Aubrey Malphurs has made an outstanding contribution on how Jesus made and worked with his disciples that are very important in the process of retaining members in the Church. This principle, which originated with God at creation, enhances the growth of the church.³⁵ During Christ's earthly ministry, it was observed

³⁴Chimezie A. Omeonu, *A Life to Live* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Perfect Printers, 2001) 341.

³⁵Peter C. Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (California: Regal Books, 1990), 19.

that the crowds that sought for Him were concerned only with the immediate satisfaction of their physical, temporal needs. In the case of the disciples, they believed in His Word, obeyed and were determined to go wherever He went, teaching, preaching and healing the sick ones. He called this circle of men into the ministry because they were willing to follow Him and they would not like to separate themselves from him including other men and women who had been blessed by the ministry of Jesus (Luke 6:13; 8:1-3).

Therefore, the decision to follow Jesus meant to be his servant, without compromise even, to the point of being willing to serve Jesus even to the point of death. To make disciples, Jesus focused on small groups of disciples as He called Simon and Andrew his brother among others (Mark 1:16-20; John 2:12). Second, He spent much time with the inner circle of the twelve, and no external influence deterred them from staying together, and He also counseled them in order to respond to their strengths and weaknesses.³⁶

The concept of this small group is very vital for the empowerment of the people who would continue in the mission of the master. The method that Jesus used is the best since it did not stop with this number. It helped them to be focused and understand the principles which they will, in turn, be ready to make known to others, thereby increasing the number of the disciples. Christ was able to handle a manageable number at first as an example per excellence in the ministry. In the context of this research, it is appropriate to have young people in small groups, devote quality time to teach them the word of God. Through a sound relational approach, they would internalize the principles taught and will reflect them in their lives.

³⁶Malphurs, A., *Advance Strategic Planning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 55-58.

The principle of small group ministry according to Kurt is traced from the first verse of Genesis in the Old Testament as Moses wrote: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The Hebrew word translated “God” in this biblical verse is plural; indicating that more than one divine person was involved in creation.³⁷

The followers of Jesus started to live out and apply the principles of small group that had been taught to them by Jesus, and they saw it as a model for church growth. This vision of ministry is what God wants to establish in the life of His people for strengthening the spiritual life of the Christian community and reaching the unreached with the message of our risen savior. This can only be achieved through growing relationship with Jesus and to Christians of all denominations who are searching for a deeper understanding of the scripture.

Small group involves getting along with other people irrespective of age or other human barriers, laying plans to lead them to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives.³⁸ It is unity in truth as Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples (John 17 21-23) it is a unity of relationship with God and not organic unity. Small group ministry is a spiritual community affair.

Steps that would help those who have received Christ in the process of retention and spiritual growth include: They would be ready to follow Jesus no matter the circumstance following Him may mean to them and constantly yielding to life of sacrificial and selfless service for wellbeing of humankind (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet 2:21). It is the willingness to serve Him and to serve fellow beings without reservation. (Acts 20:19; Rom 12:11; Col 3:24; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Cor. 12:5; Eph 4:12; 6:7; 1 Pet 4:10). They should equally deny themselves the earthly pleasures and embrace His will for

³⁷Johnson, *Successful Small Groups*, 24.

³⁸ Ibid.

their lives, by faith the Lord will surely provide for their needs in the present transient human circumstance. (Rom 6:1-14; 12:1; Gal 2:20; Phil 3:7-8). They should only believe and hold to Christ's teachings and be ready to share it with others (Acts 2:42; 6:1-7).

They should love one another, for, through this virtue, one is known to be truly converted (1 John 3:14). They should bear the fruit of the Spirit without which every effort made will be mechanical and at the same time a waste of energy. (Gal 5:22; Col 1:10).³⁹

More so, there are a number of ways by which members could be retained in the Church and at the same time enhance their spiritual growth. Among them are the process of making them discover their spiritual gift, adopting an effective strategic plan that would be welcomed by the Church. The spiritual programs would nurture the Church membership, sustaining and focusing on the mission of the Church.

It will also help the members to discover their spiritual gifts, become mission focused. According to Tangeman, adopting a strategy of shaping new believers into Christ's image will through God's grace qualify them as human instruments cooperating with the master of mission.⁴⁰ A small group is a simple Church structure that enables Church members to meet their needs easily. Small group formation makes nurturing new members to be effective.

Create understanding among members for them to be involved in effective seasons of prayer. God through his power would make every conceived plan for mission to work out positively. Helping members to discover and use their spiritual

³⁹Johnson, *Successful Small Groups*, 66.

⁴⁰G. E. Tangeman, *The Disciple Making Church in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Christian Literature, 1996), 325-326.

gifts to edify all the other members. There is the need to help members to focus on the mission of the Church and the strategies that aim at empowering church growth thereby making inroads for winning souls for the kingdom of God. Establishing small groups where disciples can be nurtured supported, encouraged, and trained, thereby strengthening their spiritual lives of the Christian community to reach the unreached with the message of our risen savior.⁴¹

The church should be highly involved in desired programs which will affect everyone in the community of faith positively as to retain them in fellowship. These are recognition and nurturing spiritual activities which are positive dimensions for Church membership retention through participation in Church growth programs.

They aim at strengthening and awakening the interests and abilities of Church membership for real opportunities for sharing their beliefs with others, and by so doing they will become agents of hope investing their spiritual gifts for Church growth. Nurturing also helps in consolidating the changes of adolescents in the process of their identity formation. And the Bible is the principal source for nurturing church membership. Again, nurture is the important key to continual spiritual growth and will eventually enhance the attitude of the people toward mission and check spiritual degeneration. The ultimate question in life is what must I do to be saved? The ultimate answer is “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. The ultimate goal in the nurturing of our youth is to lead them to ask the ultimate question and for them to discover the ultimate answer which is only possible in Christ Jesus.

⁴¹Tangeman, *The Disciple Making Church in the 21st Century*, 325-326.

Warren offers a few additional suggestions on how to retain church members unto spiritual maturity. In his suggestion, he asserts that for spiritual growth to be experienced in the life of a believer the following points are to be considered:

1. Spiritual growth involves the exercise of intentional commitment and effort, dissociating from wrong habits, by inclining to the power of The Holy Spirit (Ps 119:9-11). This is the only effectual way to acknowledge the spiritual growth as the Devil flees from the believer (Rom 6:13).
2. Spiritual growth must be very practical, for any believer can grow to maturity if he or she develops the spiritual habits required. There must be a natural and unavoidable witnessed positive, practical life that is infectious, to the honor and glory to God (Matt5:16).⁴²
3. Spiritual growth follows God's dimensions as believers cooperate with Him. It is a divine process that takes time and not by human dictatorship. He accomplishes His divine purpose according to His way. God moves mysteriously to perform His wonders. God allowed Israel to grow little by little in Deut 7:22) and people arrive at maturity through a process (Eph 4:10).
4. Spiritual maturity is better demonstrated by behavior than by beliefs, so faith should be demonstrated by actions of good works and not by verbal declaration and speculation (Jas 3:13).
5. Matt 7:24-27 informs that it is by the fruits that people produce would they be known. Christians need relationships to grow to spur one another along (Heb 10:24-25; 1 John 3:14),
6. It is a continuous variety of spiritual experiences with God to produce spiritual maturity unto perfection (Prov 4:18).⁴³

In his book *The Tender Shepherd*, John Killinger describes the following ways concerning how to care for and feed new members. He offers practical examples of how these principles can be applied to retain them in the Church

1. New members should be received affectionately with information and accompanying assignment on their level of spiritual operation. This will make them feel happy and give them a deep sense of belonging to the Church.

⁴²R. Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 331-340.

⁴³Ibid.

Collective, intentional approach in the progress of the church work should be guided.

2. Matured adults leaders should be carefully selected from the church for the purpose of mentoring new members. This should involve setting good examples in specific behaviors as in Christian service, guidance, and counseling. In mentoring, learners acquire knowledge from matured adult leaders in an ongoing capacity building personal relationship
3. The manner by the new members are introduced to the congregation at first has a great impact on whether will keep coming or abandon the Church. They should not be welcomed as visitors but as people who have accepted the full responsibility of being in a Church community in love. A letter could be extended to them through the church leadership which expresses joy and happiness for their volitional decision to serve God. More information should be given in Church bulletin, to enable church members to know more about them and make plans to visit them.
4. More so, orientation program could be organized to acquaint them with the programs of the Church and the immediate roles they could play as members of the Church. This would enable the older members to interact freely with the new ones, and a conducive and favorable relational atmosphere would then be created.⁴⁴

Mauss, in his participant-observant approach, observed that inability to meet intellectual, social and emotional needs of Church members could lead to apostasy.⁴⁵

Secular Community Retention Principle

The term community has been debated upon which has led to many definitions. Different scholars in declaring their own definitions have suggested that community cannot be restricted to locality.

Barry Wellman declares that the Community should be seen as that which consists of personal networks of an individual, a multi-dimensional variable and that which can be found in the virtual world online among others.⁴⁶ Some people consider

⁴⁴Killinger, J, *The Teacher Shepherd* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985), 37-44.

⁴⁵ Armand L. Mauss, "Dimensions of Religious Defection. *Review of Religious Research* 10(1969):128-135.

⁴⁶ Barry Wellman. "Physical Place and Cyberspace: The Rise of Personalized Networking." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22:227.

their churches to be their community and the bond to a particular religion can supersede ties to a local area which they eventually consider as secondary to their desire to preserve their religious and cultural integrity.⁴⁷ The community has much to do in the spiritual development of the young people. Through fellowship with one another, their faith is strengthened which is never legislated nor forced but is fostered by relationship.

Apostates are not seen to have only those that have lost or rejected their religions in a given community but are noted as those who have abandoned a religion they once believed in.⁴⁸ Considering the knowledge and the desired understanding on the importance of community and the idea that a religious institution can be highly considered a community, it becomes outstanding that the process of leaving one's faith has much effect on them.⁴⁹

It has been observed that without organic solidarity, people would be left in a state of anomie or be destitute on norms to guide their behavior. Community existence ensures the well-being of the residents. Being part of a community can also be beneficial to the welfare of the individual in their variable dimensions, and this is well pronounced when the existing community facilitates distributive justice, open communication, tolerance, collective action, and communion. More so, social support that emerges by part of a community is highly indispensable to the members of that

⁴⁷ A. E. Luloff and Richard Krannich, eds., *Persistence and Change in Rural Communities: A 50 year Follow-up to Six Classic Studies* (New York, NY: Cabi, 2002), 32.

⁴⁸ Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, *Amazing Conversion: Why Some Turn to Faith and Others Abandon Religion* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1994), 21.

⁴⁹ Bromley, David, *Falling from the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy* (London: Sage, 1988), 11.

community because social support is seen as a principal way by which people and households get resources readily.⁵⁰

The benefits of the community are not limited to physical resources, abstract feelings of well-being among the community membership or the desired social order; it extends to assisting individual members with health care, child care issue and even alleviating financial challenges.⁵¹

Observably, community networks have become important social network system that people can depend on which influences success in life, security, and sense of well-being and even on health ground.⁵²

Youth Participation

The idea of young people getting involved in activities is of both religious and secular concern. Youth participation which is also known as youth involvement is a concept of youth in the government and the church. It is the decision to involve young people in areas of governance or social development⁵³.

More so, David Driskell in collaboration with members of the Growing up in cities project has stressed the importance of having youth involved in community programs whereby their values will be harnessed. Furthermore, young people are vulnerable members of the community both in the present and in the future. They compose an important fraction of every urban population. Therefore empowerment in

⁵⁰ Barry Wellman and Scott Wortley, "Different Strokes from Different Folks: Community Ties and Social Support," *American Journal of Sociology* 96: (1990)558-588.

⁵¹ M. L. Usdansky and D. A. Wolf, "When Child Care Breaks Down: Mothers' Experiences with Child Care Problems and Resulting Missed Work." *Journal of Family Issues* 29 (2008):1185-1210.

⁵² Claude S. Fischer, *To Dwell among Friends: Personal Networks in Town and City* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982,) 3.

⁵³Nwankaire, Nweke ,and Nwanko, "Factors that Influence Youth Participation..."

equipping them with skills is a good investment geared towards producing a better future for the entire humanity.⁵⁴

Christ-like unconditional love that emanates a living relationship with God is yearning of the young people. Through encouragement, they would participate in the events that empower the community positively. Involving in decision making bodies that would promote families, schools, youth programs, community service, National youth day and likes would make a difference in their lives.⁵⁵ They want to participate in meaningful worship and other church programs that are consistent with the biblical principles, impacting humanity as they make a difference in the complex world they are living.⁵⁶

Focusing on a renewed sense of mission restores a healthy outward focused viewpoint. It gives the Church a sense of hope and motivation.⁵⁷ The young people should be highly involved desired programs which affect everyone in the given community. Religious faith that will work with the youths will respond to their needs as they face the challenges of modernization.

More so the yearning for indigenization in the face of new social intellectuals and cultural circumstances will also be considered.⁵⁸

⁵⁴David Driskell, *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth: A Manual for Participation* (Paris, France: UNESCO, 2002), 22.

⁵⁵Free Child project, "Youth Involvement," accessed July 14, 2016, [http://. Free child. Org/SIYI/index.htm](http://Freechild.Org/SIYI/index.htm).

⁵⁶Gary C. McIntosh, *One Size Dosen't Fit All* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 145.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 195.

⁵⁸Philip Gleason, *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 155.

Literature on Secular Retention

Secular retention has been expressed here in two dimensions namely parental socialization and religious socialization. More so, youth clubs which has helped in retaining young people is also discussed.

Principle of Parental Socialization

Hadaway and Marler have observed the effect of socialization on the religious status of the youth. Socialization which is a major life event is a key variable in predicting the retention of the youth in faith. Socialization consists of variables such as having a good relationship with parents and the level of parental religiosity. Low levels of socialization resulting either from a poor relationship with parents, does not enhance the religious life of young people which may eventually lead to abandoning their faith.⁵⁹

More so, Steve Daily observes that high parental socialization in the Church community helps in building healthy faith among the membership as it provides the opportunity to learn and grow.⁶⁰ The young person's understanding of God is greatly enhanced when they have a model of God's love demonstrated to them in the Church community interaction. The most effective parenting style for building faith, a psychological, and emotional health of the youth is one that is high on care and at the same time allows the desired freedom that empowers the youth to be independent. The help needed by the youth need to be attended to in the Christian community so that their unfulfilled social need would not make them drop out from the Church.⁶¹

⁵⁹C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler, "All in the Family: Religious Mobility in America," *Review of Religious Research*, (1993), 35: 97.

⁶⁰Steve Daily, *Adventism for a New Generation* (Portland, Oregon: Better Living, 1994), 223.

⁶¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Youth Department, *Getting it Right* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald), 274.

The enduring effects of parental socialization are striking, considering the multitude of opportunities for rejection of parental teachings in adulthood. Social learning theory developed as a response to previous learning theories that highlighted operant or instrumental conditioning as the primary vehicles for learning.⁶²

These approaches emphasize reinforcement, both positive and negative, as the guiding force in behavior acquisition. Children are guided into the appropriate response patterns during a process in which each attempt to behave appropriately is rewarded or punished, or not rewarded until the actual behavior or response becomes closer and closer to the desired response. Children, thus, learn appropriate behaviors through a series of “successive approximations” which are guided to perfection with rewards and punishments.

Bandura questions whether most, or even many, of the desired behaviors in society, could be learned solely through this method and what happens when conditioning approaches fail to appreciate the role of imitation and modeling in the learning process. He, therefore, stresses that the power of parental example was strong enough to endure the life transitions that children ultimately make in the course of becoming adults.⁶³

The family is the most natural recipient of values and principles, but in some homes, children are neglected or overlooked as fitting recipients of mission efforts. It is a gross mistake to assume that the youth will imbibe family spirituality without a parental guide. Biblically, the family is the richest and deepest of all human bonds which date from creation. Christian family lifestyle is of paramount importance in the

⁶²A. Bandura and R. Walters, *Social Learning and Personality Development* (New York, Rinehart and Wilston, 1963), 49.

⁶³Ibid.

character building of the youth. The way the young people relate to God, church, and mission opportunities is shaped tremendously by fathers and mothers in the faith.

Principle of Religious Socialization

David Bromley observes in his work that those young people who disengage from faith are much more likely to come from homes in which their parents did not attend religious services or place a high emphasis on religious practice in the home.⁶⁴ Social hours in the home are a quality time spent by the family as a corporate institution.

As the hours of the night are for refreshing of the physical being, so the relaxation of the evening companionship may serve for the refreshment of homes. In this unique togetherness, young people will continually appreciate their parents and their value system and sustained happy comradeship would reach beyond the bounds of the family circle. As children become adolescents, the urge for outside companionship increases.

Albrecht and Cornwall, stress that negative events are associated with loss of faith while positive life experiences are associated with increased faith.⁶⁵ According to Zelan, college attendance has a negative effect on the religiosity of the students.⁶⁶ Peer groups relationship may be so strong that parental guidance is often rejected as they explore issues and possibilities for themselves with inconsistencies that overwhelm and confuse adults.

⁶⁴David G. Bromley, *Falling from the Faith* (California: Sage, 1988), 68.

⁶⁵ Stan L. Albrecht and Marie Cornwall, "Life Events and Religious Change" *Review of Religious Research* (1989) 31:23-38.

⁶⁶ Joseph Zelan, "Religious Apostasy, Higher Education and Occupational Choice," *Sociology of Education* (1968) 41:370-379.

Adolescence is viewed psychologically as a period of maturity in reasoning and season of identity formation. At this stage, young people also begin to seek independence from their parents and start to identify with peer groups exploring their own belief systems to form their own identity.⁶⁷

More so, analysis of how the Bible is being interpreted by other Christian faiths is highly taken into consideration. Observably, people can leave the Church because they were never truly in the faith. Individuals could be marginal members, meaning that they never fully believed in the Church to begin with, or they were inadequately socialized or educated about the Church, and thus had a tendency to simply drift away. This member could leave or abandon his or her faith almost unconsciously, often because of other life events such as marriage to a non-member spouse.⁶⁸

Mauss, in his participant-observant approach, observed that inability to meet intellectual, social and emotional needs of Church members could lead to apostasy.⁶⁹ Religious socialization is effective when parents care for the young people in their life endeavors, providing the needed affective supports that reinforce for their behaviors.

Retention in Secular Youth Clubs

Robert Baden-Powell in 1908 in England began the Boy Scouts movement as an international organization dedicated to developing the character of boys through youth training for them to become responsible adults as they are retained in the society. Baden-Powell wrote a book called *Scouting for Boys* which narrates the

⁶⁷ Sarah Bekaert, *Adolescent and Sex* (Seattle, WA: Radcliffe, 2005), 3.

⁶⁸ Howard M. Bahr and Stan L. Albrecht, "Strangers Once More: Patterns of Disaffiliation from Mormonism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28 (1989):180-200.

⁶⁹ Armand L. Mauss, "Dimensions of Religious Defection," *Review of Religious Research* 10(1969):128-135.

forms of his training and how he engaged his troops. It was a book that was admired in Britain.⁷⁰ Boy Scouts of America has become very prominent to the extent that girls were allowed to join them from the 1980s.⁷¹

The members promise to perform their duties to God, to the country and be obedient to their laws. The Scout Law calls and requires all Scouts to be Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. This movement is without military or political affiliation and has no specific religious affiliation or biases.

This organization is inclusive in nature without religious bias. The association is divided into three sections according to age specification: Cub Scouts are boys between the ages of 7-12 years; Scouts are those between the ages of 12-19 years while Rovers are those between the ages of 19-24. There is Beaver Scouts in Britain for ages 6 to 8 and Tiger Cubs in the United States of America for age 7.⁷²

In a bid to avoid gender bias, girls were allowed to join the Cub group and above as they were designated as Girls Scout or Guild.⁷³ The Scout program emphasis is on citizenship training and community service projects, services at national, state and community events, and providing first aid in case of disaster. They also carry out agricultural projects which provide training service to help local farmers to learn new agricultural techniques. The Boy Scout activities have been globally embraced

⁷⁰ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Boys Scout," accessed July 6, 2016, <http://.britatannica.com/topic/boy-Scout>.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

especially in America, and some Christian Churches have incorporated their programs for youth retention.⁷⁴

Summary

In summary, in this chapter, the researcher has reviewed some SDA literature, other Christian literature and secular literature relating to membership retention. There is useful information on how youth retention could be increased. The Church community, youth clubs, programs, small group and youth participation, are notable retention avenues. Besides, religious and parental socialization and secular youth club contribute immensely to the retention of the youth. The next chapter would provide information on the designing of strategy for increasing youth retention with the use of interviews and questionnaire as instruments for data collection. This would be based on the knowledge gained through the literature review and the theological foundation.

⁷⁴ "Scouting for Presbyterian Youth," accessed July 5, 2015, http://www.scouting.org/About/Factsheets/operating_orgs/Presbyterian.aspx.

CHAPTER 4

A STRATEGY FOR YOUTH RETENTION

The previous chapter focused on literature review that stressed the necessity to increase retention of young people in the Church for mission effectiveness. This present chapter deals with the development of a strategy to increase youth retention in SDA Township Church, Umuokahia. This would be accomplished by presenting the description of the project setting in macro and micro contexts, research design, Focus Group discussion and questionnaire as instruments for data collection. The analysis of the data would provide a guide for developing a strategy to increase the retention of young people the in SDA Township Church, Umuokahia.

Description of the Macro Context of Aba Metropolis

This section gives a background of the project setting, considering the concise history, landscape, climate, demography, religious beliefs and economic life of inhabitants of Aba metropolis which is in Abia State and stands as the commercial nerve center of the state. Upon the creation of Abia state in 1991, Aba was divided into two local Governments Areas, namely; Aba South and Aba North. The indigenous people of Aba are the *Ngwa* that are well known for their craftsmen.

Description of Micro Context of Aba Metropolis

Jesse Clifford of England who served in Sierra Leone and Ghana with his wife established the Aba station in 1923 of Seventh-day Adventist Church which since

then has remained the headquarters of the church in the entire Eastern Nigeria.¹ The first organized Church in this area was Aba headquarters Church followed by Umuobiakwa, Umuocha, and Umuakpara. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is among the dominant Christian Churches in Aba which is recognized and respected for her biblical faith, quality hospitals, and good educational institutions.² Historically speaking, Aba community or *Ngwa* people have known God before the coming of the White Missionaries. They call God, *Chineke*, meaning the only being that created all things.

The aborigines of this town, the *Ngwa* people, did not resist the message of the Missionaries because of their beliefs and understanding of God. The majority of them were accustomed to contact with God through diviners or intermediaries. They were rooted in African Traditional Religion, but abandoned it and embraced the new faith—Christianity. Aba indigenes received Christianity without reservation, and since then, Christian evangelism has been a steady program with tremendous growth in the town which is carried majorly by the young people.

Landscape and Climate

Aba is located within the rainforest region of Nigeria, and this makes it difficult to obtain information about the ecosystem. There are forms of body water like streams, ponds, lakes, etc. The availability of these forms of body water makes fishing possible which is mainly done by the youth. It is observed that Aba has the

¹Adekunle A. Alalade, *Limiting Factors to the Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Agbo Areo, 2008), 59.

²General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2014), “Aba East Conference,” accessed November 30, 2015, Adventist yearbook.org.

widest migration incomparable to other fields in the Eastern part of Nigeria.³ The town was primarily established by the Ngwa clan of Igbo people of Nigeria as a market town for economic purposes, later became a military post as deemed necessary by the British Colonial administration in 1901.⁴ It has a river at the intersection of roads leading to Port Harcourt, Owerri, Umuahia, Ikot Ekpene and Ikot Abasi. These are some of the major towns in the Eastern part of Nigeria.

Demography

The population estimation of Aba was 1,215,000 as at April 2016 as stated in the demography of world urban areas. Population density per square mile is 34,700.⁵ Aba is primarily made up of many villages such as Umuokpoji Aba, Eziukwu Aba and Obuda Aba that were consequently merged into two Local Government Councils, namely: Aba North and Aba South Local Government Council Areas.⁶ The majority of the people living in these urban councils are young people; some are graduates who have left their rural communities only to look for job opportunities.

Economy

In the area of economy, Aba is surrounded with oil well which separates her from the city of Port Harcourt. Aba is noted to be one of the fastest-growing big cities in Nigeria and the commercial nexus of Abia state. The people of Aba are blessed

³ S. O. Alaneme, "Evolving an Urban/Rural Classification Module, A Lead Paper presented at a Workshop on Urban Rural Classification in Nigeria, Held at the University of Jos Conference Center, 19th-20th July, 2000," accessed May 17, 2016.

⁴ "Umuocham Destination Guide," [www.Yourplaceabroad. Com/nigeriageneral/Umuocham/](http://www.Yourplaceabroad.Com/nigeriageneral/Umuocham/), accessed May 10, 2016.

⁵ "Manila: Ortigas Business," <http://demographia:Com>, accessed 7 June 2016.

⁶ Njike Chigbu, J. I. Igbokwe, and K. U. Orisakwe, <http://naudigitalibrary.com/2014/01/13/analysis-of-landcover-landuse-changes-in-aba-urban-area>, accessed 6 June 2016.

with table land for business and agricultural purposes. Their predominant food crops are yam, maize, Cassava, cocoyam, vegetables, oranges, palms, and fruits. Their practices of agriculture depend solely on the annual rainfall which has a mean value of 200cm and relative humidity of 80%.

There are a good number of peasant farmers especially in the outskirts of the city who could sell their little produce to purchase other things they need. There are individual and corporate investments of plantain plantations, Acres of lands for the cultivation of yam, cassava, maize and vegetable gardens. Most of their agricultural produce like palm oil is sent to other parts of the country and even exported to other countries of the world for consumption and industrial purposes. There are famous big markets in Aba like Ariaria International market, Ahiaohuru, Ikot Ekpene Road Market and Cemetery Market, which are for business enterprises. Because the town is accessible to the neighboring Eastern states, it's a town to reckon with in the economic development of the country. There are government and corporate owned industries and financial institutions that facilitate and enhance businesses in Aba. For this reason, all major banks that are operating in Nigeria as a country have their branches in the city.

The social and economic activities that are flourishing in the city of Aba are spearheaded by seasoned Igbo businessmen who engage in importation and exportation of textile materials. ⁷The economic state has created employment for many youths who have migrated from the rural environments. There is also an opportunity for trading in wholesale and retail capacities.

⁷ Okoroafor Humphrey Kalu et al., "Rural Infrastructure Development: A Tool for Resolving Urbanization Crisis, A case Study of Southern- Eastern Nigeria," *World Environment* 2014, 4(1): 14-21.

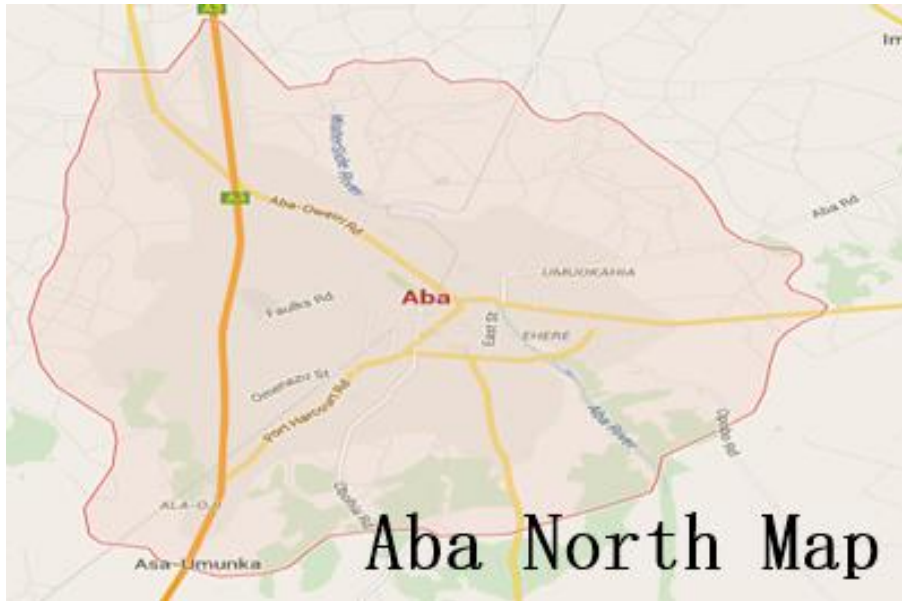


Figure 1. Map of Aba, the Enyimba City, showing Umuokahia

Brief History of Seventh-day Adventist Township Church, Umuokahia

Before the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Umuokahia, they had a place for a communal gathering called Ama-Ikpa and have ancestral deity called *Okahia-Agbara*, which was kept at a place called *IHU-ALA*, shaded by a big tree which was claimed to be spiritual and symbolic as well. The deity was under the custody of the eldest man in the community, irrespective of the clan. The first Christian Church that was established was Anglican Church in 1916 through the indefatigable role of White Missionaries marked a new dawn in the religion of the people. Subsequently, the establishment of SDA church in Aba in 1923 through the evangelistic campaign of Pastor Jesse Clifford and the wife resulted to the burning of idols and shrine by the converts and worship commenced at the Aba headquarters Church with mud house which is about three kilometers from their residence from Umuokahia .⁸

⁸Honorable Seth Agomuo SDA Township Church Umuokahia, Interview by the Author, Aba August 25, 2016.

The Church here in Umuokahia was a part of Aba headquarters district which was planted in 1991 when late Pastor I. W. Alala was the Pastor covering the entire Aba headquarters district. There was unprecedented church growth when the church began through the visitation of new members on Wednesdays and Saturdays afternoon. Contributions were made in cash and kind which were shared to the sick and indigent widows in the church. The young people were involved in the visitation programs, and they also preached the Gospel to other people. The Church was a caring one, which the young people enjoyed. The reports of group visitations embarked by the Church were given every Sabbath evening as lay activity report. The pioneer members of the branch Sabbath School that began in Umuokahia Township were Elders Dan Nwankwo, Nnamdi Nwachukwu, S.C. Ugorji, Emmanuel Uhegwu, and Deaconess Florence Obia.

The Church, which cared for her membership through visitation, prayer and Bible study, witnessed a decline of such virtue as the years were by and this affected the retention of membership notwithstanding the truth proclaimed, especially the young people.

Research Design

The research design used by the researcher was the descriptive method. The trend of youth retention would be investigated and analyzed from this research design. Through the analysis of data from the instruments employed, the researcher developed a strategy to increase youth retention in SDA Township Church, Umuokahia.

Research Authorization

A letter from the Adventist University of Africa, Babcock University Centre introducing the researcher, was presented to the President of the Aba East Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. An authorization by the administration of Aba

East Conference to conduct research on developing a strategy to increase Youth Retention in SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, in Aba East conference, Nigeria was granted to the researcher (Appendix A).

Type of Research

The type of research employed by the researcher was mixed method research which gives an account of a process through qualitative and quantitative analysis. In this case, the situation is visualized as a means of understanding what is happening. It involves assessing attitudes and opinions of individuals concerning the current status of the subject being investigated.⁹

Rationale for Selection of the Research Method

The researcher chose the mixed method because he considers it most appropriate and effective to give a clear and logical narration of the youth in the Church with regards to membership retention. From the analysis of the data collected, a strategy could be developed and implemented to achieve the desired goal of increasing the youth retention in SDA Township Church Umuokahia, in Aba East Conference.

Appropriateness of the Study

How to increase retention of the youth in the church is a study of immense importance especially in this era when the young people are faced with challenges of great magnitude, imitating and copying some global phenomenon that is detrimental to their faith. The study will be a guide to Pastors, Church leaders and parents as well

⁹ Lorrie R. Gay, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application* (Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1999), 10.

in the process of nurturing and equipping young people for a mission with the anticipation of positive results.

It is expected that the intervention that would be designed in this in-ministry project would become a viable strategy for all SDA Churches, irrespective of size, geography and cultural milieu in the process of retaining young people and positioning them as strong workforce for a population of God's the Kingdom.

Population and Sample of Participants

Seventh-day Adventist Township Church Umuokahia, under this study, has a population of 600 members as at 2011, which was the beginning of the period under review. The researcher considers this population to be involved in the process of this research. However, a sample of participants among the youth was taken through purposive sampling to achieve representativeness for obtaining necessary information since it will be difficult to manage the whole population when administering the data collecting instruments.

Criteria for Sampling Procedures and Selection

The criteria for sampling procedure and selection considered the age brackets of the Church membership, sex, education, and marital status. Representation of the larger group was considered appropriate to select the appropriate, capturing age bracket in the Church, even those in leadership.

The entire membership is not considered for the purpose of instrumentation. Hence, purposive sampling was adopted by the researcher involving three focused groups as the appropriate method for this work. The first group comprised of nine youth – five Pathfinder boys and four Pathfinder girls between the ages of 13 to 16 these are teenagers in High School who interact effectively among their peers. The Second group comprises of young people between the ages of 17 to 25 years. There

are five Males and four Females they fall in the category of the senior youth of the Church. The third group is made of young Adults youth between the ages of 26 to 30 years they are four Males and Five Females.

The fact that these groups with various age brackets are the major target of this project and their population adversely affected by their drifting away. Therefore, their involvement in the process of data collection would be authentic information that will help in the development of the strategy to increase youth retention in the Church.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in the course of this study are a focus group discussion and questionnaire. An interview may be interpreted as a process that involves at least two people in a face-to-face oral discussion with the aim of one person wanting to elicit information from the other person. Interviews have the advantage of flexibility which may yield more accurate and honest responses since they allow the investigator to explain and clarify questions.¹⁰

The people involved in the focus group interview are the interviewer and the interviewees. The interview is a collection of memories and personal commentaries of historical significance obtained through recorded interviews. In this interview, the researcher merely introduces the subject and then allows the interviewee to narrate all the information that can be remembered, without interruption or questions in between the narration. In this case, the interviewer only makes notes of or records what the narrators are saying.

It is important to note that focus group discussions are suitable for interviewing people who have concern for Church growth. These are people who

¹⁰ Gay, *Educational Research*, 134.

need to be listened to understand how they feel about the events on the ground that affect them as members of the community.

Data Analysis

In this section, the responses from the questionnaire are being analyzed as answered by various respondents. Out of 180 questionnaires that were given out, 160 were returned. Twenty were not returned. Analyses from questionnaire and interviews were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The aspect of the quantitative analysis is represented in tables below.

The researcher used structured questionnaires to receive data from respondents. The structured questionnaire is tagged Adventist Youth Retention Questionnaire (AYRQ). One Hundred and Sixty questionnaires were administered to young people of age bracket 13 – 30 years. One hundred and sixty were returned for analysis.

The table below shows the sex distribution of respondents who engaged themselves in the questionnaire exercise. The male respondents numbered 40 representing 25% while female respondents numbered 120 representing 75%.

Table 1. Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	40	25%
Female	120	75%

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents. 40 (25%) were between the age of 13 – 16 years, 72 (45%) were between 17 – 25 years while 48 (30%) were between the age of 26 – 30 years.

Table 2. Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Number	Percentage (%)
13 – 16	40	25%
17- 25	72	45%
26- 30	48	30%

Lack of teaching and understanding of Church doctrines led many of this group into Interdenominational marriages with its attendant effects play a key role here on the church membership. Amongst the various age groups, 17 – 25 years is the one with the highest percentage of respondents. The reason being that it is the age group that experiences very low retention deeply resulting from interdenominational marriage.

Table 3 shows the church membership growth for five years. The Church recorded an improved membership rate in your 2012 and 2015 respectively. It is evident from the table that in the year 2013, the membership experienced a decrease in 2014. Reason being that interdenominational marriage was on the increase. In 2015, there was a shift, gaining an increase of 1.2%.

Table 3. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, Membership growth 2011-2015

Year	Membership	% Growth
2011	600	-
2012	520	20%
2013	430	17%
2014	500	19.2%
2015	550	21.2%

This analysis is further illustrated in figure 2 below.

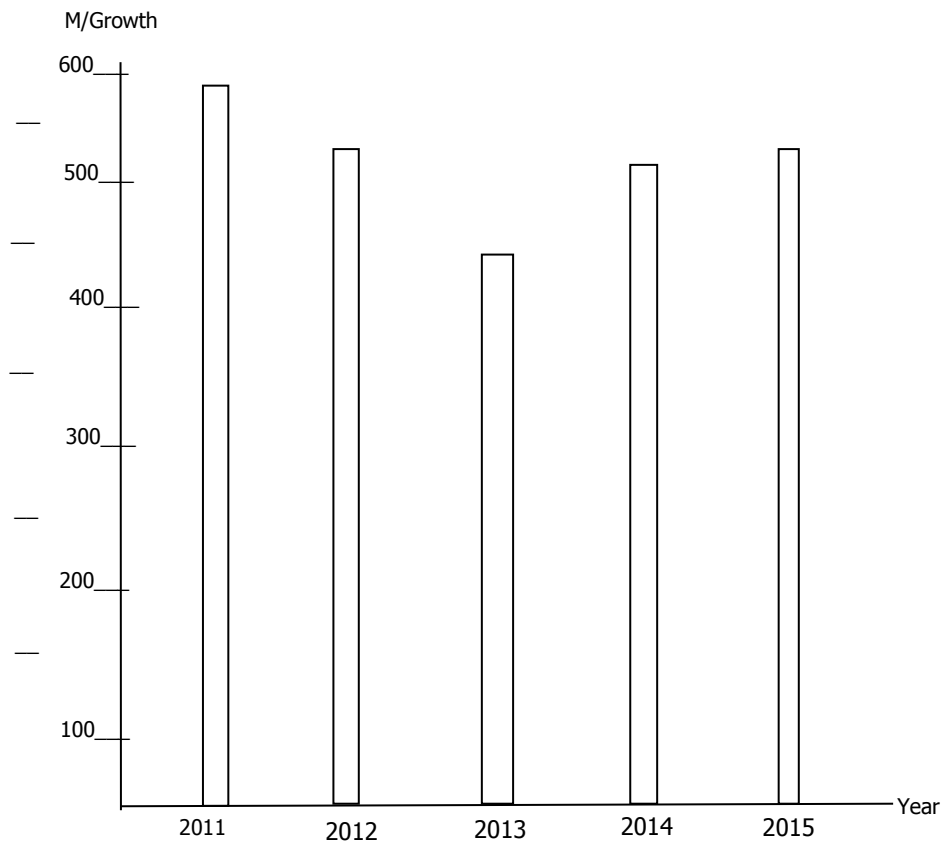


Figure 2. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, Membership record between 2011–2015

From Table 4, the increase in total membership as at 2015 is 21.2% which is calculated as a difference between 2012 to 2015. This is lower when compared to the increase noticed in the youth population of the entire Church. A second look at the analysis reveals that the young people population contribution is 9% less than average. This is gotten by adding the losses which arose from the years 2013 and 2014 and the increase noticed in 2015 deducted. Hence, more attention should be given to the young people as to reclaim and retain them in the Church to enhance the growth of the Church. The reality of this endeavor could be achieved through

conducting seminar and workshop, targeted at the young people, teaching them the doctrines and heritage of the Church.

Table 4. Analysis of Church Membership Growth from 2011-2015

Year	Total Membership	Membership (13 – 30 Years)	Total Membership % Growth	Membership % Growth 13 – 30
2011	600	270	–	–
2012	520	325	20%	(23.2%)
2013	430	250	(3.0)%	(5%)
2014	500	200	(1.0%)	(8.6%)
2015	550	355	21.2%	25.4%

The table below shows the financial returns of the Church between 2012-2015. 2013 experienced a decrease in financial returns than other years while there was an improvement in the year 2015

Table 5. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia Financial Pattern for Four Years

Years	2012	2013	2014	2015
Tithes	₦736,000	₦ 600,000	₦ 728,000	₦ 768,000
Offering	₦ 920,000	₦ 750, 000	₦ 910,000	₦ 960,000

This is further illustrated in figure 3 below.

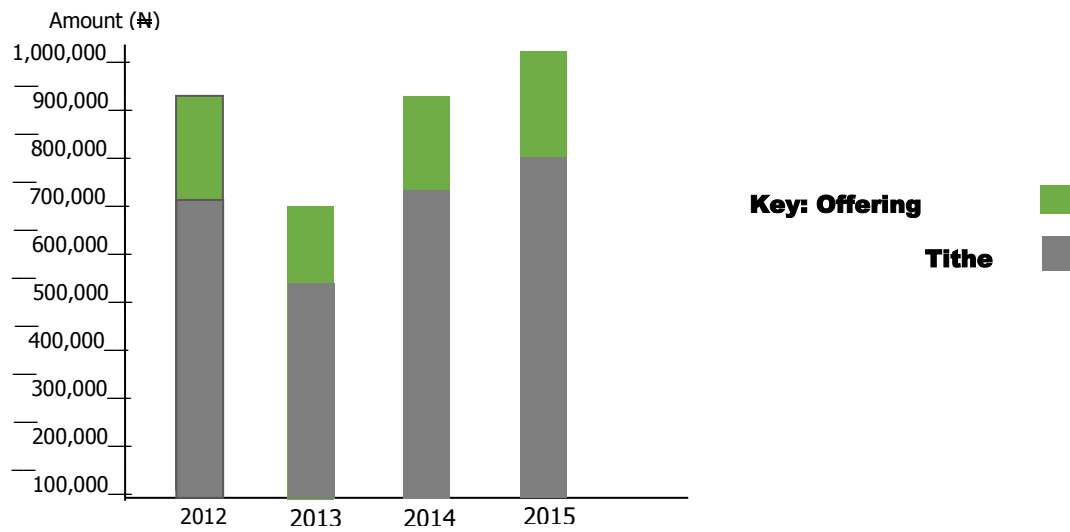


Figure 3. SDA Township Church, Umuokahia Financial Pattern for Four Years

Table 6 shows that there was fluctuation or unstable successive membership growth which affected the entire Church life.

Table 6. Church Attendance

Years	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Membership	-	480	370	460	490

Focus Group Discussion

Through the focus group interview, the researcher would have a meaningful interaction with the respondents' young people. The number selected would be a manageable number for active participation of all. Three groups of the youth would be meeting on different days for the discussion. The responses of the respondents in the course of interview would be recorded by the researcher for analysis. Below is the

representation of Church membership that was involved in the discussion through purposive sampling.

Table 7. Focus Group Discussion Participation

Group	Participants	Age bracket
1 ST Group	5 Pathfinder boys, 4 Pathfinder girls	13-16 years
2 ND Group	5 male youth , 4 female youth	17-25 years
3 RD Group	4 male youth, 5 female youth	26-30 years

This discussion would be conducted in three days with the same question administered on different days. Every discussion would be centered on issues lead to increase in the retention of young people in the Church. The report received from these groups on why young people leave the Church after baptism was as follows. The report from these groups would be analyzed from the questions administered by the researcher.

Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. What do you consider to be the reason why many youths are not retained in the church after they have been baptized Church?
2. Does the way Adventist doctrines are taught make a positive impact on the young people?
3. Are there weaknesses observed in the process of preparing young people for baptism that creates retention problem?
4. Do you consider any cultural issue that has caused the youth to leave the Church?
5. What necessary attention could be given to the youth to retain them in the Church?
6. Is Interdenominational Marriage contributing to membership loss of the young people in the Church?
7. Are there Church programs that could sustain the spiritual growth of the young people?
8. Is the youth retention a concern of the Church leadership?

9. Are there materials for spiritual growth provided for the young people?
10. Are the messages given to the youth in the church Christ-centered?

Analysis of Respondents Responses to Questionnaire

Table 8. Evidence of Good Understanding of Adventist Doctrine

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	20 12.5%	40 25%	45 28.1%	55 34.4%

Table 9. Possibility of Having Sound Teachers amongst Church Leaders

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	35 21.9%	65 40.6%	25 15.6%	35 21.9

The table above Shows that 21.9% strongly agrees, 40.6% agrees 15.0 strongly disagrees , and 21.9 disagrees. This suggests that there is potential in the Church which needs to be harnessed.

Table 10. Evidence of Considering the Need for Young People in Church and Deliberations

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	25 15.6%	35 21.9%	55 34.4%	45 28.1

The table shows 15.6% in strongly agree, 21.9% agrees 34.4% strongly disagrees, and 28.1% disagrees. This shows that almost two-third of the respondents affirmed in the negative meaning that the need field thought of the young people is not pronounced in the Church hence there should be an improvement.

Table 11. Possibility of Considering Young People in Church Deliberations

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	55 34.4%	60 37.5%	10 6.2%	35 21.9

The table indicates that 34.4 strongly agrees, 37.5% agrees, 6.2% strongly disagrees, and 21.9 disagrees. To the possibilities of considering the need for young people in Church deliberations. Given that above two – third affirmed in affirmative simply means that there is hope to the growing spirit in the Church.

Table 12. Evidence of Emphasis on Spiritual Growth

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	5 3.1%	35 21.9%	65 40.6%	55 34.4%

The above clearly shows that the emphasis on the spiritual growth of the young people does not worth it. Despite the fact that a total 5% of the respondent agreed that there is but 75% is not insignificant hence the Church needs to be revived.

Table 13. Evidence of Effective Attendance by Young People in Prayer Meetings

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	16 10%	30 18.8%	60 37.5%	54 33.7%

The table above shows that only 10 percent strongly agrees and 12.5 percent agrees that young people attend prayer meetings effectively. This indicates that their participation in prayer meeting is not encouraging hence needs improvement.

Table 14. Increase in Study Guide

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	16 10%	47 29.4%	43 26.8%	54 33.8%

The table above indicates that 10% strongly agrees 29.4 agree, 26.8% strongly disagrees and 33.8 disagree. This indicates that two-third of the respondents affirmed in the negative; suggesting that the young person needs revival.

Table 15. Possible of Increase in Study Guide

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	45 28.1%	50 31.3%	20 12.5%	45 28.1%

Above indicates that 28.1% strongly agrees, 31.3 agrees, 12.5% strongly disagrees and 28.1% disagrees. This shows that almost two-third of the respondents affirmed positively suggesting the possibility of having more study guide by the young people.

Table 16. Evidence of Satisfactory Answers to Questions

Total Respondents	SA	A	SD	D
160	40 25%	54 33.8%	20 12.5%	46 28.7%

The above analysis shows that 25% strongly agrees, 33.8% agrees, 12.5 strongly disagrees, and 28.7% disagrees. A little above one – third affirmed negatively to the evidence of satisfactory answers to questions of the young people. It is not a healthy development. Hence there is the need for improvement

Table 17. Possibility Satisfactory Answers to Questions

Respondents	5a	A	5d		D
	No of Persons	No of Persons	No of Persons	%	No of Persons
160	45	75		-	40

The table above indicates that 28.1 strongly agree, 46.9 agrees, nil in strongly disagrees and 25 disagrees. Given that two-third affirmed positively to the possibility of giving satisfactory answers to questions frequently asked by young people restores hope for the church. The 25 percent in the negative can be overtaken.

Table 18. Summary of Analysis of Respondent Results

S/N	Description	Positive %	Negative %	Remarks
1	Evidence Of Good Understanding Of Adventist Doctrine	37.5	62.5	The Church Is In Dire Need Of Classes And Sermons
2	Possibility Of Having Sound Teachers Is Amongst Church Leaders	62.5	37.5	Seminars Will Throw The Church To The Path Of Hope
3	Evidence Of Considering The Need Of The Church Deliberation	37.5	62.5	There Is A Sign Of Danger The Perception Of The Young People Need To Be Corrected
4	Possibility Of Considering Young People In Church Deliberation	71.9	28.1	The Wide Margin Between Positive And Negative Is Hope Which Hand Work Can Bring
5	Evidence Of Emphasis On Spiritual Growth	25.0	75.0	This Indicates The Decline Hence Needs Restoration
6	Evidence Of Effective Attendance By Young People In Prayer Meetings	28.8	71.2	This Is A Warning Sign, The Church Needs Revival
7	Increase In Study Guide	29.4	60.6	The Young People Need To Encouraged
8	Possibility Of Increase Of Study Guide	59.4	40.6	The Narrow Disparity Suggests That Something Should Be Done
9	Evidence Of Satisfactory Answer To Question	58.8	41.2	The Church Needs Improvement
10	Possibility Of Satisfactory Answer To Questions	75.0	25.0	This Is A Healthy Development

In the analysis of the questionnaire, administered attention is drawn to the care and more teaching to the young people on what is meant to look up to God and disabuse their mind from peer group influence.

Designing of the Intervention

Considering the findings, analysis and the literature review as highlighted in this project, It seems clear that SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, experienced a significant membership decrease of the young people to the tune of 9 %, within the period. Under review based on the analysis of data, and the responses from the respondents, the researcher, designs the intervention strategy that would Increase youth retention thereby decreasing the loss of membership.

There was development of seminar/workshop material which would be typed and photocopied to make the cost bearable as they would be retained in the files of the participants. Seventh-day Adventist Township Church Umuokahia will be the pilot study or phase one of the program which would be extended to the entire conference by the authorization of the conference as due process would be followed.

Objective of the Training/Workshop Seminar

The objectives that were to guide the training are as follows:

1. To train and equip Church workers onto a better understanding of the biblical methods of nurturing the youth and other newly baptized members.
2. To train, educate and equip Church leadership on the selfless service and responsibility of Christian leadership as it relates to the mission of the Church.
3. To awaken the interest of Church workers and the entire membership to the study of the Bible and prayer. Through this, their faith will grow as they, in turn, will help others on the spiritual ladder.
4. To educate the church workers on the responsibility of caring for the youth in spiritual, economic and social dimensions and inspire their hope, joy, and peace that would lead them to make personal decisions for the service of the master.
5. To equip the membership with Christ's love and His grace to spur to selfless service for humanity.
6. To renew the sense of fellowship in the Church as a Christian community through fellowship, prayer, Bible study, and visitation,

7. To inspire the interest of church membership in evangelism as to fulfill God's mandate for the Church as the material would be typed and photocopied as much as possible, making the cost bearable for the Church workers and the youth. They would serve as resources personnel in the subsequent programs after the pilot program implementation.
8. Training of Church workers and youth leaders that would serve as resource personnel in the local Churches. They would implement the program in phases.
9. Appointment of welfare committee and visitation teams to attend to the basic needs of the membership.
10. Promotion and organization of singles programs that will empower the young people into fruitful activities.

Limitations

First, some responses were not objective because the instrument was not written in a local dialect many of the respondents had difficulty in understanding the questions. Second, some questionnaires were not returned, and this affected the generalization of the findings. Third, this is the peak of rainy season in this geographical region which might affect performance and attendance of some Church members considering the bad nature of road

Summary

The survey conducted has shown that SDA Township Church Umuokahia, has a good population of the youth who are leaving the Church without being noticed. Through the analysis of data, respondents have identified the reasons for such a drift which affects the Church negatively. This includes lack of qualified church leaders that can nurture the young people, peer group pressure, and parental influence among other reasons. Therefore, developing a strategy for youth membership retention will go a long way to reduce the membership loss of the young people and position the Church well for effective mission. Hence, the strategy developed in this chapter will be implemented in the next chapter for effective result.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

In the last chapter, the method and procedure of designing the strategy to increase youth retention were outlined. Sequel to this, the initial approach of this chapter, gives ideas of how the project was conceived, taking cognizance of prevailing situations in the context of the project work. Besides, a brief description of the theological foundation, literature review and the ministry context environment are highlighted in this project section. More so, this chapter enumerates the findings from the focus group discussions and interview which led to the intervention of the proffered strategy which encompasses the conception, preparation stages, and project implementation and reporting of the project. The initiative that has been implemented will also be subjected to evaluation, and the data resulting from this project would be presented to the stakeholders.

Project Preparation

Planning has to do with systematized method of achieving streamlined objectives. Individual and corporate visions and goal are sustained and realized by this process. In other words, realizing and achieving any conceived vision must involve the process of planning.¹

This instruction, given by our Savior Jesus Christ forms a strong and clear emphasis on the concept of planning. Considerably, followers of Christ in their life

¹John M. Terry, *Developing a Strategy for Missions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academics, 2013), 4.

projects, spiritual or physical as the case may be should sit down, strategically plan and weigh well before hand the responsibilities that are involved in executing any project. Strategic planning involves understanding what should be accomplished in both setting and context as God directs.

The preparation of the project which has come thus far was done with enthusiasm and happiness, undermining all challenges and difficulties as to see the reality of the strategy to increase youth retention in SDA Township Church Umuokahia. How to increase the retention of the young people is an issue the Church has been silent for a long time which has now received positive attention.

The dissertation journey began with the study of relevant Bible texts in the Old Testament, New Testament, Writing of Ellen G. White and other Christian writers that deal on the principle of retention. Lectures and spiritual guidance received from Professor Kelvin Onongha and Dr. Samuel Larmie at Babcock University were helpful for the project work. There was cooperation from the administration of Aba East Conference, the Church Board of SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, and the entire Church membership where the research was primarily conducted. There was a baseline survey that analyzed the rate of youth retention for five years which affected the entire Church growth in all dimensions.

The Church growth analysis from 2011-2016 shows that the Church has a membership declension in some years due to loss of young people in the Church which adversely affected the spiritual, social and economic development of the Church. Therefore, through strategic planning, the awakened interest for intervention drawn from biblical principles would bear fruitful result.

Brief Description of the Theological Foundations

Theologically, retention has been the plan God has for His children which He expressed and maintained the very moment sin came and brought a radical change to the order of creation. Apart from the fallen of the first earthly parents, there are many biblical characters like Cain, Nadab, Abihu, Hophni, Phinehas and Rehoboam as among those who trod the path of disobedience which led them to fall away from faith and notwithstanding. God has reminded humanity through his Word that retention in the family of God is possible only through obedience to his principles.

Retention is possible through teaching the word of God to the Young people. God said in Gen 18:19, that he knew that Abraham would instruct his children in the way of righteousness. In Deut 6:4-8, The Lord spoke to Israel that they should teach their children at all time. Through teaching the young people will imbibe the divine principles that would make them grow and remain in faith. The principle of teaching is well supported by the Spirit of prophecy writings. Marriage as a Spiritual institution is bounded by biblical principles that should not be negated. It has a great impact in mission accomplishment in the lives of the young people. Though the principles were neglected by Samson among others, the consequences were pronounced.

The principle of retention was an important aspect of community well-being in the history of Israel. Moses was in leadership and owing to administrative challenges; he was counseled on the principle of the small group by Jethro his father-in-law to delegate responsibilities to others. This led him to organize the people from a larger group to smaller groups so that there would be delegation and participation of the people in their daily activities. The basis of small group formation in the Old Testament stems from the nature of God. *Elohim* is a plural word that involves more

than one person. Man's expression of a small group is simply a logical representation of the fact that the creator of heavens and earth exists in the divine manifestation of a small group of relationship that is beyond human comprehension.² The small group initiative is a well-noted retention principle in the Old Testament.

There are retention principles in the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, as well as in the writings of Paul in the New Testament. The apostolic church growth and retention as recorded in Acts chapter 2 were as a result of training, instructions and gaining insights. The members enjoyed quality time together, prayed and worshiped God together in the temple.³ In other words, the principles of retention were in line with the divine order, and this was practiced and upheld by the early Church which made her flourish as a center of attraction for all people.⁴

Brief Description of Literature Review

In this in-ministry dissertation, many kinds of literature were reviewed to provide insight on the subject. The range of literature involved were books authored by Adventist scholars on retention and nurturing. Journals, Spirit of Prophecy writings, books from other Christian writers and secular literature were reviewed as well.

The information from the various literature reviewed indicated the importance of the strategy to increase the retention of young people in all sectors of life since they are considered as a great asset for any given society or institution. In the various literature, it was observed that retention of young people is increased through social

² Neal F. McBride, *How to Lead Small Groups* (Colorado: Navpress, 1990)14

³ W. Barclay, *The Daily Study: The Message of Acts* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1976), 42-44.

⁴ Ibid.

meetings, Church community, youth ministries, and youth programs, small group and youth participation principles. Various scholars assert that these avenues are practical and effective ways of increasing retention of young people in any given institution. Parental socialization and religious socialization are dimensions that promote retention of the youth as well.

Brief Description of Project Context

The venue for this in-ministry dissertation project is the Seventh-day Adventist Township church Umuokahia. Before the project commenced, the Executive Committee of Aba East Conference gave the authorization for implementation according to the researcher's request, since it is a project that will bring a positive result to the Conference. Furthermore, the Church board of Seventh-day Adventist Township Church Umuokahia accepted the request to conduct the program in the Church and gave authorization for implementation.

Consequently, a prayer and fasting session was carried out on Wednesday 27th July 2016 that preceded the one-week seminar and workshop implementation program. The Church which is situated on the East side of Aba Metropolis also serves as the District headquarters comprising of Umuokahia, Heritage, and Satellite Churches. The Church is accessible to all since it is located in the heart of the town and along the road that leads to Umuahia the capital of Abia state. The compound is made of five plots of land, accommodating the main Church auditorium which is well ventilated, painted and decorated for worship purpose.

The floor is tiled, and there is a standard public-address system for effective communication. There is a storey building that serves for educational purposes and youth worship and social meetings. There is a playground for recreational and social activities. It is also often used for open air evangelism. There is an open hall with a store opposite to the Church auditorium that is used for the social meeting. At the extreme of the Church, the compound is a parsonage with modern facilities for effective worship. The compound is well

fenced with one major entrance, and there are two trees that shade the open space of the church premises. Other additional modern facilities include a standby generator which complements for steady electricity, projector, and screen, keyboard, Laptop. It has spacious Church auditorium painted and fitted with modern doors, fans, windows and a well-decorated pulpit. The Church auditorium is conducive for seminars and worship.

Table 19. Focus Group Discussion Participation

Group	Date	Those Involved
1 ST Group	28-6-2016	5 Pathfinder boys and 4 Pathfinder girls, 13-16 years
2 ND Group	29-6-2016	5 male Youth, 4 Female Youth, 17-25 years
3 RD Group	30-6-2016	4 male youth, 5 Female youth, 26-30 years

Description of Findings from Focus Group Discussion

Focus group one discussion comprised of youth within the age bracket of thirteen to sixteen years of age as stipulated above. The interview was conducted on June 28, 2016. These are teenagers who objectively want to effect change in the Church. At this stage, the young people seem to be mature in reasoning, forming their identity and seek for independence. The majority of this group of young people are in the secondary schools while others are undergoing vocational training and many of them are very often seen in the Church programs. The interview conducted with this group revealed the issues that can result in a lack of retention of the young people which include youth negligence in church participation and lack of Church community relationship.

The second focus group discussion was with young people between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five years of age, and their discussion was conducted on the 29th day of June 2016. The majority of the young people within this age bracket are in the tertiary institutions while some are involved in vocational jobs as well. The quest

for independence is high as some of them are getting involved in courtship. In the interview conducted with them concerning youth, retention revealed that many of the youth left the church because they were not grounded in the doctrine of the Church. Hence, interdenominational marriage can easily be experienced among their group.

The third focus group is between the ages of 26-30 years of age, and they had their successful interview on the 30th day of June 2016. They were mainly working class group who did not engage in marriage early enough. They are more of counselors to the younger groups, and they serve as mentors to most of them.

Response from participants of the focus groups is thus: The first group was of the view that Young people should be involved in church programs after baptism and they should not be spectators to the community of faith. Also, non-participation in the church programs makes them spiritually dormant as their talents are not harnessed for the personal and corporate growth of the Church as a community of believers.

The second group commented that necessary attention should be given to the young people by assigning Church functions to them, thereby making them participate in the every church deliberations and activities. The young people are blessed with diverse spiritual gifts that could edify the church of God. Conducting seminars and workshops for them would bring positive change to this situation.

The third group confirmed the views of the first and second group and further added that lack of counseling is a major factor that leads to the loss of faith among young people in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Umuokahia . Internalization of church doctrines should not be a barrier for baptism. Adventist doctrine should be taught in a precise manner, impacting on the lives of young people, as to make them remain in their faith and there is a need for the deliberate teaching of biblical doctrines by the Church leaders to enable them to internalize the principles for proper

application in their lives. Through such exposure to activities, interdenominational marriage will be drastically reduced. More so, good knowledge of Adventist doctrine will make them resist peer group influence within and outside the Church.

They observed that enough time is not given by the elders and older members of the church to teach young people before they are baptized. Even after baptism, there is no scheduled plan to teach them more of the Adventist beliefs since teaching, especially in the lives of young people, should be a continuous process as made known in Mathew 28:19. Also, there is no small functional group that could nurture the newly baptized young people. The Church board hardly discusses issues that would lead to the retention of the young people, and this has silenced their voices as many of them have left the church owing to lack of retention strategy. In fact, the answers from the three focus groups were almost unanimous; hence the threats to the increase in retention of the young people became pronounced and obvious.

Implementation Steps

Step 1: The church board of SDA Township Church Umuokahia would receive official information of the intervention program that would be carried out in their Church. This would be done by personal letter and backed up the researcher's presence since he resides on the premises.

Step 2: The next step was a scheduled meeting of the Church board where the implementation would be carried out to agree on the comfortable day and time that the intervention program would be carried out so that there would be no conflict of programs and this will enhance early dissemination of information concerning the program.

Step 3: Organizing a meeting with the Elders, Church workers, and youth leaders. The essence of this meeting was to acquaint these groups of Church workers

with pre-implementation activities as well as the actual program. They were made to understand the various committees that would be at work and even put them into action since these activities would gear towards the success of the program. The processes of this program would be made known to the conference administration.

Step 4: The entire process leading to the execution of the intervention program was duly communicated to Aba East Conference Administration for advice since the implementation would be extended to other churches within the conference and beyond after the pilot study has proven successful.

Implementation, in this case, is the ability to carry out, execute, or practice a plan, a method, or any conceived design for doing something. This pilot study which is limited to SDA Township Church took place from July 31 to August 6, 2016. It was a weeklong seminar/Workshop spirit filled enrichment program titled “Imitating the Servant of Servants” The reason for this pilot implementation in this Church has a biblical foundation.

Jesus’ injunction to His disciples is a timeless effective way of implementing spiritual matters. He commanded them thus, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost comes upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Here is shown a progression of implementation—from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and to all parts of the earth, from a small area to larger areas. In the course of this progression, the experience gained would be replicated and extended to other Churches as experiments have been made and lessons learned from the pilot phase that would be of immense benefit to her churches. Besides, SDA Township Church Umuokahia was chosen because of the reality in proximity as envisaged by the researcher. It is the Church where the researcher resides and worship there regularly.

The researcher, having been poised and equipped through study and consultations for the effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy to increase youth retention in this Church has the opinion that it will be a successful work that would benefit the entire conference and beyond.

After necessary planning and preparations, July 31, 2016, was chosen as the day the implementation strategy for increasing youth retention would begin. The targeted group for this project is the young people between the ages of 13 to 30 years, and this is the category that has the pronounced number of backsliding in the Church among the Church membership.

Program Implementation

Project venue. The project was carried out at Seventh-day Adventist Township Church Umuokahia, the district's headquarters Churches in the Conference. It has two other churches attached to her for administrative convenience. The church was selected owing to numerous advantages she has over other Churches around her. The Church is accessible road wise and located where there is a large population, in the metropolis. It has modern facilities such as sound public address system, fairly steady electricity, a generator to complement, projector and screen for audio-visual display. It has spacious church auditorium painted and fitted with modern doors and windows. The interior and exterior are well painted with decorated pulpit. In fact, the Church auditorium is conducive for seminars and worship. The Church compound has event arena with some cover trees for outdoor class activities. Suffice it to say that it has all it takes to implement this all important and needful program. More so, these were carried out as pre-implementation activities.

Permission. A letter was written to the Seventh-day Adventist Township Church Umuokahia, Board on 30th June 2016. It was discussed and voted into action by the board, permitting the implementation project in the Church.

Sensitization meeting. A crucial meeting was convened on July 14, 2016. Elders, Adventist women ministry members, and young people were in attendance. The personal ministry leader chaired the meeting. In that meeting, attendees were meant to understand the importance of the Program that is beginning in the church which dealt on the retention of young people in the church. The Church board also empowered the church clerk to go to the church record book and get the names of backslidden members for immediate action. During the meeting, the date for the one-week seminars/workshop was announced with the theme “Imitating the Servants of Servants.”

The date for the implementation program was voted to run between 31st July to August 6th, 2016 by the Church Board. Two weeks before the commencement of the program, the Church communication secretary was empowered to pass the information through the Church bulletin, inviting all the members, especially the young people and guests to the program. This project implementation program which was slated to run for two hours between 6pm-8pm was a welcome period, and copies of the seminar materials were made available to the participants as the Church voted money for it.

Visitation team. Ten visitation groups were involved in the program. Each team is made up of five (5) people in the order of two young people, two adults and an elder who spearheaded the group. The aim of the mission was made known to them which includes; praying for the sick people, community service outreach, special

needs coordination, provision of certain basic needs. The visitation team attended in line to most of the challenge faced by their target group.

Before the commencement of the program, the report was called for on daily basis which started on July 17, 2016, given that each team was x-rayed; there was clear evidence that the responses of their target population cannot be qualified; hence the mission was fruitful. At the end of every submission, they were meant to understand that their service is a continuum.

Table 20. Visitation Participation

Dates	Group Visitation Leaders	Total No of Days For visitation	No of Young People Visited	Total No of People Visited Irrespective of Age
17/7/16	Eld. Amaechi Nelson	10days	5	10
18/7/16	Eld. Ugoala Sampson	10days	7	11
19/7/16	Eld. Alozie Israel	10days	4	15
20/7/16	Eld. Stephen Amaraihu	10days	6	10
21/7/16	Eld. Nweze T. Nwogu	10days	5	12
22/7/16	Eld. Nathaniel Nwankpa	10days	7	14
23/7/16	Eld. Laurence Nnah	10days	5	13
24/7/16	Eld. Innocent Agomuo	10days	9	12
25/7/16	Eld. K.E. Ogiriga	10days	4	14
25/7/16	Eld. S.C. Ugorji	10days	5	11

Welfare group. A welfare committee of five members was chaired by Deaconess D.O. Ogiriga assisted by Elder N. T. Nwogu. Members of the Church volitionally contributed money, and foodstuffs to the welfare committee and through the guidance of the researcher, and the committee managed all donation made by Church members to meet the basic needs of the indigent members including the youth who are the targeted population. The welfare group services brought succor to some despondent souls in the Church and made the program take-off to be successful. In fact, this made the land more fertile for the take-off of the program.

Table 21. Seminars/Workshop Material Development

Day	Material
Day 1	Key Text: Matt. 28:19,20 Seminar: Church and Mission Objective: To understand what mission means and the mission of Jesus Christ to the backslidden world, as He handed it over to the church
Day 2	Key Text: Genesis 18:18,19 Seminar: Leadership and mission as exemplified by Abraham Objective: To help leaders recognize their responsibility in teaching and transmitting values to the youth as a fulfillment of mission mandate.
Day 3	Key Text: Exodus 18:13-25 Seminar: Nurturing and Retaining members (Part 1) Objective: To lead the church to understand that group participation is an effective way of membership retention.
Day 4	Key Text: Acts 2:42 Seminar: Nurturing and Retaining members (part 2) Objective: To educate Church leaders on the process by which newly baptized members could be retained in the Church
Day 5	Key Text: Galatians 4:18-19 Seminar: Standing firm for the Lord for spiritual empowerment Objective: To help the young people understand that God promised to be with whoever remains in the mission.
Day 6	Key Text: Mark 6:7 Seminar: Visitation (Part 1) Objective: To let the young people understand what visitation requires, why it is necessary, and what it can accomplish and the right approach to it.
Day 7	Bible Text: James 1:27 Seminar: Visitation (Part 2) Objective: To teach Church workers that visitation is a part of the Christian obligation that must be done in love.

Other issues of significance were treated in the course of the implementation program through short speeches. Given the fact that the program was meant for the entire Church but having the prospects and young people in mind; some adults who thought that they needed the activities of the program attended. In this Church, attendance at programs has always being a challenge, it was given due promotion, and the responses at the pre-implementation stage was encouraging; hence, attendance was good as no serious challenge was witnessed.

The one week program. The implementation program was scheduled for one week and involves seminar/workshop training program and sermon. This program

took off two weeks after the sensitization meeting giving opportunity the whole Church especially the young people to have awareness and be fully prepared for the event. This was aimed at watering and tilling the ground before the program kick-starts. In the pre-implementation activities, a positive response accompanied the report of the visitation team, and a banner for the program was produced for awareness of all.

This program was scheduled to run between 6.00pm – 8.00pm which is a convenient period that would promote attendance in this community. There were gospel tunes and youth presentations to thrill the soul before the beginning of the program. There were also special prayer sessions which climaxed the program nightly. Each day's activities included 60minutes studies and 10 minutes intensive prayers. The opening prayer was offered by the platform assistants, and closing prayers were offered by the resource person. The seminar/workshop was delivered by the pastor. The topics for the seminar/workshop for each day were based on the primary objective set in the strategy. The theme song was from SDA hymnal number 361, which says "Hark! It's the Shepherd voice I hear."

Table 22. Imitating the Servant of Servants Program

Days/ Dates	Plat Form Assistants	Presentations (Music & Activities)	Speaker	Topic
Sun. 31/7/16		Choir, Youth, Individuals		Church and mission
Mon. 1/8/16		Choir, AMO, Individuals		Leadership and mission as exemplified by Abraham
Tues. 2/8/16		Choir, AYM, Individuals		Nurturing and Retaining members
Wed 3/8/16		Choir, Current Elders, Individuals		Nurturing part II
Thurs. 4/8/16		Choir, Deacons, Individuals		Leadership: standing firm for the Lord
Fri. 5/8/16		Choir, AYM, Individuals		Visitation (Part 1)
Sat.6/8/16		Choir, Individuals		Visitation (Part 2)

Daily Schedule for the One Week Seminar/Workshop which ran from 6pm to 8pm is seen below:

Song Inspiration	Song Leader/Choir Master
Choir Procession	Elder in charge
Song/Special Presentation	Platform Assistants
Remarks/Welcome	Elder for the night
Special Song	Music Coordinator
Bible Text	Selected by the Pastor
Opening Prayer	Officiating Elder
Introduction/Theme song (SDAH 361)	Choir Master
Seminar Presentation	Pastor
Special Song/Testimonies	Target Population
Season of Prayer	Prayer Band Leader
Announcements	Communication Secretary

Closing Song (Theme song SDAH 361) Choir Master

Benediction Pastor

Attendance. All the groups (Visitation team, Prayer Band, and Welfare group) were resolutely committed to their daily activities throughout the week. Meetings they had held before the program commenced gave room for a better understanding of what the community and backslidden membership yearn for. Every aspect of the program was edifying to the church as a community of faith as spiritual gifts were utilized for expansion of God’s kingdom.

Table 23. Record of Program Attendance

Days/Dates	Committees at Work	Regular Church Members	Number of Invitee Target Population /Visitors
Day 1 31/7/16	Visitation team Welfare Group Prayer Band	195	5
Day 2 1/8/16	Visitation team Welfare Group Prayer Band	202	4 and a family of 8 =12
Day 3 2/8/16	Visitation team Welfare Group Prayer Band	185	12
Day 4 3/8/16	Visitation team Welfare Group Prayer Band	265	15
Day5 4/8/16	Visitation team Welfare Group Prayer Band	265	17
Day 6 5/8/16	Visitation team Welfare Group Prayer Band	261	20
Day7 6/8/16	Visitation team Welfare Group Prayer Band	590	10 different families =34

Participation. The seminar/workshop experienced a large turnout as shown in the table above which was attributed to pre-visitation commitment engagement by the

various group that has been highlighted above. The coordination of this spiritual outing was principally coordinated by the researcher- the resident pastor, while the Elders were of noble assistance. This activity helped in discovering the areas of needs that needed to be attended to while the program commenced.

Visitation. During the pre-meetings, lack of adequate visitation was a recurrent issue. Hence it was a theme treated as among the major lecture topics during the implementation program, and it marked the climax of the program. The citation was taken from the visit by Jesus Christ to the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany as recorded in John 11:1-44. The program brought hope for the church. The program afforded the opportunity of introducing the prospects to church and programs. Prayer for success was offered and subsequently, older members of the Church in good and regular standing with the church for nurture and follow-up. The program was crowned with a Holy-Communion on day 7.

A speech made by one prospect who is not an Adventist is that he declared with his family to belong to Adventist Church at the end of the program. The implementation program revived much us Adventist, and there was a high degree of resurgence to fellowship and community care. This resulted in a spiritual revival in families, and fifty-two backslidden were reclaimed.

Table 24. Church Membership after Program Implementation

Year	Total Membership	% Growth
2011	600	–
2012	520	16.2
2013	430	13.4 (2.9)
2014	500	15.6 (0.6)
2015	550	17.2
2016	602	18.8

Source: SDA Church Umuokahia Statistical Report

From the preceding, we notice 2.6% increases in the Church membership as a result of the paradigm shift in Church activities and evangelism pattern. To this effect, 52 people were added to the membership. Those that visited the church during her programs has gotten to the degree that the church hall is always full to brim while people remain outside; this has aroused the feeling in the church leadership of the church for the expansion of the Church building.

Table 25. Analysis of Church Membership Growth after Implementation

Year	Total membership	Membership 13-30	Membership 31 and above	Total membership %Growth	Membership % 13-30
2011	600	270	330	-	-
2012	520	325	195	14	18.3
2013	430	250	180	(12.6)	(4.2)
2014	500	200	300	21	(7.1)
2015	550	355	195	(14)	20
2016	602	378	224	18.8	21.3

Source: SDA Township Church Umuokahia, statistical report; supplied by the Church clerk

The above table shows the analysis of church membership growth percentage after implementation of the project strategy. The contribution observed on the total membership was to the tune of 4.8% which is calculated as the difference between 2012 and 2016 year of implementation.

It is now objectively clear that the young people contribution in the overall growth is more pronounced to the tune of 3percent, which accrued from percentage difference between 2012 and 2016. This shows that the 2% witnessed in the total membership had more than one and a half percent (1.5%), from the young people. It is evident that the intervention program has increased the retention of the Church Membership. More so, The effect of this growth will have a positive impact on numerous un-entered communities in Umuokahia neighborhood.

Post seminar/workshop programs. The campaign did not end with the one-week seminar/workshop implementation series rather it was a tip-off. The implementation continued through other programs for spiritual sustenance. Immediately after the one-week seminar/workshop which ended on August 6, 2016. The welfare committee by the directive of the church board makes an appeal to the members of the church to assist the indigent members and the needy with financial and material assistance as an expression of love to them. This appeal yielded tremendous dividend as much food stuff and money was collected which was given to those that the appeal was meant for. The women Ministries on their regular Sunday fortnight meetings made plans to assist many prospects with their material and financial resources.

There was intensified visitation program by the Church as visitation teams that comprised elders as a group leader with some other members including the youth were involved. Every team devoted quality times in a week and visited the members of the church. They encouraged and prayed for them and ascertained their challenges and needs, motivating them to attend midweek prayers and vesper service of the church for continual spiritual empowerment. Each team was told to report to the pastor where there is specific need and attention so that the pastor could be with them. The visitation group leader would report every Friday at sundown worship through the personal ministry leader of the church. They went together with the pastor to many homes and offered prayers to God on behalf of those families.

Series of meetings were held with the purpose of receiving report and testimonies from the just concluded program. General Conference Bible Reading plan initiative: This plan to read a chapter of the Bible each day was adopted by the church for the daily spiritual empowerment of every member of the Church. The reading on

the Sabbath lasted between 8:30 to 9:00 am, preceding the Sabbath school activities. Some families were designated every Sabbath day specially prayed for.

As parents stand with their children for the spiritual exercise, they are encouraged in fellowship, and the retention rate of the young people also increases. In continuation, August 13, 2016, marked the activities of Hymnal Sabbath which was a championed by the youth. In this program, the background of many Hymns in the Seventh-day Hymnal was given, and songs were sung to the glory of God. The young people as targeted group witnessed a sober, reflective moment together with the entire Church membership. In this program, they were made to understand that singing is a part of Christian living which gets believers connected with Christ. Through singing God is being appreciated as the creator, redeemer, human chart, compass and peace of their souls.

This program was a blessing to the entire Church membership as their souls were lifted to God in prayer and adoration. It was a source of revival and transformation, and young people greatly desired that it be done quarterly. More so, it was a program through which glowing and burdened souls received consolation, minds were restored, and the hopeless received hope. In fact, it was a refreshing moment before the Lord. In the course of the spiritual event, regular Church members' hearts were gladdened in excitation together with invited guest and newly converted members.

Singles program report. The singles program was held from 5th - 8th October 2016. It was a membership retention program for the young people. The activities of the program are stated in the table below.

Table 26. Singles Program

Dates	Time and Activities for the Singles				
	5:00-5:30	5:30-6:00	6:00-6:30	6:30-7:00	
	Opening formalities	Lecture 1	Lecture 2	Closing formalities	Platform Assistance
Wed. 5/10/16	Song Service	Singles in Worship by Pastor H.U. Anaba	singles in governance by Hon. Seth Agomuo	Seasons of prayer	Goodluck Robert Goodluck Peters
Thurs. 6/10/16	Song Service	Singles in Multicultural setting by Mrs. June Eruba	Singles in Entrepreneurship by Engr. Prince Dimkpa	Seasons of prayer	Abaenowa Eziokwu Caleb Nathaniel
Fri. 7/10/16	Song Service	Singles dressing mannerism by Prince Nweze	Singles in marriage Anticipation by Justice Eruba LTC	Testimonies	Abaenowa Adaure Chidiebere Enwereuzor
Sat. 8/10/16	8:00 Song Service	Sabbath school coordination	10:00-11:00 Drama, talk show, news presentation, etc	Divine service by Bro. Ben Nwankwo	Bro. Felix John Pastor H. U. Anaba Sis. Chika Enyinna Sis. Lynda Agomuo

On 5th October 2016 which was the day, the program started witnessed attendance of one hundred and twenty people (122) and followed by one hundred and sixty-seven (167), One hundred and eighty-four (184) in the subsequent dates. The Sabbath which was the program grand finale had over four hundred (400) persons in attendance. It was Sabbath worship, filled with joy and gladness as the singles unleashed their spiritual activities to the glory of God.

Youth and Healthy Living Seminar was one the post-seminar program held for the retention of the young people. It was a four-day program that was handled by health personals from 21st to 24th September 2016. The theme song was carefully selected from SDA number 184. The first lecturer was Deaconess Love Eruba. The number of youth in attendance on the first day was seventy-seven (77), followed by 91, 113, and 155 in subsequent days. It was learned that watermelon, pear, is rich in

vitamins, and cucumber helps in the treatment of obesity and diabetes because of high vitamin content. Bitter leaf, fluted pumpkin leaf, *okazi*, they help in the treatment of obesity and diabetes. Bitter leaf reduces body pain when taken. Unripe plantain meal with ginger and garlic improves erectile function in men, treats catarrh and control respiratory track movement. Soya bean prevents cancer and gives protein in the body, cleanses the blood vessels. Protein replaces worn out tissues, eat the fiber in the fruits like pineapples, oranges, pears they help in the digestive process.

Unhealthy eating habits cause:

1. Slow growth
2. Causes several kinds of diseases which can disfigure our movement.
3. It affects uncomfortable sensation in the stomach.
4. It affects the reproductive system of women.
5. It causes constipation.

The contribution was given that after eating, one should not take cold water because it blocks our meal in the stomach and cause a delay in digestion, so it is not good in our system after a meal. Eat heavy food when at work and light food at night; take water one (1) hour before a meal or one (1) hour after a meal. Adventist

Lifestyle for longevity involves:

1. Plant based diet
2. Regular exercise
3. Abstaining from alcohol, caffeine and illicit drugs
4. Abstaining from smoking
5. Maintaining a healthy weight
6. Trusting in God
7. Regular Bible study

There is a need for temperance, which is the moderation in action, thought, feelings and purity. It is, therefore, abstaining from the harmful thing and moderation in things that are good. Intake of the alcohol damages immune system increases the risk of bacterial and viral diseases and causes mental retardation. It is learnt that soft drinks is artificially color, and chemically flavor much intake weakens immune system. Water is highly recommended as nature's superfluid. It quenches thirst and readily available.

Table 27. Health Seminar Program

Date	Lecture	Topic	Key Text
21-9-16	Deaconess Love Eruba	Diseases Prevention	3 John 2
22-9-16	Shepherdess Rose Anaba	Healthy eating habit	1 Cor. 6:19
23-9-16	Hon (Mrs.) June Eruba	Health by Choice	Isaiah 3:10
24-9-16	Prof. L. N. Chigbu	Temperance	Phil. 4:13

Among the things learned by the singles are:

1. Worship is due only to the Lord who created the Heaven and the Earth and should be in Truth and Spirit.
2. Leadership originates with the Lord to accomplish His divine agenda.
3. Leaders should put God first, to have the courage to face its challenges.
4. In dressing God alone should be glorified. No God-fearing youths should wear dresses that expose private parts of the body.
5. Youths contemplating marriage should be physically and spiritually matured. They should be educated and live independently from their parents.

Evaluation

The project was closely monitored and evaluated to determine the level of success or failure of the strategy developed for increasing retention of the youth in the

Church. The program was well monitored to ascertain its success. To monitor is to check what is happening at intervals to find how it is progressing or developing.

Without monitoring, it would be difficult to judge whether the project is on course or not. It is necessary for any project to have in place tools for monitoring as the project progresses. Interviews and consultation with the field officers were made to provide information on project activities.

Evaluation entails formation of an opinion, value, or quality of something after thinking about it carefully. The main reason for evaluating a project is to identify the problems and take note of the opportunities to provide reliable information to all stakeholders. It is from this information that the problems unearthed can be addressed and the strengths and opportunities opened by the project can be built on. In the evaluation, one examines the values and lessons of what has taken place in the immediate or remote past. This project was examined to bring out the positives and negatives, to enhance future implementation of the project.

The scope of the evaluation process utilized data collected through the monitoring tools mentioned in the preceding section and actual interviews conducted with various project participants, and observations made on project activities. Critical analysis of all this data was done.

Findings

The goals and outcomes of this laudable project are buttressed in the findings as enumerated below.

1. The revival of the Church membership through Bible study, fellowship and prayer were experienced. Interest in action unit has been renewed, and small groups have been formed, meeting on every Tuesday for prayer and evangelistic activities and nurturing the newly baptized. Besides, membership interest for evangelism has been inspired through this intervention program as to fulfill God's mandate for the Church.

2. There is renewed vibrancy and vigor in the Church as young people have organized themselves into full participation in a church program. Spiritual growth in the family life has built Christian love, peace, and unity in the church community. The seemingly lost evangelistic vision has been regained.
3. There is a renewed interest in Small group initiative as a biblical principle as Church workers have understood it as a sure way of nurturing newly baptized members and it has brought positive interpersonal relationship within and outside the Church family irrespective of age bracket and build relative peace in the society. In these small groups, biblical truth is driven into the minds of the youth through wholesome interaction.
4. Positive Participation in church activities has been witnessed as they have been given the opportunity in church programs. Parents are accepting the young people as the greatest asset of every given society and have disengaged in any attitude that would relegate them to the background. Rather, their constructive ideas and opinions are accepted, giving them an operational free hand with keen supervision.
5. Mid-week prayer meetings and Friday vesper services came into its full swing as they have discovered the joy of fellowship. This affords the opportunity for testimonies, prayer requests, personal prayer, two by two prayer season and corporate prayer.
6. There is an experienced renewal in visitation as members consider this spiritual exercise as a way of Christian life.

Project Report

The stakeholders of the project would be furnished with the results of the evaluation period to enable them to give due consideration to the challenges and opportunities. In the first phase, the stakeholders would include the Umuokahia. Comprehensive documentary report of the implementation carried out was officially presented to the administration of Aba East Conference that authorized the project to be carried out in the church under their leadership.

The president who was a guest lecturer in the program pleaded that this intervention should be replicated and carried out in other churches because of the fruitfulness of the program. He asked for a meeting with all the pastors within the Conference for sensitization as plans would be made to reach their respective districts and Churches.

This would begin after action has taken by the executive committee of the Conference. The researcher also thanked the administration for financial and moral support which has led to the accomplishment of the project though with numerous challenges. The report was also given to SDA Church Board, where the project was implemented, and their joy knew no bound as they see the reality of what they helped to accomplish to the glory of God. They promise to sustain the strategy for Church growth. In the same vein, the researcher thanked the church for wonderful support giving for the program and through this venture, the plans to fulfill this assignment was executed.

Summary

The implementation process of this project was successfully completed notwithstanding the limitations involved. The various stages of intervention with the strategy to increase youth retention in Seventh-day Adventist Township Church Umuokahia, was systematically followed and applied. The various entities involved in the project gave maximum cooperation, and the goals of the project were realized. A good number of non-members were in attendance.

The researcher invited the Conference President who was also a facilitator in the program. Two weeks to the commencement of the program, information was passed through the Church bulletin, and all pre-implementation programs that were proposed were all executed. The program ran successfully for one week, between 6 pm to 8 pm daily. The participants had the training materials in their files.

After few months of intervention, it was observed that interest for worship had been aroused among young people and the church membership growth improved. The evaluation by the beginning of 2016 showed that youth retention has increased

according to church statistical records. Parents expressed happiness as they observed some of their children returning to fellowship.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Retention of the youth in the Church is of utmost importance for the mission accomplishment in every generation. It is a divine mandate that cannot be undermined, as emphasized in Mathew 28:19, 20. This study has revealed the factors that have resulted in retention decline of the youth in SDA Township Church Umuokahia.

It is owing to this situation that the strategy to increase youth retention was developed. The study revealed that poor performance of parents and Church workers in teaching biblical doctrines has enormously contributed to the decrease in retention of the youth in the Church.

Parental modeling is highly needed for the retention of the young people in the Church. Parental Modeling is very important for the retention of the youth and for this reason, parents should be careful to exhibit Christ-like behavior that would influence the youth positively. Interdenominational marriage constitutes another avenue for the decline of youth retention. Most Adventist girls who married outside the church are forced to follow their husbands to their churches thus leaving the Church.

Final Evaluation

Obviously, having designed and implemented the strategy to increase retention and restore spiritual vibrancy in Seventh-day Adventist Township Church, Umuokahia, it will not be completed without being assessed through necessary

evaluations as to know the degree of success or failure. This will warrant its future application and benefit to other Churches around and possible further research.

The one-week implementation program brought a sense of joy to the area. In the course of the interview as an instrument for evaluation, those interviewed responded well. It was a great joy to hear them respond positively regarding the one-week implementation program. They thanked the Lord for such a spirit, reviving program they have enjoyed.

Semi-structured questions which were closed and opened ended were administered to the focus group participants. The young people who affirmed that the Church of God should be a model were also of the realistic view for improvement responded positively.

Furthermore, various methods and devices were employed which included interviews and personal observations with face-to-face interactions. Interviews were conducted with selected church members and master guides; this was in addition to those selected by stratified random sampling to ensure an unbiased result. Personal observations were carried out for each of the set goals following the particular strategy that was implemented. The project was executed, data collected and analyzed and below are the findings and significant impacts in the course of evaluation.

The intercessory prayers helped members and prospects to develop faith in God and to trust Gods promises. It also helped in winning their confidence regarding each other. The dual allegiance witnessed by young people has drastically reduced as personal testimonies reveal evidence of answered prayers which are attracting more people to the Church. Participant's observations are clear indication that members are happy to attend prayer meetings.

Given the fact that young people want their voice to be heard; the possession of study guide has increased in order to study and contribute during classes.

Participant interviews attested to this.

The program won back the trust and confidence amongst the youth and the entire Church membership. Community care has been rekindled, and effectual prayer is observed through testimonies that are given. As members have developed the right spirit of caregiving to the newly converted youth through visitation as an integral aspect of nurturing, they become empowered spiritually, and this has cemented their spiritual bonding with one another.

Testimonies in fellowship programs attest to the fact that personal businesses are improving as well as Church finance as many young people are returning their tithes and offering for the furtherance of the Gospel. There was a progressive improvement in outreach as the theme of the implementation program “Imitating the servant of servants” arrested peoples view. Imitating Jesus Christ (the servant of servants) will bring relief to our challenges. The idea of Jesus being all for men was ringing a bell in their minds hence interest was developed.

Commitment in attendance and participation in Church programs has increased especially on Sabbath mornings when the Church would begin its first worship phase with praises, testimonies and prayer between 7:30 am – 8:30 am. This session entitled “Moment of Grace” has inspired hope among the Church membership.

The leadership of the Church has developed an interest in caring for her membership. This is a notable strategy that builds relationships for spiritual growth and retention purposes. Given that, the program is a continuum, the take-off stage of the project implementation was completed on August 13, 2016. A brief verbal report

was presented to the local church elders on August 20, 2106, and subsequently, an informal report was prepared by the church clerk.

This was necessary for the church to feel the impact of the project and take action and make it a model as it relates to young people and membership retention. The interpersonal relationship was of interest to the people hence it was encouraged to be a regular activity for local churches.

Given the success recorded, the researcher recommends the implementation of this project to other Churches in the Conference and even beyond for wider implementation. An expression of gratitude and application was made to all bodies that contributed in one way or the other to see to the success of the program. Those present at the meeting were urged to see to the sustainability of the program as it is a paradigm shift to evangelism campaign that cost less and yields more.

Lessons Learned

1. In the process of data collection, respondents have divergent views that could make subjects discussed to be argumentative.
2. Church membership would support any program that would benefit and revive them.
3. The project program was excited to the Church membership because it was needful for their spiritual survival.
4. The faith of indigent members of the Church be could strengthened and sustained through the provision of basic needs.
5. It takes some time for members and leaders to adopt new ways of training since change does not occur instantly.
6. Projects like this should not be embarked on at the time it would have interference with other Church programs like the election of workers that is statutorily fixed within the fourth quarter of the year.
7. By training church leaders on how to nurture young people, the researcher has been enriched by numerous principles studied that are vital for church growth.
8. I have learned that if baptismal candidates are thoroughly and extensively taught before baptism, the present trend will change.

Conclusion

The issue of youth membership loss in the SDA Township Church, Umuokahia, has been clearly identified, the causes also enumerated. Extensive literature was reviewed on retention principles. Teaching and parental influence have been of great challenge. When parenting improves, children are taught church doctrines and carefully tutored to maturity. Westernization is a big problem to many homes hence adopting western culture is common here leading to poor parenting and invariably loss of youth membership.

Peers should be monitored beyond the family environment. Because many youths are lead astray by friends, close monitoring of children up to what they are doing in their school becomes necessary. Teachers are involved in monitoring children when a cordial relationship exists between parents and teacher, only then can close monitoring prevail.

Interdenominational marriage revealed in this study has led many to leave their faith. Being born again and allowing the Spirit of God to direct human affairs is the greatest defense to this problem because partners who are truly born again must be true to their vows and maintain sanity in the home. When members collectively care for each other, the church becomes an extended family sharing things together and caring for one another; this increases retention in the church and facilitates sharing of burden among members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is important to note that the overall goal of the project has been achieved, which was to increase the retention of the youth in SDA Township Church Umuokahia.

Recommendations

Records of all the youth should be kept in the Conference headquarters for identification of all the youth.

The Conference should adopt attendance counts as a standard so that the pastors and elders would be able to determine when young people or other categories are slipping away.

Youth programs should be an annual by the guidance of their leaders to discuss issues concerning Church growth and evaluate their spiritual state.

Specific training in nurture, retention, discipleship, as well as evangelism, should be given to the young people quarterly.

Regular pastoral visitation to Church members especially the youth should be strengthened at the local Church level.

The Conference should have training for membership on conflict resolution and reconciliation.

All churches in the Conference should consider it necessary to incorporate Youth retention program in their churches and continue with the implementation process.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE

Letter to the Conference for Research Authorization



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

*Aba East Conference
Headquarters*
No. 1 New Umuahia Road
Ogbor-Hill,
P.M.B. 7115, Aba,
Abia State, Nigeria
Tel:
E-Mail: aecaba@infoweb.abs.net
aecaba@yahoo.com

July 20, 2015

The Administration,
Aba East Conference,
Aba.

Sir,

REQUEST FOR IN-MINISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT AUTHORIZATION.

I humbly request for authorization to conduct my In-Ministry Dissertation project in your Conference. This project is in partial fulfillment for my Doctorate Degree in Ministry. The topic of my work is "Developing a strategy to increase Youth Retention in SDA Township Church, Umuokahia 1, Aba East Conference.

Having observed, the high rate of Youth leaving the church after baptism, I believe that a critical analysis of the situation with the appropriate intervention strategy, would change the situation. There would be focus group interviews and questionnaire for the young people between the ages of 13 – 31. These are the target group.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Yours in His service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. U. Anaba', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

PASTOR H. U. ANABA.
Min. Sec. / Family Life Director.

CC: The President, AEC.
The Treasurer, AEC.

Letter of Authority from the Conference to conduct Research



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

*Aba East Conference
Headquarters*
No 3 New Umuahia Road
Ogbour Hill,
P.M.B. 7115, Aba,
Aba State, Nigeria
Tel:
E-Mail: aecaba@infoweb.aba.net
aecaba@yahoo.com

13th November, 2015

Pastor H.U. Anaba
Ministerial Sect./Family Life Min./PMD
Aba East Conference
Sir,

**RE-APPLICATION TO CONDUCT D'MIN RESEARCH IN ABA EAST CONFERENCE
CHURCHES OF YOUR CHOICE**

I am directed by the administrative committee of Aba East Conference in her meeting of 19th October, 2015 approved your application to conduct you D'Min research in any church of your choice in Aba East Conference. It is our sincere desire that the good Lord will grant you the favour as you meet with the required group in the churches with the right information that will enrich your project and make it pass the taste of time and demand of the University.

Congrate and God bless you.

Yours in His service



cc: AEC Officers

Letter to SDA Township Church Umuokahia 1 to conduct Research



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

*Aba East Conference
Headquarters*

No. 1 New Umashia Road
Ogbor-Hill,
P.M.B. 7115, Aba,
Abia State, Nigeria

Tel:
E-Mail: aecaba@infoweb.abs.net
aecaba@yahoo.com

June 8, 2016

The church Board
SDA Township Church,
Umuokahia, Aba.

Fellow Pilgrim,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT MY DOCTOR OF MINISTRY RESEARCH

I humbly request your permission to conduct my research project in your local church. Your church has been slated for pilot the activity. The topic of my research is "Developing a strategy to increase youth retention in Seventh-day Adventist Township Church", Umuokahia 1.

The church would assist in the provision of her statistical record and would also participate in all outlined program, that would lead to the success to the project.

Thanks for anticipated positive response.

Yours in His service,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Hillary U. Anaba".

PASTOR HILLARY U. ANABA.
Min. Sec. / Family Life Director

Letter of Approval from SDA Township Church Umuokahia



Seventh-Day
Adventist Church

Umuokahia Township
Umuokahia Township District

P.M.B. 7115, Aba.

Your Ref: _____
Our Ref: BO/2016/06/0004

Date: 12/06/2016

Pastor H.U. Anaba
Family life & Min Sec. Director
Aba East Conference

LETTER OF APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH WORK

In view of your letter written to the Church Board dated 8th June 2016 seeking permission to conduct a research work for the award of **Doctorate Degree in Mission** on the topic "strategy for retaining membership"

After due consideration, the Church Board has granted your request and promised to give all the needed support.

You are encouraged

Thanks



APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: Answer by ticking where appropriate

S/N	STATEMENT	A	SA	D	SD
1	Church leaders help young people in understanding church doctrines holistically				
2	The church has programs that are youth oriented				
3	Youth-oriented programs in the church are sufficient				
4	Leaders involve young people in church activities				
5	Leaders provide materials for young people spiritual growth				
6	Leaders emphasize on youth spiritual growth.				
7	Every youth have a weekly study guide				
8	Good number of youths attends mid-week and Sundown prayer meetings				
9	All youths have a full understanding of the Sabbath doctrine				
10	Teachers read and study scripture together with young people				
11	Teachers present Christ-centered programs to young people				
12	Young people experience efficiency in church leaders				
13	During lectures, sufficient instructional material are provided				
14	There is partiality in discharging discipline standards				
15	Young people experience cultural inferences.				
16	Young people experience dual allegiance amongst church members and family				
17	Church leaders have sound teachers amongst them				
18	Young people have good understanding of Adventist doctrine				
19	Peers group influence causes young people to abandon their faith				
20	Interdenominational marriage affects young people's faith				
21	Marrying outside the faith by young people is considered a serious issue				
22	Parents study scriptures together with young people				
23	High bride price contributes to interdenominational marriage				
24	Young people lead out in morning prayers at home				
25	Leaders monitor the activities of the young people				
26	Parents monitor the activities of the young people				
27	Church leaders consider the need of young people in the church and deliberations				
28	Young people's questions are satisfactorily addressed				

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

I understand that this research is meant to develop a strategy to increase retention of the Youth in the Church. I, therefore, give my consent to participate in the focused group discussion.

Name:.....

Phone Number.....

Age.....

Occupation.....

Name of Local Church.....

Membership Status (Baptized or Not).....

Adventist by Birth.....Convert.....

Ministry Role in Church.....

Signature.....

Date.....

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Why do you think so many young leave the church soon after their baptism?
2. What can you say concerning how Adventist beliefs are taught in baptismal classes?
3. Do you observe any weakness on how the church prepare the would-be members for baptism?
4. Is there any identifiable cultural barrier causing them to leave the church?
 5. What do you think that we can do after baptizing them that would help to stop them from leaving?
6. Do you believe that inter-denominational could be a reason for the youth to leave the church?
7. Are there Christ-centered messages presented in the church? Do you think we need more?
8. Are there seminars to help your Christian life? Do you receive handouts? Concerning spiritual nurture from seminar presenters or the conference? How often?
9. Is the church manual followed consistently in matters of church discipline?
- 10.** Do church boards have annual programs prepared to nurture church members?

APPENDIX E

YOUTH AND MISSION

INTRODUCTION

The word "YOUTH" is the English translation of the Greek word *NEOTES* (*VEOTNS*), from *neos* meaning "NEW" as illustrated in the biblical passages like Mark 10:20; Luke 18:21, Acts 26:4, 1 Tim 4:12.

In the Seventh-day Adventist church youth ministries, 30 years of age is the peak for regular membership. Interestingly, this period embraces the life stage of dependence on the parents and attainable status whereby one could achieve economic and social independent characteristics of the adults.

The word "Mission" is the English form of the Latin word "mitto" meaning "to send." Mission has to do with special and identified task or assignment that needs fulfillment. In the Christian perspective, missionaries go out with the message of Jesus Christ. Therefore, being a Christian means that the individual has accepted to be sent to the world to represent Jesus. Christians, live and teach others what they have known about their master, Jesus. The mission of Jesus is the mission of His disciples because they are redeemed through his love from the ensnarement of the Devil.

Reason for mission - Sin brought radical change or reduction in all spheres of creation as recorded in Genesis 3:14-19. The human community is ravaged by poverty, sickness amid socio-economic upheaval to mention but a few. People are desperately yearning for conditions that would relief their burden or needs.

Imperative for Mission- Jesus' care for humanity is the paradigm for mission effectiveness. He relieved people of hunger as the scripture testifies in Mathew 14:14-16. ; Mathew 14:14-16; 1Tim.1:5. The following Bible passages stress that mission is an imperative from Christ (Matt 28: 18-20; *Rev.14:6-12*; *John 20:21*; Matt. 9:37). The great commission charge has a unique statement of assurance from the creator whose wonderful power can never be contested. In Mathew 28:18-20, Christ said "...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

This is a statement of assurance that is supposed to give confidence to every missionary which is given by the author of protection. The I AM has sent you. No need to be afraid *Exodus 3:14*

Mission Influence in Homes: *Heb.11:24, 25*; Acts 16:1; *2Tim. 1:5*;

Mission in Compassionate Work: *Heb.11:24, 25*; Acts 16:1; *2Tim. 1:5*;

Abraham, a case study in the Old Testament for effective missionary work: Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18, 19. The missionary activity of Abraham began in his family.

Paul, a case Study in the New Testament for effective missionary Work: *1 Cor. 9:16*; *2Tim.4:7, 8*, and mission was all inclusive to him. He was called and sent by God. But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). All our neighbors are to be attended to as the good Samaritan did.

Climax of Mission- John 3:16; Revelation 21:1-4

Conclusion

Jesus spent time with the people—great and small, rich and poor, men and women, the sick and the healthy—and He made Himself available for this interaction both day and night. He did this to find ways to benefit the people. Indeed, Jesus calls us not only to come to him but to go for Him. Mission will always be possible with the Master of mission at the center

APPENDIX F

BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

Though leadership may be hard to define owing to diverse angles of vision, one characteristic common to leaders is the ability to make things happen, to act in order to help others work in an environment within which each individual serving will be encouraged, stimulated to realize their potentials as contribute meaningfully in the system or institution they have found themselves. Christian leadership represents actions that would result in giving God the glory and hinges on the Shepherding principle. This should manifest in homes and every other institution.

The root of Leadership Gen 1:1; 1:26, He is the originator of leadership and is the leader of all.

Leaders, as Servants of the Lord- (Num. 11:11; Ex 14:13; 1 Sam 23:10-11).

Leaders are called by God- (Mal 3:1; Matt 11:10; Gen 6:14-16; Gen 12:1-3); 1Sam 16:1-3.

Jesus, the Servant of Servants. “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15).

Leaders as Good Shepherds. Leading to have a change should follow the biblical metaphor of being a good shepherd. It is a cautious and careful process done with prayer. A good shepherd does not drive the sheep but gently leads as one who understands them one by one (John 10:14). When Jesus talked about His relationship with His sheep, He gave the impression of knowing much more than their names. To Him, knowing them means loving them. Ironically, the smiting of the good shepherd insured the safety of His sheep (Zech 13:7; Matt26:31).

Song: Jesus like a Shepherd led us

Steps leading to change. There must be a personal change that is evident in the life of the leader. A leader must be born of the Spirit.

God’s Revelation to Leaders- Jonah 1:1; 3:1

Leadership in New Testament- Jesus called his disciples and made twelve apostle (Mt 4:18-22; 9:9; Mk 1:16, 17; 2:14; 3:13-19; Lu 5:27; 6:13-15; John 15:16).He also called seventy and sent them for mission (Lu 10:1-17).

Servant leadership Versus Secular Leadership-Matt 20:25-28; Mk 10:45; Gal 6:9; 1Tim 5:8.

1. Set and determine their goals and policies and compel their subordinates to accept them.
2. Highly interested in the subject matter (content) than the led (process)
3. Aggressive in carrying out functions.
4. They have no respect to other people view point in decision making.
5. It is a self-control leadership.
6. Discontent and aggressive attitudes grow among the led.
7. The leader exercises a domineering influence.
8. The leader expects absolute obedience.

LEADERSHIP AND THE BIBLE

The first lesson informs us that God has given a mission to the Church which has to be fulfilled. Today we are to see God making us leaders to fulfill this divine mandate. He bids us shine; you in your small corner and I in mine.

Christian leadership represents actions that would result in giving God the glory and hinges on the Shepherding principle.

Apostle Paul and Prophet Isaiah, picture God as a shepherd of His people who cares for them spiritually, physically and otherwise. (Isa. 48:17; Heb 13:20).

“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel. I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go” (Isa 48:17).

“Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20).

Jesus Christ after His Resurrection Ordered Peter to Feed His Sheep

“So when he had denied, Jesus says to Simon Peter. Simon, son of Jonah, Love you me more than these? He says him yea Lord, you know that I love you. He says to him, Feed my lambs.

He says to him again the second time. Simon, son of Jonah, love you me? He says to Him, Yea Lord: you know that I love you. He says to him feed my sheep.

He says to him the third time. Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time. Love you me? And he said to him, Lord you know that I love you. Jesus says to him. Feed my sheep” (John 20:15-17).

Peter, in Turn, Challenged the Church Elders to Feed the Flocks

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre; but of a ready mind. Neither as being Lords over God’s heritage but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away: (1 Peter 5:2-4).

Leadership which is equated to shepherding means:

- Leading not Lording
- Drawing not Drowning
- Pulling not Pushing
- Inspiring not Inhibiting
- Motivating not Motiveless

Dimensions for Spiritual Leadership Growth:

Studying the word of God

Meditating on the life of Christ

Developing a prayer life

Allow the Holy Spirit to work in you John 16:13

Christ the priority in all decisions, Phil 1:21, Gal 2:20

Leaders Approach towards Prayer - When Peter and John were threatened by Sanhedrin and told not to preach, their response was neither by murmuring nor complaining. They did not seek for an attorney or special meeting rather they called for prayer meeting. They prayed that God would protect them and give them boldness in doing what He wants them to do. The entire Church prayed. The Christian leader should lead the church into prayer direction (Acts 6:4; Eph 4:11-16).

Leaders Approach towards Teaching and Preaching- The preachers may not have political and economic power, but they have the word of God as the power to convict, persuade and convince. Consistent exposition of the Bible is very important for making a change in leadership. When the congregation has been well fed with the word of God, they will discern where God is leading. If a change in the worship

format is needed, leaders should preach ahead of time on such things like the meaning of worship and let members be cautious of offering a strange fire (Lev 10:1,2).

Leadership and Small Group- The best and most natural way of creating a caring church is through the small group. In Old Testament, we see small group ministry as a part of God's plan for healing broken relationship (Exodus 18:21-23). When Jesus was ready to found the Christian church, He began with a small group, and His example should speak volumes to His church today (Mathew 4:18-22 and Luke 6:13-16).

Five components parts of the small group are: loving, learning, deciding, doing, and praying. The small group involves getting along with other people irrespective of age or other human barriers. It is unity in truth as Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples (John 17 21-23) it is a unity of relationship with God and not organic unity

Principle of Acknowledgement in Leadership- Proverbs 3:6

Principle of Delegation in Leadership- Exodus 18:1-21; Acts 6:3

In conclusion, Jesus is the model servant-leader. He by metaphor and life lived; set an example of what servanthood is all about. The fundamental principle from which church leadership and organization should develop is to accept the exemplary life of Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate source or point of origin. Therefore everything the leadership does should be in content and context of the divine agenda. (Mt 4:17, 19; 1pet 2:9; Mt 28:18-20). It will express redemption program that centers on revealing God's glory (Isa 42:6-9; 49:6b).

APPENDIX G

NURTURING AND RETAINING NEWLY BAPTIZED MEMBERS

Definition: The word nurture means retaining or being retained, the capacity to hold.

Introduction: It is obvious many young people leave the church after baptism on a yearly basis. This is a situation that needs urgent attention. It means that the mission of the church is in jeopardy and by God's grace; the Church should do her part through dedicatory service to retain our young people.

Older Church members should be appointed to take care of the newly baptized members, giving them the necessary supports they need for their spiritual growth. They older members are those who have proved in their church community relationship to be committed and devoted to the service of the Lord. This is achieved through Small Group Initiative.

Biblical Injunction for Nurturing and Retention

Exod. 18:1-24

The principle of delegation in leadership enhanced and developed unity among the people, it brought courage, reduced conflict and led to the growth of the church as members are delegated to serve for the benefit of all.

In Leviticus 19:11

God gave the admonition concerning how those who have not behaved well should be treated. There is a need for a retention process to redeem the offender and it shall be done in love.

Matt 14:18-22,

Informs on Christ's retention approach in His ministry of saving humanity. God needs all, both old and young to be retained for His kingdom. The older generation of the Church will pass Christian heritage to the younger ones. Matt 19:14

Small Group Strategy

According to Kurt Johnson, a small group is an intentional face-face gathering of three to twelve people who meet on regular schedule, with the common purpose of developing relationships, meeting felt needs of group members, growing spirituality, and laying plans to lead others to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives.¹ The principle of small group ministry is traced from the first verse of Genesis in the Old Testament as Moses wrote: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The Hebrew word translated "God" in this biblical verse is plural; indicating that more than one divine person was involved in creation.²

Acts of the Apostles chapters 2 and 4 inform how the Holy Spirit possessed the apostles and they spoke in tongues. More so, Peter and John being possessed by the Holy Spirit preached and gave Bible studies. After the death of Jesus and after the Apostles had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, The followers of Jesus started to

¹ Johnson, *Successful Small Groups*, 34.

² Ibid., 24.

live out and apply the principles of the small group that had been taught to them by Jesus, and they saw it as a model for church growth. This vision of ministry is what God wants to establish in the life of His people for strengthening the spiritual life of the Christian community and reaching the unreached with the message of our risen savior. This can only be achieved through growing relationship with Jesus and to Christians of all denominations who are searching for a deeper understanding of the scripture.

The small group involves getting along with other people irrespective of age or other human barriers. It is unity in truth as Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples (John 17:21-23) it is a unity of relationship with God and not organic unity. Small group ministry is a spiritual community affair. Community refers to a group of people who have common goals in their personal lives and who have come together to form supportive friendships with one another. Christian community is living like Jesus in our relationship with one another. The moment people feel that they do not belong to a community; they quickly get detached from it.

The best and most natural way of creating a caring church is through small group, and its principles are traced from the very beginning when God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were united in creation. The triune function mirrors small group relationship. Though sin, brought a radical change in the relationship, God provides a solution for all humanity through Jesus Christ. In Old Testament, we see small group ministry as a part of God's plan for healing broken relationship (Exodus 18:21-23). When Jesus was ready to found the Christian church, He began with small groups and His example should speak volumes to His church today (Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 6:13-16).

Five components parts of the small group are: loving, learning, deciding, doing, and praying. A thriving group will reach out to non-Christians and to Christians who do not have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and to Christians of all denominations who are searching for a deeper understanding of scripture. The ultimate goal of small group Bible study is application. Wholistic Bible study groups are made up of members who want to have a balance in the use of their group time, focusing on the four ingredients of sharing among them. These ingredients are Bible study, outreach ministry, and prayer. Two basic approaches are used in sharing Biblical knowledge. The first one is the teacher-centered approach which is known as the didactic method while the student-centered approach which is the second is known as the inductive method. In sharing, methods may change, but standards and doctrines are not negotiable. The small-group is a person appointed and recognized to serve the group by facilitating and enabling it to achieve its purposes and goals. Prayer and spiritual preparation are the primary and most important steps for a group leader.

New Testament teaching: Acts 2:41-47: New members to be

1. Devoted to church leaders teachings
2. They are to be taught to fellowship with members or one another
3. They should be consistent in prayer
4. They should be ready to participate in witnessing

Spirit of Prophecy principles Acts of the Apostles pp 177-187

1. Appointed church officers to be in charge of newly baptized members.
2. Commit the new church members to devoted church members
3. To be carefully trained
4. To follow the example of Paul and Barnabas in teaching new members.
5. To be taught to take care of them and rely upon God's promises Matt 28:20.
6. Good men to give them instructions

7. To involve them in church service
8. To help them to be mature and to educate them thoroughly.
9. To be dedicated to God and His holy spirit for guidance.

Other writers

10. Have them in small groups
11. Have them attend all church meetings
12. Make them disciples – by allocating time of prayer with them, bible reading time for fellowship and the habit of tithing
13. Have delegation of duties as you minister to them.
14. Have them involved in social meetings conducted by the church.
15. Let them be integrated with church members, church leadership and the mission of the church.
16. Have a plan to nurture them - strategic plan – under the committee of nurture and Retention.

APPENDIX H

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Four major ingredients to spiritual formation

- a. Vision Hebrews 11:27
- b. Gospel Romans 1:16
- c. Lordship Col 2:6, Eph 3:14-20
- d. Presence Matt 28:20

Spiritual Formation Part 2

Ways to improve our vision

1. Study of the word of God
2. Meditate on the life of Christ
3. Develop a prayer life
4. Memorize scripture

Ways to understand the gospel better

Accept the reality that Jesus died for you Romans 5:8, 10

Study the truths of the gospel e.g. birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ

Accept the fact that God loves you with unconditional love Jer 29:11-13

Ways to integrate Christ's Lordship Eph 3:14-20

Allow the Holy Spirit to work in you always John 16:13

Make Christ the priority in all decisions you make Phil 1:21, Gal 2:20

Ways to enhance our awareness of God's presence Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:15-20

APPENDIX I

SIGNIFICANCE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Spiritual Growth and Development

1. Attract -Where it starts –John 12:32
2. Convict -What He does –John 16:7-11
3. Compel -What we want to do -2 Cor 5:14-15
4. Empower -What God does in us
5. God works in us –Phil 2:12-13
6. God gives a new heart –Ezek 36:26-27
7. God’s Spirit in us causes us to obey
8. Transform -How God changes us to be like Him
9. Not recognized by the individual (1 Tim 1:15)
10. God created us for good works (Eph 2:4-10)
11. God equips us to do His will (Hebrews 13:20-21)
12. Christ dwells in us (John 14:20, Eph 3:15-17)
13. God promises us power (Acts 1:8)

APPENDIX J

YOUTH AND MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

RELATIONSHIP: *Relationship is indeed a fundamental human need and stands as a significant connection between two or more things. It could be by people or group, in adoption, or marriage. The marriage relationship is very intimate because of feeling of being in a close personal association and belonging together. It is a bond that is established through knowledge and experience of the other. Genuine intimacy in human relationships especially in marriage requires dialogue, transparency, vulnerability and reciprocity. Christianity views marriage as spiritual relationship. The relationship of God to man is symbolized in terms in which men and women could happily apply to their homes.*

Spirit of Prophecy Counsel on Youth and Marriage Relationship:

“I wish I could make the youth see and feel their danger, especially the danger of making unhappy marriage (AH 32:2).”

“Marriage is something that will influence and affect your life both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will not advance his plan in this direction without the knowledge that God approves his course...Great care should be taken by Christian youth in the formation of friendships and in the choice of companions”(AH 43:3).

“The youth who consecrate their hearts and lives to God have, in so doing, placed themselves in connection with the foundation of all wisdom and excellence” (AH 279:3).

“God’s word places great stress upon the influence of association, even on men and women. How much greater is its power on the developing mind and character of children and youth. The company they keep, the principles they adopt, the habits they form, will decide the question of their usefulness here and of their future destiny” (AH 55:4).

Marriage: It is a legally and socially sanctioned union, usually between a man and woman, that is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs and attitudes that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners and accords status to their offspring’s. God is the author of marriage. In fact, He instituted it before sin followed by the Sabbath as recorded in Genesis 2:18-24.

Different Stages In Marriage Preparation

Courtship:

This is a period when a boy and a girl of marriageable ages (Late teens, which is 18-20 years for girls, and early twenties, 20-22 years for boys) become interested in each other and wish to be intimately acquainted with each other. In other words it is a period of special friendships during which final decisions may be taken for or against marriage.

It usually begins with a casual friendship between the boy and girl who may by chance meet each other under varying circumstances such as in a bus or station; at school, college or university fellowship; spiritual retreat; youth camp and other church gatherings; social functions, etc.

Boys and girls approach each other at this period no doubt to convince and assure themselves that they are normal human beings but with no thought of the relationship developing further.

Two main steps have been identified in courtship by renowned marriage counselors namely, casual dating and a period of going steady.

Dating as an aspect of courtship has to do with social activities or relationship specially arranged when a boy and a girl who have not yet committed themselves to each other in marriage meet under wholesome circumstances to carry out activities that are suited for the achievement of the goals of the stage.

During the initial or casual dating period, there ought not to be any serious commitments yet, and each party should still be able to go out with other friends. If however as time goes on, a boy and girl who have been undergoing casual dating observed that their love for each other is maturing and they find more desirable qualities in each other, they may agree to limit their dating activities to each other and refrain from going out with other youths. They are then said to be at the sub-stage of going steady in their courtship.

The first thing they notice in their 'going steady' with each other is that they start thinking of each other so much that their only desire is to be together always. There is need to exercise great caution here to avoid committing sin. In acknowledgement of the fact that their love and affection for each other has further advanced, and they have fully discussed the various relevant issues that need to be discussed and have reached meaningful agreements on most of them, their next desire is to possess each other completely, seeing no obstacle to prevent them from becoming husband and wife. If this comes to the knowledge of parents who then carry out all necessary investigations about the family history and backgrounds, have these checked and double-checked and find no reason why the relationship cannot proceed to marriage, consent is then sought to proceed to the next stage by the boy's parents.

The Engagement:

The form this takes again depends on the customs of the girl's people. As much as possible, these should be followed strictly as much as they do not go contrary to Christian and denominational standards of those involved. This involves the traditional marriage gifts including dowry to be paid on the wife-to-be. Where the parents of the girl, for example, are not members of the same church with the boy, a lot of pleading and explaining may have to be made to avoid going against denominational standards.

As important as the engagement is, Christian Youth must realize that it is not yet the actual marriage. They must, therefore, refrain from intimacies that belong only to the marriage proper. There is, therefore, need for caution, patience and a lot of self-control. They must realize that it is still far better to break than to marry and divorce later, for God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16)

The Marriage Ceremony: This is the stage when the engaged couple declares publicly before God and human witnesses that they have accepted each other as husband and wife. The church recognizes three main types of marriage bearing in mind the laws of our country:

- a. Church wedding.
- b. . Marriage according to native law and custom.
- c. Marriage in the court registry.

In the later two options, however, each must be followed by a service of church blessing as soon as possible after the marriage ceremony. A Christian wedding is a solemn and sacred service, and if a church wedding is opted for, it must, therefore, be conducted with dignity and simplicity devoid of any ostentation and extravagance. The Establishment of a Home and a Family: In western tradition, the wedding is usually followed by a short honeymoon lasting between one to four weeks. This is the introduction and prologue to married life. Since it largely sets the pattern for the new home. It should be characterized by courtesy, genuine love, mutual respect, understanding and a spirit of give and take. The couple should not be disturbed unnecessarily by visits to, or from friends.

One of the purposes of marriage is to bring children to life and raising of a modest family. It is however hoped that this will be delayed until the couple feels ready and prepared for the responsibility of parenthood. In the light of the present bad state of world economy, it is desirable for a young couple to limit the number of children to that which they can reasonably raise to God's honor and glory.

God inspired Ellen .G. White of the Seventh-day Adventist church to make these prophetic statements that point to an effective marriage relationship.

“The family is the closest, the most tender and sacred, of any on earth. It was designed to be a blessing to mankind. And it is a blessing wherever the marriage covenant is entered into intelligently, in the fear of God, and with due consideration for its responsibilities”.

“Women are forced to a life of hardship, pain, and suffering, because of the uncontrollable passion of men who bear the name of husband—more rightly could they be called brutes. Mothers drag out a miserable existence, with children in their arms nearly all the time, managing every way to put bread into their mouths and clothes on their backs. Such accumulated misery fills the world”.

Before increasing their family, they should take into consideration whether God would be glorified or dishonored by their bringing children into the world...Unless children can be trained and disciplined from their babyhood...molding and shaping their characters to meet the standard of righteousness. Parents should calmly consider what provision can be made for their children. They have no right to bring children into the world to be a burden to others... Those who are not qualified to take care of themselves should not have children.⁵

Many who can but barely live when they are single choose to marry and raise a family when they know they have nothing with which to support them. And worse than this, they have no family government. ... Must the cause of God be dropped, and the treasury in different places exhausted, to take care of these large families of poor? No.

How To Conduct Christian Courtship

Issues to Discuss during Courtship: In order to ensure a happy and lasting marriage relationship it is very important that agreement be reached by intending future partners on at least the following vital issues among others:

- a. Attitude to God, religion and the church.
- b. Mutual interests such as hobbies, recreation, social activities, friends, etc.
- c. General expectations from each other and the marriage.
- d. Recreation.
- e. F. Premarital sex.

- f. g. The issue of morality
- h. Relationship with relatives especially parents-in-law.
- i. Philosophy of life.
- g. Individual's family history and background.
- j. Choice of future careers
- k. Family finances.
- l. The question of children their number, training, and education.
- m. The owning of property and their location.
- n. Conflict resolution
- o. Sharing of roles and responsibility.
- p. Pattern of decision making etc., etc.

Quality to Look in Intending Future Partners:

Generally, a boy and a girl looking forward to marriage should possess and demonstrate the following virtues:

Genuine Christianity (preferably belong to the same denomination)

Good sense of values,

Kindness

High ideals and ambitious,

A clear tongue,

Stable affections,

Good character and reputation,

Understanding attitude,

Love and concern for parents,

Unselfish spirit.

Qualities to look out for in a girl or future wife have been so clearly outlined in Proverbs 31:10-31 in the distinguishing features of a virtuous woman. These include among others: God-fearing,

Prudence,

Noble and refine influence (not profane),

Caring and loving,

Trustworthy,

Steadfast,

An economist (not wasteful and extravagant),

Intelligence,

Wisdom

Understanding,

Industrious (not lazy or slothful),

Patience

Dependability.

All The Above Qualities For A Girl Are Equally Applicable To Boys. And also (For Boys):

A clean past record,
Purity of life,
Great love for his mother and sisters in particular,
Diligence,
A non-domineering attitude,
Accustomed to a disciplined life.

It is very advisable for intending partners to avoid those with the following traits: love of the world; low ideas and ambitions, frivolity; lying, disrespect for elders, habit of drinking, gambling and smoking, lack of purpose in life, a bad and uncontrollable temper, a desire to change partner's ways, and one who is careless in matters of personal appearance.

Choosing A Life Partner: Four Criteria

1. **Readiness:** Readiness implies maturity of both parties for courtship and marriage. Maturity can often be measured by the way you answer the following question: Are you ready for challenges and joys of married life? Have you come out of the confusion and conflicts typical adolescence? Are you balanced and responsible? Do you know how to relate to others altruistically? Can you think through and solve a problem that seemingly overwhelms you? Do you understand and accept the sacred and undying nature of marriage? Have you developed wholesome and appropriate attitude toward sex? Do you know what true love is? Do you have a positive religious experience?
2. **Compatibility:** Incompatibility between husband and wife is one of the primary causes for marriage breakups. Young people contemplating marriage need to evaluate their compatibility. Test yourself by asking some hard questions: Do you feel comfortable with the way you communicate with each other? Is it easy for you to establish a successful dialogue? Are you comfortable with the other's manner and lifestyle? Are the ways in which you express affection pleasant or discomforting to either one or both? Are you comfortable with each other's temperament?

Communication is a key element in compatibility. If you find during courtship that you have communication difficulties and that even a simple discussion leads to serious misunderstandings, heated arguments, and shouting matches, chances are you will face similar problems even after marriage. Yes, any problem can be solved, given love, mutual understanding, and tolerance, but why take the risk? Better end the relationship before you enter marriage commitment.

Another strong element in building compatibility is a sense of basic agreement. During courtship, have you sensed a growing list of topics that you would rather not talk about? Is there basic disagreement between you on the important things in life? Do you have significant differences about values, religious beliefs, and practices, or friends? Any serious differences in these areas should alert you to the possibility of marriage.

3. **Homogamy:** The world may sound strange, but it has a simple meaning: Likeness. Research shows that partners who share common characteristics in certain crucial areas have a better probability of success in marriage than those

who do not. These areas include age, religion, education, intelligence, and social, cultural, and ethnic background.

This does not mean that marriage between persons who differ in any of these areas will inevitably fail. Given time and effort, mature Christians who are otherwise compatible can work out differences in one or more of these areas. However, research indicates that the more common factors the partners share, the less difficult marital adjustment will be. And when conflicts do arise, the easier it will be to make needed adjustments.

4. **Spiritual Commitment.** The most important factor for success in any aspect of life is a positive relationship with God. This is particularly true in marriage. When two persons with different religious commitment and preferences choose to marry, they are putting their marital stability in serious jeopardy. Such a high-risk marriage also puts the children in serious trouble.

CONCLUSION:

Marriage is psychologically proven to be the most intimate and complex of adult interpersonal relationships and it is good and honorable (Heb 13:4) as God's institution. He has set boundaries that lead to an effective marriage contract. More so, God's holiness should govern every youthful relationship for the blessings of the Lord to abound here and hereafter. Amen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- African Economic Outlook. "Migration." Accessed 22/06/2016. <http://African-economicoutlook.org>.
- Akanni, Niji. *Policy Guide in Youth Conflict*. Abuja, Nigeria: Action Aid Nigeria, 2009.
- Alalade, Adekunle. *Limiting Factors to the Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa: The Nigeria Case Study*. Apata, Ibadan: Agbo Areo, 2008.
- Alaneme, S. O. "Evolving an Urban/Rural Classification Module, A Lead Paper presented at a Workshop on Urban Rural Classification in Nigeria, Held at the University of Jos Conference Center, 19th-20th July, 2000." Accessed May17, 2016.
- Albrech, Stan L., and Marie Cornwall. "Life Events and Religious Change." *Review of Religious Research*, 1989.
- Amanze, Philemon, and Ruth. *Give me Children*. Lagos, Nigeria: Jamiro Press, 2009.
- Bahr, Howard M., and Stan L. Albrecht. "Strangers Once More: Patterns of Disaffiliation from Mormonism" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28 (1989):180-200.
- Bandura, A., and R. Walters, *Social Learning and Personality Development* New York, Rinehart and Wilston, 1963.
- Barclay, W. *The Daily Study: The Message of Acts*. Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1976.
- Bekaert, Sarah. *Adolescent and Sex*. Seattle, WA: Radcliffe, 2005.
- Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger, *Amazing Conversion: Why Some Turn to Faith and Others Abandon Religion*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1994.
- Bromley, David. *Falling from the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy*. London: Sage, 1988.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. 6th ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994.
- Burrill, R. C. *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church*. Fallbrook: CA, Hart Books, 1988.
- Council of Ex- Muslims of Britain. "Political Legal Status of Apostates in Islam." <http://atheistalliance.org>. Accessed 20/06/2016.

- Cress, J. A. *You can Keep Them if You Care: Helping New Members Stay on Board*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000.
- Daily, Steve. *Adventism for a New Generation*. Portland, Oregon: Better Living, 1994.
- Dale, R. *Development Planning: Concept and Tools for Planner, Managers and Facilitators*. Pathumthani, India: Asian Institute of Technology.
- Driskell, David. *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth: A Manual for Participation*. Paris, France: UNESCO.
- Dudley, Roger L. "Indicators of Commitment to the Church: A Longitudinal Study of Church Affiliated Youth." *Adolescence*, Spring 1993 Issue.
- _____. *Passing on the Torch*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1986.
- Edwards, Rex D. *Every Believer the Church*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013.
- Elwell, Walter A. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books House, 1984.
- Fee, D. G. *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical Theological Study*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007.
- Fischer S., Claude. *To Dwell Among Friends: Personal Networks in Town and City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Free Child Project. "Youth Involvement." Accessed July 14, 2016. <http://.freechild.Org/SIYI/index.htm>.
- Gane, Barry. *Building Youth Ministry: A Fundamental Guide*. River Side, CA: Hancock Center, 2005.
- Gane, Bary, and Steve Case. "Youth Apostasy and Recovery." *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* (June 2002). Accessed 20/06/2016. <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2002/06/youth-apostasy-and-recovery.html>.
- Gay, Lorrie R. *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1999.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventist Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists "Aba East Conference." Accessed November 30, 2015. adventistyearbook.org.

- General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, Ministerial Association. *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1992.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Youth Department. *Getting it Right*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.
- Githii, David. *How to Grow a Healthy and Vibrant Church through Small Church Groups*. Nairobi, Kenya: Frangancia Book, 2008.
- Gleason, Philip. *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.
- Habana, Patricia A. *A Department of Church Ministries Publication*. Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993.
- Honorable Seth Agomuo. SDA Township Church Umuokahia. Interview by the Author, Aba August 25, 2016.
- Hull, B. *The Disciple Making Church*. Grand Rapids: MI, Chosen, 1990
- International Labor Organization. "Youth Employment." Accessed 22/06/2016. <http://www.ilo.org/youthmakingithappen/youthemployment/index.htm>.
- J. Syed (2010), <http://www.emeraldinsight.com>, Accessed 22/06/2016.
- James Hasting. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968.
- Johnson, Kurt W. *Successful Small Groups: From Theory to Service*. Hagerstown, Review and Herald, 2011.
- Knowles, G. E. *How to Grow an Adventist Church Fulfilling the Mission of Jesus*. Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 2009.
- _____. *How to Help your Church Grow*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1999.
- Kiage, Paul G. "A Strategy to Increase the Retention of members in the Nyaguta District." DMin Dissertation, Andrews University Digital Library for Graduate Research, 2014. <http://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>. Accessed July 3, 2016.
- Killen, James L. Jr. *What Does the Lord Require?* Lima, Ohio: CSS, 2004.
- Killinger, J. *The Teacher Shepherd*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985.
- Kirk, Hadaway C., and Penny Long Marler. "All in the Family: Religious Mobility in America." *Review of Religious Research*, (1993), 35: 97.

- Linthicum, C. R. *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities*. Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005.
- Luloff, A. E., and Richard Krannich, eds. *Persistence and Change in Rural Communities: A 50 year Follow-up to Six Classic Studies*. New York, NY: Cabi, 2002
- Malphurs, A. *Advance Strategic Planning*. Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 2009.
- “Manila: Ortigas Business.” <http://demographia.com>. Accessed 7 June 2016.
- Mauss, Armand L, “Dimensions of Religious Defection,” *Review of Religious Research* 10(1969):128-135.
- Mcbride, Neal F. *How to Lead Small Groups*. Colorado: Navpress, 1990.
- McIntosh, Gary C. *One Size Dosen't Fit All*. Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999.
- Njike, Chigbu, J. I. Igbokwe, and K. U. Orisakwe. <http://naudigitallibrary.com/2014/01/13/analysis-of-land-cover-land-use-changes-in-aba-urban-area>. Accessed 6 June 2016.
- Nwankaire, Nweke and Nwanko, “Factors that influence Youth Participation...”
- Nichol, Francis D., ed. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1976.
- Okoroafor, Humphrey Kalu, et al. “Rural Infrastructure Development: A Tool for Resolving Urbanization Crisis, A case Study of Southern- Eastern Nigeria.” *World Environment* 2014, 4(1): 14-21.
- Omeonu, Chimezie A. *A Life to Live*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Perfect Printers, 2001.
- Parrinder, Geoffrey. *Worship in the World's Religions*. London: Faber and Faber, 1961.
- Perenich, Timothy “Antichrist: From Persian Dualism to Contemporary Christianity” *Ministry* (2009): 21. Accessed 16/06/2016. <http://ministrymagazine.org>.
- Sills, David L. *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. New York: The Macmillian and Free Press, 1968.
- “Scouting for Presbyterian Youth.” Accessed July 5, 2015. <http://www.scouting.org/About/Factsheets/operating-orgs/Presbyterian.aspx>.
- Stott, J. *The Living Church: Conviction of a Lifelong Pastor*. Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Tangeman, G. E. *The Disciple Making Church in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Christian Literature, 1996.

- Terry, John M. *Developing a Strategy for Missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2013.
- Thompson, Neil. "Youth In-reach." In *Getting it Right*, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Youth Department, ed. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005.
- "Umuocham Destination Guide." www.Yourplaceabroad.Com/nigeriageneral/Umuocham/. Accessed May 10, 2016.
- U.S. Agency for International Relations 2013. *Youth in Development Policy*. Accessed 16/06/2016. <https://usaid.gov/policy/youth>.
- Usdansky, M. L., and D. A. Wolf, "When Child Care Breaks Down: Mothers' Experiences with Child Care Problems and Resulting Missed Work." *Journal of Family Issues* 29 (2008).
- Van Rheenen, Gailyn. *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.
- Wagner, Peter C. *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*. California: Regal Books, 1990.
- Warren, R. *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising your Message and Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.
- Wellman, Barry. "Different Strokes from Different Folks." *Community Journal of Sociology* 96: (1990)558-588.
- _____. "Physical Place and Cyberspace: The Rise of Personalized Networking." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.
- "What is Holistic Education." Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://www.teachnology.com/teachers/methods/holistic>.
- White, E. G. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913.
- _____. *Education*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903.
- _____. *Evangelism*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946.
- _____. *Messages to Young People*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1930.
- _____. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890.
- _____. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948.
- _____. *Prophets and Kings*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917.
- _____. *Testimonies for the Church*. 9 vols. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948.

White, E. G. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1950.

_____. *The Great Controversy*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911.

William, Barclay. *The Daily Study: The Message of Acts*. Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1976.

Zelan, Joseph. "Religious Apostasy, Higher Education and Occupational Choice." *Sociology of Education* (1968) 41:370-379.

<http://.britatannica.com/topic/boy-Scout>.

<http://www.ellenwhitedefend.com>. Accessed on 16/06/2016.

<http://www.worldincrisis.org>. Accessed 16/06/2016.

VITA

Name: Anaba, Hilary U.
Date of Birth: June 25, 1968
Place of Birth: Aba
Marital Status: Married
Number of Children: Two
Date of Employment: January 1, 1993
Date of Ordination: January 28, 1998

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

2017 DMin Candidate (Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi)
2000 M.A. Religion (Andrews University)
1993 B.A. Theology (Adventist Seminary of West Africa)
1988 Onicha Ngwa Community Secondary School
1980 Orhuru Community School

WORK EXPERIENCE

1993–1999 District Pastor
2000 Sabbath School, Personal Ministries, and Children Ministries
Director
2000–2003 Youth and Chaplaincy Director
2003–2005 District Leader
2006–2012 Youth and Chaplaincy Director
2013–2016 Ministerial Secretary, Publishing Ministries, Voice of Prophecy
and Family Life Director
2017–present President, Anambra Mission