

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

Title: EFFECTIVE PROGRAM OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP RETENTION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST, AHODWO DISTRICT, ASHANTI SOUTH GHANA CONFERENCE

Name of researcher: Adjei Mensah, Isaac

Faculty adviser: Berchie Daniel, PhD

Date Completed: June 2017

It is not the first time someone is writing on membership retention. I observed the challenge of membership retention. The Church is poised in responding to the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20.

The Church always eager to hold open air campaigns and other outreach programs to increase baptism; meanwhile, both entrance and exit doors are open. The Church spends a lot of funds (huge budget allocation) channel through these programs, meanwhile to retain them is another thing altogether for the Church worldwide, which Ahodwo district is inclusive.

This uncertainty has motivated the researcher to help reduce the dropout in the Church. For example, out of 215 people baptized in 2015, only 40 of them were in the

Church at the beginning of the second quarter of 2016. The researcher reviewed much on what other writers contributed on this topic, but there is still problem with the nurturing and retention in the church. Therefore, this paper intended to develop training materials on nurturing and retention to train lay person on the effective and efficient way of retaining new converts and old members in the Church

The purpose of this paper is to find out the causes of this poor retention of membership and to develop a better and effective means to reduce such challenges. Several works of literature on membership retention were reviewed. The Bible, Ellen G. White's writings, and other religious writers were used. Questionnaires were given out to some selected members and purposive group discussion were conducted to know the real challenge and to determine the actual area to work with and to understand the real needs of the leaders and the laymen.

Workshops were organized for leaders and laymen, and after six months, an evaluation was made through headcount of members in all the Churches, and there was a significant improvement in all the Churches. The project was embraced by the members, the training should be done from time to time in the districts within conference and recommendations given should be implemented.

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EFFECTIVE PROGRAM OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
RETENTION IN AHODWO DISTRICT OF
THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN ASHANTI SOUTH
GHANA CONFERENCE

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the degree

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by

Adjei-Mensah, Isaac

June 2020

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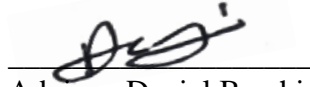
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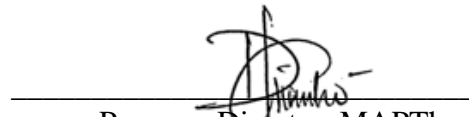
by

Adjei – Mensah Isaac


APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:



Adviser: Daniel Berchie, PhD



Program Director, MAPTh
David Odhiambo, PhD



Reader: Oswell Dzvairo, PhD



Dean, Theological Seminary
Robert Osei-Bonsu, PhD

Extension center: Babcock University Campus

Date of Approval: June 2021

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear wife, Love, to my Children, all my kids and my
brothers for their love, encouragement, support, and prayers
in making this paper a reality

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the Lord God Almighty for His guidance and protection throughout this program. He provided me with requisite knowledge for my education. I am indebted to my family both extended and immediate, especially my wife, Vivian Love Owusu, and the children, Solomon Adjei-Mensah Berko, Perpetual Adjei-Mensah Nyantakyiwaa, Juliet Adjei-Mensah and Akosua Agyeiwaa Mensah for their encouragement and helping me through this Master's degree.

I do express my gratitude to the Administration and the Executive Committee of Ashanti South Ghana Conference sponsoring me for the course. Special thanks also go to the elders and the entire membership of Ahodwo District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for their encouragement and prayers during the time of studies.

I am thankful to the Lecturers and Professors who taught me and helped me throughout my studies. I am also grateful to the Adventist University of Africa and Babcock University administration, staff, and all workers who made my stay a successful one. I will never forget colleagues and friends at the Adventist University of Africa for their moral support. I am also indebted to Pastor Philip Amponsah-Mensah, and Pastor Stephen Oppong-Addo for their help and time to reach where I am today. Last but not least, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Daniel Berchie and others who supervised this project work, I say God bless you all.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

From the inception of Christianity, the task of the Apostles was to spread the gospel, nurture, discipline, and retain the members as Christ Jesus commanded them in the great commission (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:16-20). Jesus commissioned His followers or disciples to make disciples, baptizing, and teaching all those who accept the gospel to observe what Jesus has taught them. In 1 Pet 5:2, Peter admonishes leaders to take good care of church members.

Pastors and elders should shepherd the flock of Christ. Thus, pastors and elders should not leave the church members to go out of the church unguided rather proper care of the members should be a keen consideration. Luke emphasized in Luke 19:10 that “for the Son of man is come and to save that which was lost.”¹ It is therefore, the responsibility of pastors and elders to do the same.

The first major evangelistic campaign after the ascension of Jesus Christ fell on the day of Pentecost, of which three thousand souls got baptized into the church (Acts 2:41-42). The Apostles were poised and with their enthusiastic spirit, another five

¹All biblical references are primarily from the New King James Version. Other versions (apart from the NKJV) used in the study are indicated immediately following the reference, usually in parentheses.

thousand people were added to the church (Acts 4:4). Luke testifies that the Church continued to increase and more were added (Acts 5:14). However, they grew in numbers in houses and temples, and they ceased not teaching. The message of the gospel spread throughout Asia Minor, and the apostles also increased in numbers (Acts 6:7). Luke further testifies in the Book of Acts that retention was the priority of the early Christian church.

Meanwhile, church membership retention has become a significant challenge confronting the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide, which Ahodwo District in the Ashanti South Ghana Conference is inclusive. The first global summit on membership retention revealed the rate at which members left the church through the back door. The world church, with nearly 18 million members, has lost 1 in 3 Seventh-day Adventist members in the last 50 years.²

Ahodwo district in the Ashanti South Ghana Conference experience significant challenges in terms of membership retention. While baptisms are conducted every quarter, there is no significant improvement on the part of the district in terms of membership retention. The effort made by Ahodwo district to fulfill the great commission (Matt 28:18-20) through public evangelism is challenge by a constant exodus of newly baptized converts out of the church. “The gospel commission is the greatest missionary charter of Christ’s kingdom. The disciples were not to wait for the people to come to them; they were to go the people with message.

²Angel Oliver, “First Retention Summit,” accessed 17 June 2014, <https://adventist.news/news/at-first-retention-summit-leaders-look-at-reality-of-church-exodus>

Churches like Ampabame no. 1, Konkori, Mpatasie, Afrancho –Odumase, Kwanwoma, Trede, and Ahodwo did the same as the disciples. They also went out to people with the gospel message. The ten campaigns that were conducted in these seven churches in 2015 yielded two hundred and fifteen souls.

Barely a year after the campaigns, only forty-eight of the new converts could still be accounted for in the church.³ A church like Mpatasie SDA Church record book has one hundred and ninety-eight members, but during Sabbath service, attendance hovers around forty-two and forty-five members. Afrancho-Odumase gets audiences between ten to fifteen. Konkori church likewise Ampabame no. 1, Ahodwo, the district headquarters, Trede, and Kwanwoma have a similar problem of dropout. The rate of backsliding is very high, this needs consideration.

The faithful few who hold fast to the faith and love for the church have become cold. Indeed, it will be tedious for the minister alone to solve the problem. Still, with the help of God, prayers, support of elders, and the institution of useful programs and measures, the churches would be revived.

Statement of the Problem

The issue at stake in the Ahodwo district of the Seventh-day Adventist church is that the church injects a lot of funds into evangelism and revivals to win souls into the church, yet such souls could not be retained. About sixty percent (60%) of the budget allocation for the year goes into evangelism and revivals. Such biased interest results in

³Ahodwo District of Seventh-day Adventists, *Personal Ministries Leader's Report* (Mpatase, Ghana: Ahodwo District of Seventh-day Adventists, 2016), 5.

retaining more names in the churches record books while the physical membership is not corresponding to the increase.

In 2015, the district focused on evangelism and revivals, and the result was massive. Out of ten churches, campaigns were conducted in seven churches. The following baptisms were recorded at the end of the evangelistic campaigns: Ampabame no. 1, 29 souls; Konkori, 19 souls; Mpatasie, 31; Afrancho-Odumase, 34; Kwanwoma, 32; Trede, 28; and Ahodwo, 42. Out of these, only a few are in the faith. Ampabame no. 1 has 8 members remaining; Konkori, 2; Mpatasie, 3; Afrancho-Odumase, 7; Kwanwoma, 2; Trede, 18; and Ahodwo, 8. This testifies to the high rate of backsliding in the Ahodwo district of Seventh-day Adventist church in the Ashanti South Ghana Conference.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the study is to discover the challenges facing Ahodwo district in terms of membership retention and to develop strategies for retaining new converts. The study will also find out the ways of nurturing the old members to achieve their objectives. Again, the study is to explore the background of Ahodwo District of Seventh-day Adventist Church, its growth, and the challenges affecting retention in the district. Moreover, effective programs will be designed to help suit the newly baptized and those already in the faith to strengthen their faith.

Significance of the Study

It is anticipated that the research will help to modify some of the church members' attitudes towards newly baptized and old members. And will challenge them to win more souls for Christ and keep them in the faith. The study will also help the leaders to understand their task of nurturing and retaining of members.

Delimitation

The study will focus on seven out of the eleven churches. These churches are located in the Ahodwo district of Seventh-day Adventist church in the Ashanti South Ghana Conference for the period of three years.

Methodology

This is a program development that is aimed at helping curb membership loss in the Ahodwo District of SDA Church. The research method employed in the study from the mixed method perspective, i.e., quantitative primary, and qualitative.⁴ Thus, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in the study. Therefore, purposive group discussion and questionnaires were used in the study as data collection procedures. Besides, relevant scholarly materials such as books, articles, journals, periodicals, and other relevant internet sources were used. Moreover, the Bible and the E.G. White writings were used.

⁴Randy L. Joyner, William A. Rouse, and Allan A. Glatthorn, *Writing the Winning Thesis and Dissertation: A Step-By-Step Guide*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2013), 73.

The population in this study was the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Ahodwo district. The purposive sampling method was used to obtain the sample of the participants. Purposive sampling is the ideal sampling in qualitative research because it allows selection of participants that show the different perspectives of the problem.⁵ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba suggest that sampling should be conducted “until a point of saturation or redundancy reached.”⁶ Two hundred literate respondents ranging between the ages of 15 and over 65 were purposively sampled for the questionnaire. Nine groupings were used for the purposive group discussion.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one comprises of the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, limitation, methodology and organization of the study. Chapter two puts forth the literature review, which is grouped under these topics: membership retention in the Old Testament, New Testament, among Seventh-day Adventist church writers, and other writers. Chapter three dealt with the description of the local setting and data analysis, program survey and interviews. Chapter four is about program development, implementation and evaluation. Chapter five provided the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study

⁵John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2013), 97-103.

⁶Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon. G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985), 64.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

This chapter of the paper deals with some works on church membership retention. It looks at church membership retention in the Old Testament, New Testament, the writings of Ellen White, and in the writings of other writers.

Membership Retention in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the Lord God chose the Israelites to be the light to receive strangers among them (Duet 26:11). However, their attitude towards foreigners at times was appalling. For instance, some particular people were excluded from their assembly. The eunuchs, bastards, Amorites, and Moabites were not to be in the presence of an assembly of Yahweh (Duet 23:1-3). They also frown upon intermarriage with non-Israelites for fear of being led into idolatry (Duet 7:1-5). Whenever the people of Israel went astray, the Lord God called them to return unto Him (Mal 3:7).

On the other hand, the Old Testament depicts a positive reflection of Jewish attitude toward strangers. For example, Ruth, the Moabite chose to be part of God's people (Ruth 1:16-19). Again, Malachi testifies that God's name shall be great among the gentiles (Mal 1:11). Zephaniah also forecasts a day when all the people of the earth would serve God (Zeph 3:9). The Israelites were noted of receiving sojourners whiles

keeping the Passover (Exod 12:48). They were not to assume exclusive attitude toward foreigners. They were to welcome those who desire to join them in the worship of God and being incorporated politically and socially. These strangers were to be accepted religiously through circumcision rites. Thus, they become part of God's people to participate in the Passover rituals (Exod 12:44).

The Israelites maintained their membership through circumcision and non-Israelites; it was the requirement for them to belong to the congregation of Israel and joined the Israelites to do whatever God required of them. The circumcision increased the number of the Israelites.⁷ The influence of Daniel in Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires, and Esther in the Persian Empire showcase the significance of the dispersion of Jewish proselytism. Numerous Gentiles were exposed for the first time to God of Israel as they attended Synagogue.

Worship probably attracted by the monotheistic concept and great ethnical idea of Jews.⁸ They listened to the readings of their scriptures, and often they became converted to the Jewish faith.⁹ In Isa 43: 12, the Lord God is proclaiming Israelites global mission

⁷“Strangers accepted through circumcision” [Ex 12:44], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)* rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 1:557.

⁸Thomas R. Schreiner, “Monotheistic Concept” *Proselyte International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 3:1007.

⁹*Ibid.*, 557.

as His servants to make him known to the world.¹⁰ A congregation that overlooks the challenges of its members cannot meet the importance of their particular needs.

To retain His people, God gave His law for them to know Him among other nations (Lev 19:1-37). Even though the people of God sinned the Lord God called them to reason together (Isa 1:18).

Membership retention is dear to God that whenever the people of God went astray, He looked for them. For that says the Lord God, “indeed I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out.” As a shepherd seeks out his flock, on the day that he is among his scattered sheep. So I will seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day” (Ezek 34: 11, 12).

The Lord God also called back and gathers His people. God’s plan for the remnant of Israel, was the hope that all religious revival would sweep the ranks of the exile and the Israelites at long last would accept divine destiny¹¹ (Mic 4: 6, 7). The above search could help one deduced that God was particular about His people. God’s calling to His people was keeping and retaining them.

¹⁰Albert W. Dock, *Keeping Ministers in the Church: A Model that Works* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 27.

¹¹“Remnant” [Ezek 40:1], *SDABC*, 4:1022.

Membership Retention in New Testament

Retaining church members is a challenge nowadays regardless of great opportunities available. Ahodwo churches with its members do not best reflect the New Testament model of retaining the new converts. In the book of Acts, repeated references were made to the people accepting the word and believing in the gospel and been added to the church.¹² The rationale for the early church to retain the new converts was to grow both qualitatively and quantitatively. The Acts of Apostles reveal the passion which the apostles and early church had in nurturing and retaining its members. The evidence is Christian involvement, fellowship together that promote unity and good relations among the early church. One hundred and twenty disciples met (Acts 1:15), and the results were some three thousand souls baptized into the church (Acts 2:41).

There is a clear indication that those who heard the message became convinced. “Many of those who heard the word believed and the number continue to be five thousand” (Acts 4:4). One can deduce that nurturing of the new converts was a priority to the disciples; “the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (Acts 6:7). The members were so passionate that they kept on increased that led to church planting (Acts 16:5). They prepared and nurtured the new converts in small groups and prayer, and the emphasis was on corporate worship and praising of God (Acts 2: 46). Jesus emphatically stresses that the fruit should remain (John 15:16); the members should treat in such a way that they continue in the faith. In the New Testament,

¹²Sidney W. Powell, *Where are the Convert?* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1958), 4.

Jesus was often proclaiming the good news and portraying God's love. In His early ministry, Jesus said the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach to the good news to the poor (Matt 4: 18).

However, Jesus went through all villages and towns, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom (Matt 9:35). He taught people every day, giving them their needs through the word of God and calling them to confess their sins and experience transformation of life. He saw the multitude He was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered like sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9: 36). "The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He shared His sympathy for the ministered to their needs and won their confidence, and bade them follow me."¹³

Ellen G White and Membership Retention

Membership retention is dear to every organization for its survival. Some religious writers have volunteered to show a significant concern, of which Ellen G. White cannot be left out. In the book of 1 Peter, the Scripture warns every believer to be vigilant and sober because the adversary, the devil, is seeking whoever he may devour. She reiterates of the importance of new converts being filled by the spirit leading to transformation and reformation. She writes every member of the church including those who have newly baptized must be reformed. However, many try to live a reformed based on their own strength. To this she counsel "the necessary reformation would never be

¹³Mark Finley, "Evangelism Picture from Baptism to Discipleship," *Ministry*, September 2009, 9.

made unless men and women are assisted by the power outside of themselves.”¹⁴ This means that members should seek the filling of Holy Spirit in order to prepare themselves for the necessary transformation and reformation of character. Again, she continues to emphasize the importance of the use of talents. She rightly mentioned that “those who have capabilities must use these gifts to bless their fellow men laboring to place them upon a footing where they can help themselves. Thus education gained in school be put the best use.”¹⁵

Here, in clear terms, members are encouraged to use their talents and capabilities. By so doing, not only do they help others, they also help themselves. She reiterates the importance of educating new converts in the word of God. In this regard, to guard against apostasy, she advises that new members are to be well educated in the word of God and not left alone. Thus the leaders of the church are to teach faithfully all that Christ has commanded. Otherwise, there is the tendency that they (new converts) may be merely charmed by soft words and fair speech of sophistry.¹⁶ Moreover, she counsels that we are to create a bulwark around new convert. This, she explained, is necessary since unconverted people that resisted the Holy Spirit and are in opposition to the truth. Nonetheless, with the spirit and right training in the word of God in the right manner, these new converts may won to Christ.¹⁷

¹⁴Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 391.

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1952), 195.

¹⁶Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1974), 367.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 339.

With this education in the word, young men and women could be very useful as workers in the mission of souls. With their energies, training, partnering with more experienced and through empowerment of the Spirit and the company of angels, these young people can be engaged in service and faithful work in presenting the truth.¹⁸

Furthermore she emphasized that those who engage in mission in large cities should be well qualified by being consecrated, appreciative of sacredness and importance of the work and are preserving.¹⁹ In any case she admonished that “do not hinder those who are willing to work but give them encouragement and support.”²⁰

She instructed that just as God with His all-seeing eyes bears with our mistakes and is pitiful of our weakness, we are “cherish the same spirit of tenderness and forbearance.”²¹ She writes true Christian will not exult in exposing the fault and deficiencies of others. They will turn away from the vileness and deformity to fix their mind upon which is lovely and attractive. To the Christian every act of fault-finding, every word censure or condemnation is painful.²² Thus every Christian are not merely condemned but are to be patient with others with fault. This is even truer in case of the new converts. Ellen G. White indicates that all members including new converts must be

¹⁸Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1904), 9:118.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 119.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 119.

²¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:95.

²²*Ibid.*

involved in the service of the Lord. This in effect will break up the monotony. She comments every church member in some line of service for the master. Some cannot do much while others are idle, instead, everyone should do his or her honest part to roll back the tide of disease and distress that is sweeping over the world.²³ She continue explain that many would desire to work if only they are educated on how to begin, and are also encouraged.

Furthermore, Ellen White described the importance of availing ourselves for the work of God. She makes it clear that, the “same grace that came from Christ to Paul and Apollo which distinguished them for spiritual excellence, will today be imparted to devoted Christian missionaries.”²⁴ As such all are to develop physical and mental abilities to be used by God. She further explained that the spirit of old is working in individual who avail themselves just as He did in times past. Thus, all Christians are to consecrate themselves to be used as channel of light to communicate the good news and be bless thereby²⁵. Further still, Ellen White mentions the necessity of humbling one’s self to God and having faith. By so doing, they will be filled with the fullness of the power of God to share Him to the world to bring to pass the eternal purposes of God in Jesus.²⁶ Christians should learn from Christ every day, if not, they shall undoubtedly come short of the

²³Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, Complete Published Ellen G. White Writing [CD ROM] (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen White Estate, 1999), 15.

²⁴Ibid., 149.

²⁵Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 14.

²⁶Ellen G. White, “A Call to Consecration,” *Review and Herald*, November 21, 1907, para. 1-3.

essential knowledge. They cannot afford to be weakling in Christian experience. They cannot tell when their account may be settled for eternity. They must continuously increase in faith and likeness to Jesus Christ. If they humble themselves, the Lord will lift them. Many may try to lift themselves, but this will not be reckoned in their favor in the day when Christ estimates character.²⁷

Moreover, there is the great need of leaders having a living connection with God. It is not the dry theories that move souls, but the truth proclaimed from the lips of God through a living connection with Him and proclaimed with lips that believe the truth. This is the only way to get the sinner convicted of sin. This explains why leaders are to continually seek for greater light and power from above.²⁸

Again, in no uncertain terms, she describes what will happen in the time of the end. She writes, “Confederacies and powers will increase in number as the time draw nearer. These confederacies will create opposing influence to the truth by forming new parties of professed believers who will act out their own delusive theories. The apostasy will increase ‘some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.’ Men and women have confederated to oppose the Lord God of heaven and the church is only half awake to the situation.”²⁹ This is obviously happening in the church today, which calls for the power of God to bring about victory.

²⁷Ellen G. White, “The Work in Washington, D.C.,” *Review and Herald*, August 15, 1907, para. 2-4.

²⁸White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:447.

²⁹White, “The Work in Washington, D.C.,” para. 3-5.

Finally, she describes the need for much more prayer and earnest efforts among believers for new believers. “These believers who are inexperienced do not merely need pity and compassion, rather they need to be strengthened because they are weak. It is only being the strength of Christ and His loving kindness can they be strengthened. Meanwhile, they must labor for their welfare and the shaping of their characters.”³⁰ These are some counsels that can be learnt from the writings of Ellen G. White concerning retention of new members.

Other Writers and Church Membership Retention

According to Lyle Schaller, one-third to one-half of all protestant church members do not feel the sense of belongingness to a congregation. The reason was that they have never been accepted into the inner fellowship circle. It is easier to become a member of the protestant group than to be recognized by the community of believers.³¹

The need for membership retention attracted many people to undertake studies on how the problem can be solved. The prosperity and the growth of every organization sometimes depend upon the leadership style. Some leadership style prevents church members from the use of their talents. A church with autocratic pastors tend to have smaller membership. On the other hand, a church with a democratic pastor have a large

³⁰White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:345.

³¹Donald P. Smutt, *How to Attract and Keep Church Members* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 79.

membership. While domineering pastors have little support from their members, the democratic styles of pastors have support from their congregation.³²

Moreover in order to retain members there should be a level of trust in the leadership. Trust the root of personal and relational growth is an essential tool in all human relations. When this tool is lacking to prevent others, one begins life ultimately depends upon another for cooperation, which necessitates for full existence without it one remains to insulate.³³ Every leader that invests himself/herself into other people needs, can mentor who invests themselves into him/her. “Mentoring happens through official as well as informal relationships. The more extensive their responsibility as leaders, the more they need people interested in their spiritual growth to bring out more and more their God giving potential.”³⁴

An evangelical awakening moment of the Holy Spirit in the church of Christ brings about a revival in the New Testament Christianity.³⁵ In effect, it is to revitalize the life of Christians.³⁶ To revitalize the church, it is vital on the part of the pastor, Bible worker, or an elder to visit the new members the week after their baptism. According to Richard L.

³²Roger L. Dudley and Clarence B. Groesbeck, *Plant a Church, Reap a Harvest* (Oshawa, Canada: Pacific Press, 1989), 38.

³³Christian A. Schwarz, *Implementation Guide to Natural Church Development, Church smart Resources* (Minneapolis, MN: Church Smart Resources, 1998), 48.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Philip Anderson and Phoebe Anderson, *The House Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1975), 51.

³⁶Donald A. McGauran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 187.

Halversen, every member needs a pastoral visit every week for the first month after baptism, then once a month for the next six months.³⁷ People come to the church family with the hope of the beautiful truth they have heard from God's book and their love for Christ, but they could stay in the church family because of love, concern, and fellowship they find in their new family.³⁸ The church should show love and concern for them to feel sort of belongingness.

At times many congregations do not have a caring ministry for the dropouts. Total care through telephone visit to inactive and former members by the church or group leaders inform them of the sense caring. According to Skip Bells, the inactive member through this ministry of caring turns to be active after not attending church for some time when had special visit informed him/her of someone caring for him/her. That help boosts their low spiritual and emotional feeling.³⁹

Pastoral visitation and its resulting friendship are essential to effective ministry. Ellen White posits that if the pastor neglects the work of visiting people in their homes, as unfaithful shepherd, God will rebuke him because His work is not half done. Again, a pastor who neglects visitation cannot influence his people in a meaningful way.

A shepherd needs to know their sheep. Jesus, our master and ultimate example, said I am the good shepherd I know my sheep and my sheep know me (John 10: 14).

³⁷Richard L. Halversen, "Nurturing and Preserving New Converts," *Ministry*, April 2000, 14-15.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Skip Bells, "Caring for Church Dropouts," *Ministry*, April 1986, 8-10.

Pastoral visitation enables the pastor and members to identify with one another.⁴⁰ Pastoral visitation is incarnational. The word became flesh and visited among us. One can be an extension of Christ for them an expression, although imperfect of God's love.⁴¹

Paul asserted in Rom 12:5 that "many members are one in the body of Christ". To be a Christian is to be inclusive in every aspect of life to provide care for each other. Any group that does not offer mutual care for the community is out of Christ's church. Such a group lacks doctrinal truth the church possess.⁴² Christians should provide healthy and mutual concern for one another to facilitate unity among the church and the community as a whole. Furthermore, to be one in Christ body there should be a cordial relationship between the old and new members to foster membership retention. The active Christians should not insulate themselves from the new converts, rather the believers are to build a relationship that will inform them of members lost for the church to draw closer to them. They are to spend quality time and leisure time with the lost to share their joy and sorrow. The believers come with excitement to their new faith when they realize that evangelism isn't the value.⁴³ The relationship that values.

⁴⁰Jonas Arrais, *Wanted A Good Pastor: The Characteristic, Skill and Attitudes of Every Effective Church Leader Needs* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 2011), 69.

⁴¹Ibid., 69.

⁴²Russell Brurrill, *The Revolutionized Church of the 21st Century*, 3rd ed. (Fallbrook, CA: Hart, 1977), 70.

⁴³Aubrey Malhurs, *Planting and Growing Churches for 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches those Desiring Renewals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 194.

The family of Christ functions best when members who are spiritually ahead care for the spiritually behind. It facilitates chain of caring. Thus discipleship is replaced by an apprenticeship as each church member is responsible to someone and also for someone. This chain of caring is important when extended through the church members to the new believers.⁴⁴ Paul, in 1 Cor 14, describes the mutual building up of believers. His order is for every Christian to use spiritual gifts to build up the church. The word *edifies* as Paul used six times in his teaching (vv. 3, 4, 5, 12, 19, 25) bears the fact that each person is to participate in the ministry of building up the body of Christ. Christians are to be optimistic in exercising their spiritual gifts to build up and help others to the growth of the church.⁴⁵

Theological convictions are necessary, and motivating, the beliefs of the church alone are insufficient to keep new members bonded to the congregation. Thus, without friendship, involvement, or inclusiveness of the new believers their unique experience may not be tapped and sooner or later exit the fellowship they willingly joined.⁴⁶ The new believers be involved and befriended to tap their experience. These new members would not believe that they are unwanted. It becomes easier for them to develop an attitude of indifference rather than risk rejection.⁴⁷ However rejection and neglecting are suicidal.

⁴⁴Ralph W. Neighbor, *Where Do We Go From Here? A Guide Book for the Cell Group Church* (Houston, TX: Tough, 2000), 249.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁶James A Cress, *You Can Keep Them If You Care, Helping New Members Stay On Board* (Ontario, Canada: General Conference Ministerial Association Resource Center, 2000), 60.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 61.

By neglecting the church members most especially, the newly baptized members in Christ or the new converts is equivalent to child abuse. They come to the spiritual family as a result of present truth delivered by evangelist or pastor. As midwives help in the delivery process, the church is more of a nursery where newly-born believers are to be cared for with tenderness and love.⁴⁸ The leaders of the church should guide these new converts with tender hearted and proper care for the spiritual family to grow. The spiritual family cannot grow very well whereby the church members are not accorded with recognition. They desire to know and be known, to love and be loved, and accepted without exception and reservation. Without friendship, it is impossible for new converts to remain in fellowship.⁴⁹

Adventists have retained the field of preaching but has lost the small group, which is vital in retaining church members. Without the small group component attached to public evangelism, the church stands to lose the new converts. The relational small group is the part of the success formula of early Methodism, and likewise, of the early Adventism.⁵⁰ Early Methodism developed all the essentials of the relational small group that met together regularly for support and encouragement and to hold each other accountable for their life in Christ.⁵¹ It very essential membership retention.

⁴⁸Halversen, "Nurturing and Preserving New Converts," 13.

⁴⁹Cress, *You Can Keep Them*, 65.

⁵⁰Brurrill, *The Revolutionized Church*, 100.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 100.

The early church continued in the apostle's doctrine and Bible study (Acts 2: 42; 17:11). Bible study and fellowship in the home are viable methods of penetration. Bible teaching makes the most considerable single contribution among all church activities. When such priority is given, and the Bible is adequately taught, the results will be both corporate and personal success beyond any conceivable measure.⁵² Without prayer, there cannot be joy or victory in the church; neither can there be deliverance or miracles. Churches that do not pray fervently have the setting right amid their congregation. The bible records that the early believers labor in prayer. It helped to plead with great earnest faith and humility.⁵³

All activities that took place at evangelistic meetings are events, not the culture of the church. The challenge with discipleship is not purely cognitive. It must be molded, not merely taught. Acceptance into the church is an aspect of the group of people who never been disciple themselves. They just cling to church with their fundamental beliefs. That is right and powerful, but its absence of relational and discipleship nothing is achieved. They need to feel the local church needs them and serve with others in the ministry. Naturally, the members have to develop a personal relationship with others.⁵⁴ After evangelism, education and building up of relationship will help empower the new converts.

⁵²Gabriel Oluwasegun, *Church Leaders Resource guide for Church Planting and Growth* (Ibadan, Nigeria: International Publishers, 2005), 53.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Jane Thayer, "Pastors' Perspective on Assimilating New Members," *Ministry*, February 2010, 6-11.

The biblical concept of people of God who find their identity in him helps guard against a particular danger that entered into a fantastic relationship with believers, which Christ in you is the hope of glory.⁵⁵ Many times the church attempts to fulfill Christ's great commission through outreach activities alone and therefore tend to measure the achievement by the number of baptisms rather than by the number of disciples. As a result, much attention and effort expended to gain new members, but little nurture and follow up occurs to keep those persons within the fold.

The real problem is not the assimilation, but anything that is less all-out effort to conserve the harvest of a soul that the Holy Spirit gives is spiritual child abuse.⁵⁶ By assimilating and taping the dynamics of spiritual gifts is only one aspect of church growth principles. In most cases, a program putting spiritual gifts to use will not be sufficient for maximizing the growth potentials of the church. Preferably when the gifts are discovered, there should be a channel through which the spiritual gifts are to be used effectively.⁵⁷

Healthy churches provide a setting where members can share their life in Christ in small groups. These holistic small groups provided the basis for a meaningful relationship to develop within the body of Christ. A healthy church sees small groups as

⁵⁵Craig A. Dossman, *From House to House: A New Testament Model for Church Growth* (Lincoln, NE: NAD Distribution, 1994), 44.

⁵⁶James A. Cress, "You Can't Teach an Egg to Fly Before It Hatched," *Ministry*, March 1991, 15-17.

⁵⁷Peter C. Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gift Can Help Your Church Grow* (Mountain View, CA: GL Publications 1979), 248.

necessity rather than an option.⁵⁸ Assimilating new members into an organization is a challenge. Individual entering a new group come as a stranger. Until one learns the ins and outs of the new environment remains exceptionally uncomfortable.⁵⁹

The first thing that new employees should learn is determining the people that are in charge. The need for closeness is most important when people begin a new relationship with an organization. As a result of individuals joining a church have just experienced crisis in their lives regardless of their nature. Therefore, both gospel message and caring community of which the church has to provide. Nurturing congregational members keep the church alive and growing. Growing healthy churches, members have to discover their gifts and find ministry placement in harmony with that giftedness. The structure of the church is thus built around spiritual gifts rather than officers who rule.⁶⁰

The church needs to face reality on the ground. The fact that many will very likely become discourage shortly baptism. If the church manifests little tolerance for their mistakes, no sympathetic understanding of their trial, the sharp stab of criticism will destroy the blessings. The new members are like babies that cannot survive if they are left alone. It is the church's responsibility to take careful steps to help each new member develop a deep abiding relationship with Christ. Baptism is not a remedy to solve all spiritual problems. Instead, they need warm hand friendship, care, attention, and love. Its

⁵⁸Russell Brurrill, *Rekindling A Lost Passion Recreating Church Planting Movement* (Mountain View, CA: Hart Researcher Center, 1999), 230.

⁵⁹Peter Rudowski, "The Church is an Organization Too," *Ministry*, January 1986, 14-17.

⁶⁰Brurrill, *Rekindling A Lost Passion*, 229.

only kindness, care, and concern that will provide an environment to enable them to keep on growing.⁶¹

Church members' adoptions mean that someone else gives birth, but the child becomes part of God's family. It seems that some believers have to visit both old and new members and contact with the young ones and offer help to them in every way of family-type relationship.

In these informal family would be more comfortable to have babies than to raise the dead. Through adoption, the church will be revitalized and become vibrant one.⁶² God is nurturing God, whose heart of love nurture flows. God desires to seek those who have just come to Christ grow in Him. He is a dedicated physician who tenderly cares for his patients. He nurses each one to health and applies healing balm until they are whole (Jer8: 22). He is a loving parent who instructs, guides, connect, and discipline his children. Even if they fail, he will never give up. He is a good shepherd who cares for his flock.⁶³

Bible heroes train there would be disciples by building relationships often refer to as nurturing or mentoring. Nurturing the youth is essential in the youth ministry. Mostly, the church concentrate most of their time and effort on developing effective programs rather than developing relationships. But the real spiritual growth can only occur in an

⁶¹Mark Finley, "Caring for the New Born," *Ministry*, August 1983, 8-9.

⁶²Peter C. Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest* (Mountain View, CA: Regal, 1990), 64.

⁶³Finley, "Evangelism's Big Picture," 9-11.

atmosphere of love and acceptance, and one cannot create that atmosphere with someone who does know.⁶⁴

Summary

This chapter dealt with some works on church membership retention. It looked at church membership retention in the Old Testament, New Testament, the writings of Ellen White, and in the writings of other writers. The literature review makes clear that a study about membership retention is timely and pertinent.

⁶⁴General Conference Adventist Youth Department, *Getting it Right: A powerful Resource for Adventist ministry* (Hagerstown, CA: Review & Herald, 2005), 11.

CHAPTER 3
DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING
AND DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with the local setting of Seventh-day Adventist Church Ahodwo District. It consists of a geographical area, population, and occupational distribution of the people in the community. It also gathers together the views or the perception of the Seventh-day Church members concerning the low rate of membership retention in the Ahodwo district of the church.

Local Setting of Ahodwo District

The Ahodwo District of Seventh-day Adventist Church is situated in the Ashanti Region. It shares two main Assemblies, Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) and Atwima Kwanwoma Assembly (AKDA). It starts from about two kilometers (2km) from the central business of Kumasi and ends in some part of Atwima Kwanwoma. The geographical area is approximately thirty-eight kilometers (38km) square.

In the Adventist setting, it shares boundaries with Ahinsan District in the east, Santasi District in the south, Dominase District in the north, and Ahenema Kokoben District in the west. Ahodwo district was carved from Santasi district in 2013 with Pr. Michael Kwame Obeng and Elder Eric Sarpong as the first District Pastor and Elder respectively.

The KMA section of Ahodwo district is cosmopolitan, with heterogeneous people but dominated by the Akan tribe. The people in Atwima Kwanwoma subsist on farming, trading, wood industry, artisans, and a handful in the other sectors. Ahodwo district has one pastor who shepherds ten churches and companies with total membership of one thousand and fifty-nine.

The elders and the laity assist some of the pastoral work through preaching, nurturing of churches, visiting members, conducting midweek prayer meetings, evangelism, and so on. Therefore, the elders and laity should acquire a requisite knowledge on Church membership retention to enable them to share the experience through a training program in membership retention.

Research Design

The research design that was employed in this study was a blend of both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative method involved soliciting for verbal descriptions of settings and characteristics through views of focus group. It used the quantitative was also used by seeking for hard data through questionnaires. These two methods were used concurrently.

Population and Sampling Design

In this study, questionnaires were administered and purposive group discussion were conducted. The population used for this study was the 10 churches and companies in the Ahodwo district, in the Ashanti South Ghana Conference. These churches and companies were brought together through a letter inviting all members in the district to

discuss membership loss and retention on 18th March 2017. On the said date, out of a total membership 1,068 expected during this district corporate worship, 850 members were in attendance. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered. These respondents were purposively sampled from the churches and companies. However, the number of respondents per church or company was proportional to the size of the membership of the church or company. Out of the 200 questionnaires administered, 185 responded.

Besides, nine purposive groups, 2 from the churches and companies were together to solicit their views and opinions on membership loss and retention. These members included elders of the church, frontline lay persons who were passionate and actively involved in evangelism, and other members who had been in the church for long. In all, 18 persons were involved in the focus group discussion.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process. The following guidelines were considered.

1. Informed consent: The purpose of the study was explained to the participants. The participants were informed of the iterative process of research. Participants were not forced to participate in this study. Those who volunteered to participate were provided with a consent form to sign.
2. Confidentiality and anonymity: Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the privacy and anonymity of the participants. Additionally, codes

were assigned to the findings, and data was treated with the utmost confidentiality.

3. Power, coercion, and positionality: All participants were not forced to answer certain questions if such questions caused stress. I did not manipulate professors to force students to participate in my study. I included only those participants who were willing to participate were part of this study.
4. Protection from physical, mental, and emotional harm: Precautions were taken to ensure that the participants were safe throughout the study. For instance, interviews were conducted in safe place where participants were comfortable. The participants were not subjected to acts which diminished their self-respect. All measures were taken to make sure that the researcher's close proximity to the participants did not cause emotional disturbances or burnout. As a researcher, I had to set boundaries and remained objective throughout the interview process.
5. Respect and dignity: All participants were treated with respect and dignity. Participants were allowed to stop participating anytime without prejudice or penalty.
6. Treatment and reporting of data: Participants' names were not attached to their responses. Access to raw data was limited to the researcher only, and no individual participation was made public. The audio recorded during interview was deleted soon after transcription. The results of the study were communicated to the participants.

7. Project expertise: I worked with knowledgeable advisor and readers. I respected the suggestions and guidance of my advisor and readers as they supervised each stage of my study.

Analysis of Survey and Purposive Group Discussion

The questionnaires were passed out in the Ahodwo District, where the study is limited to. The questionnaires were administered to two hundred Church members, and one hundred and eighty-five (185) out of two hundred (200) gave responses. The persons given the questionnaires were asked to provide the following demo-graphical information: gender, age, educational status, occupation, office held in the church and the number of years as a church member. After the questionnaires were administered, analysis was made as follows.

Demo-graphical Information

In this section, the demo graphical information of the respondents who responded to the questionnaire is presented. The areas covered are age, gender, educational status, office held and the number of years spent in the church.

Table 1. Age Groupings of the Respondents

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
15-24	13	7%
25-34	29	16%
35-44	32	17%
45-54	55	30%
55-64	30	21%
65 and above	26	14%
Total	185	100%

The table above shows that the highest age group responded to the questionnaire was 45-54 years, which represent 30% of the total respondents. Majority of the respondents were 45years and above. This makes the responses real and reliable since it represents the views of the elders of the church.

Table 2. Gender

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	105	57%
Female	80	43%
Total	185	100%

The composition of Table 2 above indicates that the highest percentage of the respondents are males that constitute of 57% of the respondents and 43% are females. It is suggested that the highest gender responses came from males while the females were few meanwhile the more significant number of the church members are females.

Table 3. Occupation Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Students	20	11%
Apprentice	14	8%
Teachers	26	14%
Trading	48	26%
Farming	41	22%
Others	36	19%
Total	185	100%

The table is based on the occupation of the respondents. The highest percentages came from Traders, which constitute 26% of the total respondents, and the least from Apprenticeship, which is 8% of the respondents.

Table 4. Literacy of the Respondents

Group	Responses	Percentage
Literate	185	100%
Illiterate	0	0%
Total	185	100%

The table above indicates that all respondents had some level of formal education. This makes their responses reliable as they have a better understanding of the subject under discussion.

Table 5. Current and Former Officer of the Church

Church Office	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	42	23%
No	143	77%
Total	185	100%

Table 5 above shows that 23% of the respondents are either current or former officers and 77% are yet to hold office in the Church. This shows that a lot of workshops or training needs to be done for more laity and leaders of the Church to equip them on how to retain new converts.

Table 6. The Number of Years the Respondents has Been in the Adventist Church

Number of Years	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1-10	19	10%
11-20	28	15%
21-30	46	25%
31-40	37	20%
41-50	33	18%
51 and above	22	12%
Total	185	100%

Table 6 above indicates that 25% of the respondents have been in the Church for 21 years and 10% for less than 10 years. The number of years of members proved to the researcher that at least the respondents are familiar with the challenges facing the Church on membership retention in their various Churches.

Findings on Membership Retention

This section specifically exposes the discoveries made about membership retention through the questionnaires that were administered and collected. It first looked at the frequency of baptism and the prevalence of low membership retention in the Ahodwo District of SDA Church.

Table 7. Frequency of Baptism in the District

Rate of Baptism	Respondent	Percentage
Monthly	22	12%
Quarterly	70	38%
As the Need Arise	93	50%

Table 7 shows that 50% of the respondents indicate the church do not have a regular schedule for baptism. The table also indicates that approximately the District holds baptism service once in every quarter. This depicts that issue of membership retention in the district is a matter of concern.

Table 8. Prevalence of Low Membership Retention in the District

Low Membership Retention	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	185	100%
No	0	0%

Table 8 above indicates the prevalence of low membership retention in Ahodwo district of SDA Church. All the 185 respondents admitted that there exists poor membership retention in Ahodwo district, representing 100%. To sum up, the statistics depict the reality of the issue under discussion. Hence, a program to address low membership retention is appropriate and pertinent.

Table 9. Perceptions of Church Members on Factors Accounting for Low Membership Retention in the District

	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage
The church has poor follow-up activities	185	100%	0	0%
Lack of intensive visitation by Pastors and elders	185	100%	0	0%
Lack of integration	185	100%	0	0%
Lack of active nurturing in the district after baptism	185	100%	0	0%
Unattractive lifestyle of old members	185	100%	0	0%
Lack of post baptismal class	185	100%	0	0%
Discouragement from family and friends	185	100%	0	0%

Table 9 shows the perceptions of church members of factors accounting for the low membership retention in the Ahodwo district of SDA Church. All the 185 respondents, constituting 100% of the respondents, replied yes to the factors that were listed. They endorsed that poor follow-up activities after baptism, lack of intensive visitation by Pastors and Elders, lack of proper integration and nurturing, unattractive lifestyle of members, absence of post baptismal class and discouragement from family and friends as the factors amounting to the challenge of low membership retention in the District. This depicts that a problem exists. Thus, the church and its leadership need education. Hence, the study is crucial.

Causes of Low Membership Retention in Ahodwo District

The entire respondents, constituting 100%, admitted the prevalence of low membership retention in the Ahodwo district. This has been attributed to many factors from interview and questionnaires administered. Upon the analysis of the data, I could see that the district and its leadership give attention to baptizing new converts than retention church membership. For some who were interviewed, they blamed the leadership of the church for the low membership retention since the more concern about getting numbers for report than nurturing the members to stay in the church.

All the 185 respondents expressed their views on the factors influencing low membership retention in Ahodwo district. Based on the respondents to the questionnaires, the researcher identified the following as causes of low membership retention in the Ahodwo District.

Lack of Follow-Up.

After baptizing new converts into the church, at times the pastor and the lay-team become satisfied that they have won so much and that the work has come to a close. Instead of continuing their evangelistic zeal in visiting and encouraging the new converts, they leave them to their faith. All the 185 respondents endorsed that there is lack of follow-up of new converts after baptisms. It is important to note that these converts would be still struggling with pagan influence and pressure from society and threats to their lives from former affiliations, both family and religious bodies. There is the need to

develop a strong or post baptism or evangelism plan that would be carried out with the same passion and commitment as pre-evangelism activities.

Visiting new converts that join the church from other religions and denominations is paramount. This could be similar to befriending such people. By lack of immediate follow-up and constant visitation to new converts, they can be driven away. Therefore, educating the church and its leadership on proper follow-up activities is paramount.

Poor Quality Program, Lack of Prayer, Fasting and Fellowship.

Many of the churches in the Ahodwo District of Seventh-day Adventist Church do not have a vibrant fellowship with new converts after baptism. There are no vigorous prayer meetings organized neither by the church nor the district to address the needs of the members. As a result, many members are easily influenced by their friends to attend prayer meetings in other churches and through this leave the church. Through an interview by the researcher with Elders S. Y. Sabeng and E. A. Boahen in the district, it was discovered that many of the church services were boring, and many of the old members and elders attend church late, so when new converts join the church, he or she do not feel at home or happy.

But what fellowship means from the context of Acts 2:42 is that, the term fellowship is to be understood as an expression of all activities which heighten the oneness of the believers resulting from the common faith those who assembled shared in their mutual relationships. Fellowship is a great New Testament concept. It denotes something vital to Christian spiritual health, and central to the church's true life. Ministers

and elders need to have a clear sense of what Christian fellowship actually is, then we can help to bring it about in our churches.⁶⁵

The New Testament describes fellowship as central to the life of the young, first century Christian church. Fellowship among the early Christians had spiritual, theological, fraternal, and economic dimensions and was effective in all relationships of believers with one another. Such fellowship may probably serve as a process of nurturing faith of the recent believers and helped to establish them in their new faith. The early church understood that no evangelism is complete if it does not contribute to guide new members into enduring relationship with God and equip them for the ministry of the word they have been called to share.

Lack of Integration

Lack of integration of new (converts) affects retention. This was admitted by all the 185 respondents. The period it takes for the new member (converts) to be involved in church activities is long. While most church members are careless or ignorant about new converts especially when they came to the church through public campaign or crusade, it become difficult for old members to integrate them in Church service. The concept of integrating new members seems to be neglected. The context Acts 2:42 and 6:1, and the role played by Barnabas in integrating Paul (Acts 9:26, 27) should be understood by all

⁶⁵Bryson M. Katele, "Fellowship: Its Meaning-and Its Demand," *Ministry*, June 2003, 24-27.

members. Member Retention is membership integration. It is the greatest means by which the church can keep people together to boost growth at all levels of the church.

Lack of Nurturing Program

The entire 185 respondents representing 100% complained about lack of nurturing program for new converts. The weekly programs do not last and are unattractive. The programs offer less spiritual lessons. The success or failure of the new converts to these groups depends on how rich or poor the church's nurturing programs are. It is also observed that most of the services, especially those of rural areas are just like routine without varieties of programs. In rural areas, Sunday Bible studies service, midweek prayer, and Friday vesper services are no longer observed.

Lifestyle of Old Members

According to the responses of the questionnaires, all the 185 respondents constitute 100% mentioned that the lifestyle of old members' affect retaining new members. Even though the church has a clear and laudable doctrine, but there is also a difference between theory and practice in the church. A new convert confessed that some Adventists are hypocrites, i.e., they pretend to be good, but when you join them, it is then that you will know and see their actual character. The people that were initially trusted or admitted lose confidence in the church members and they will leave the church.

Lack of Visitation

All humans are social beings, they need interaction, and when new converts are deserted by members of their new church who could not meet their social needs, they

tend to look for friends outside to keep them company. In an attempt to do so, they could be prey to their former friends who could lure them into their former lifestyle. The entire respondents complain of lack of visitation in the churches, which is one of the major causes of poor membership retention in the district. There is need to determine means of visiting both the new and the old members so that the church can meet their needs. The pastor and elders should visit church members when hospitalized, should be ready to share their joy and sorrows, and befriending and encouraging them so that they can build confidence with one another.

Family and Other Religious Bodies

Some of the parents and family members who are members of the other religions and denominations force many of the new converts to deny their faith. Some parents even threaten especially the youth that they will lose their education if they fail to stop. Even some grown-up newly baptized members are at times threatened by their sons and daughters to reject their new faith, of which they will stop caring for them if not rejected.

Such people put pressure on these newly baptize members, thus teasing and mocking them so much that many of them cannot bear it anymore and therefore stop attending church. All the 185 respondents admitted this fact.

Post Baptismal Classes

Pastor's Bible class, which noted for bible studies should include newly baptized members. The content of Jesus commission in Matthew 28:19-20 indicates that baptism is not the end of the work for new convert's person. After baptism, teaching is required to

be continued. There is a need to find means of teaching both new and old members to strengthen their faith in the Christ and the church. All the respondents accepted the fact that lack of post baptismal class is one of the factors accounting for the low of membership retention in the District.

Positive Effects on Membership Retention to the Church

The essentiality of membership retention in any religion in our world today cannot be overemphasized. The merits of membership retention are an issue of great concern as that is from the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church down to the local level. Membership retention has become essential because it keeps the religion and faith going and surviving over centuries.

The church depends on her membership for many things. It is the members who return tithe and offerings to enable any projects in the church to be carried on, and also salaries paid to workers of the church come from the members. New converts with special qualification also help in our institutions like schools and hospitals which the church offers to the communities. When the church is not able to maintain or retain her members, no activity in the church can function properly, and the entire church will collapse.

Finally, the mission of the church is to preach the word to all people, baptizing and preparing them for the soon coming of Jesus Christ. If all members leave the church, it means the mission of the church has not been fulfilled; hence there is the need to find ways and means of recalling them to the church. The subsequent chapter will address programs, implementations, and evaluations of the project

Focus Group Discussion Data Representation

Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research. Data was collected, transcribed, and coded in a focus group discussion form. Member check was used to ensure trustworthiness of the findings. I used an iterative process where I had to send my transcriptions to the participants to confirm the veracity of information. And participants clarified some of the information. Data files were organized in one folder. The folder consisted of all in-depth views with the participants and the group participants are labelled GP.

Member Retention in the District

In this section I will present my findings from the views of the focus group. The district has contribution to the increment and decrement in membership as well as the retention of the new converts and other members. There are two themes that emerged from membership retention by the district leadership namely: (a) positive member retention practices and (b) unhealthy member retention practices. There are six categories that emerged from positive member retention practices of the district. These categories include: (a) follow-up of baptismal candidates and new members, (b) be-friending new members, and (c) Involvement of new members in church activities. The categories for unhealthy member retention practices were: (a) lack or irregular visits and (b) lack or low of new members' involvement in church activities.

Positive Member Retention Practices

Follow-up. Following-up on new members create a relationship that further enhance the member's retention in the church. As noted by the participants, "The district do make follow up after baptism, they may spend few days may be a week or two as follow up" GP 1. The relationship that builds from follow-up contribute to the new membership willingness to stay in the church. This idea of follow-up and relationship creation goes back to one of the main methods used to help retain members. In Jesus' method of relationship and follow-ups with his disciples, White has noted that

these disciples had been for some time associated with Jesus in active labor. John and James, Andrew and Peter, with Philip, Nathanael, and Matthew, had been more closely connected with Him than the others, and had witnessed more of His miracles. Peter, James, and John stood in still nearer relationship to Him. They were almost constantly with Him, witnessing His miracles, and hearing His words. John pressed into still closer intimacy with Jesus, so that he is distinguished as the one whom Jesus loved.⁶⁶

"There should be a level of follow up at least for six months," GP 2 emphasized to buttress the fact for the district to have such an intentional strategy to make sure that all new members that join the church are retained.

Be-friending. Taking new members as friends in the church is a way for the older members to disciple the new members. The new members learn from the older ones and thereby creating rapport and learning experiences. A group participant, GP3, highlights that "old members should make friends with the new converts to build cordiality." Another, GP 4, notes that "the lay teams normally come from towns outside the district that makes it very difficult for the new converts to trace these new friends." The GP 3

⁶⁶Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Silver Spring, MD: Review & Herald, 1990), 159.

recommends for the district to have a lay team that emanates with the membership within the district so that the new members can be-friend them and will be able to see and relate to them always. The lay team can disciple the new member the Jesus way as T. Rainer and E. Geiger posit, “If anyone knows discipleship it is Jesus. His method of discipleship was simple. Jesus drew twelve men to Himself, trained them, and unleashed the movement of the gospel through them.”⁶⁷

Involvement. When new members join the membership of the church, they play a significant role with their giftedness for the edification of the church as well as advancing the mission of the gospel. The Apostle Paul notes in Eph 4:12 that God’s gifts on members are to be used to prepare God’s people for His service and mission. As Thom Rainer has indicated, “If a member does not become meaningfully involved in some type of ministry in the church, his or her dropout chances increase dramatically.”⁶⁸ The integration of new members helps greatly to retain them in the church. The new members have a sense of belongingness and feel at home. The lack of proper integration of the new member will affect their retention in the church. One group participant (GP 5) notes as displeasure that “new members are not trained in the various departments in the church.

⁶⁷T. Rainer and E. Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2011), 160.

⁶⁸Thom Rainer, “Four Principles for Membership Retention: Closing the Back Door with a Four-legged Stool,” (July, 2007), para. 7, accessed June 4, 2016, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/thom-rainer-four-principles-membership-retention.html>

They are not involved in church activities. How do you expect them to stay? They do not feel at home in the church.” Also, GP 7 highlights that “There should be a proper integration of new converts into the church and other departmental activities.”

Unhealthy Member Retention Practices

Lack or irregular visits. When the district and older church members desist from visiting new members, it affects the retention of the new member into church membership. As GP 6 postulated, “We don’t visit the new converts, and that affects their coming to church and into membership. The lay team should keep visiting the new converts so they can continue to create the rapport.” Though GP 6 notes that barrier that comes as a result of culture and individual differences, the district needs to be intentional in visiting the new members. J. A. Solomon (2000) echoes this thought: “Through a willingness to work within culture, we can, like Paul, be all things to all people so as to win the un churchd to Christ and to the power of the gospel.”⁶⁹

Lack or low of new members’ involvement. The district should involve the new members in the programs and activities of the church. The participants denounced the low or no involvement of the new members. For example, GP 8 posits that “new converts are not involved in the church activities.” This has affected the retention of the new members and the district should do something to avert losing more new members. Another, GP 9 emphasizes that “there should be vibrant programs and new members should be involved as we don’t see that happening in the churches.” White has noted that

⁶⁹J. A. Solomon, “Worship and Praise,” *Ministry*, February 2000, 19.

when new converts or members are involved in church programs, it builds their spiritual development.

When souls are converted, set them to work at once. And as they labor according to their ability, they will grow stronger. It is by meeting opposing influences that we become confirmed in the faith. As the light shines into their hearts, let them diffuse its rays. Teach the newly converted that they are to enter into fellowship with Christ, to be His witnesses, and to make Him known unto the world.⁷⁰

Summary

This chapter dealt with the local setting. It looked into the challenges that confronted Ahodwo district in terms of poor retention and how it affects church growth. The idea came as a result of questionnaire and purposive group of discussion that were conducted in Ahodwo district.

⁷⁰White, *Evangelism*, 355-356.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

Introduction

The main focus of this chapter is to develop a strategy to train church leaders and lay persons to help address the challenges of membership retention in Ahodwo District of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. With respect to responses to the questionnaires that were administered and based on personal observations, the following programs were designed and implemented to solve the problem of low membership retention in the Ahodwo district of the SDA Church.

Program Objectives

The following objectives were aimed to be achieved at the end of the program.

1. To make the church leadership aware of the prevalence of low membership retention in the District and the need to make a conscious effort to deal with it.
2. To train and educate the church membership on Christian behavior and its effects on retention.
3. To challenge new converts to commit themselves to the God's word and work in order to improve their spiritual growth.
4. To educate church leadership on proper membership retention methods.

Program Design, Preparation, and Implementation

The primary purpose of the church is to evangelize and make disciples for Christ. Ahodwo District of Seventh-day Adventist Church has desire and willingness to sacrifice their resources and their given time to conduct public evangelism, to win souls for Christ. They establish new churches, companies, and Sabbath school branches as well. After conducting the evangelism, there is the need to nurture and retain members both old and new. The challenge in this part of West Africa is the duty of one shepherd to many churches. Ghana which Ashanti South Conference is inclusive is falling further behind in preparation of church leaders for number of new churches which are being established. It therefore important to train more leaders. According to Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong General Secretary Christian Council Ghana there are many churches coming out in Ghana outside the main denomination that has raised spiritual confusion. In 2014 there were more than 10000 churches in Ghana with inexperienced pastors.⁷¹ There are more than 500 ministry training institutions, yet they continue to plea for more leaders.⁷² Moreover, every year, the church elects new officers into the office to take care of new believers without proper training on membership retention. These leaders do their possible best, but it is not adequately coordinated

⁷¹Kwabena Opuni-Frimpong, "Too Many Churches in Ghana," accessed 7 September 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/too-many-churches-in-ghana>

⁷²Edger J. Elliston, "Desiring Education Missiology," *An International Review* 12, no. 20 (1988): 205

Program Design

Membership retention is of great importance since it keeps the church growing. Through training, the church leaders help in nurturing, visiting, and encouraging their new converts to stay in the church. A program was designed to train leaders and members on how to retrain new converts. The program has one session lasting for five days, 19th-23rd October 2016. The theme for the workshop was “Let Us Rise and Build.”

Participants were drawn from the ten churches in Ahodwo District. Ten members were selected from organized churches and five from company churches. The compositions from the organized churches are three Elders, The Secretary, Personal Ministries Leader, Personal Ministries Secretary, Adventist Men Organization Leader, Women Ministries Leader, and stewardship leader. The company churches also provided one church leader, Personal Ministries Leader, Personal Ministries Secretary. The District Elder, The District Personal Ministries Leader, The District Adventist Men Organization Leader, District Secretary, and District Stewardship Leader were to represent the district. The total number of participants were sixty-seven. The workshops were held at Ahodwo Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The workshop was sponsored by partly from annual district budget and a special donation from individual church members. The facilitators for the were: Pastor James Opoku Addai, Pastor Stephen Kofi Anokye, Miss Vivian Love Owusu, Pastor Newman Osaforo Aduamankwaa, Pastor Frank Duah, Pastor Isaac Adjei-Mensah.

The Objectives of the Workshop

1. To educate leaders on strategies of retaining new converts

2. To train leaders on how to be effective in assisting the district pastor in his duties.
3. To educate the leaders of their role and function in the church as leaders.
4. To assist the participants in drawing the church program.
5. To encourage the participants to effectively work so that members derive maximum satisfaction from the service they receive from them.

The participants were accommodated at the venue for the period of the workshop.

The Ahodwo Church premises was used as a lecture hall for the workshop. The participants were accommodated at the Ahodwo/Adieboba J.H.S. and Primary School. All these facilities were free of charge, except utility and water bills were footed by the district. The method to be used in delivery include lecture, group discussion, role-play, and field practice.

Materials Given to Enhance Teaching and Learning

- a) Bible
- b) A4 sheets
- c) Exercise books for notes by the participants
- d) Folders with pen, pencils, and eraser.
- e) Chalkboard duster and wooden pointer
- f) Projector, pointer.
- g) Wooden pointer

The Activities of the Workshop Include the Following

- a. Introduction
 - Greetings
 - Devotion
 - Season of Prayer
- b. Main Activities
 - Lecture/Presentation by Resource Person,
 - Group Discussions, and Discussion of Group Report
- c. Conclusion
 - There was a season of prayer at the end of program

At the End of the Workshop, Participants Were Expected to Gain the Following

- a) Understand their role as leaders.
- b) Be able to visit church members.
- c) Acquire practical communication skills.
- d) Develop an excellent interpersonal relationship skill.
- e) Develop practical nurturing skills.
- f) Acquire skills in sermon preparation.
- g) Learn effective management and better-organized program.
- h) Appreciate and understand effective follow-up program.
- i) Develop an interest in caring for new converts.

Table 10. Cost Estimate of Five-Day Training Workshop

ACTIVITIES	COST GHC	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF DAYS	TOTAL
Breakfast	4.00	75	5	1500
Dinner	4.00	75	5	15900
Water	7.00			700
Pre-workshop	200			200
P.A system	200			200
Utility Bill	60			60
Allowance for Resource				600
A4 Sheets	80			80
Exercise Books				250
Folders, Pen, Pencil eraser				
Chalk				
Duster	2.5			2.5
Wooden Pointer				

Topics for the Workshop

- 1) How to influence and invite others to Christ- Pastor James Opoku Addai
- 2) Effective visitation and its importance in member retention- Pastor Isaac
Adjei-Mensah

- 3) Follow-up activities and its importance in establishing new converts in the church- Pastor Osaforo-Aduamankwaa Newman
- 4) Integration of new converts into the church- Pastor Isaac Adjei-Mensah
- 5) Maturing in the Adventist faith- Pastor Stephen Kofi Anokye
- 6) Effective communication and building effective communication relationship- Miss Vivian Love Owusu
- 7) Causes of membership loss in the church- Pastor Stephen Kofi Anokye
- 8) How to plan and lead worship service- Pastor Frank Duah
- 9) How to develop an interest in Bible Studies and Prayer- Pastor James Opoku Addai
- 10) How to organize an effective nurturing program in the church- Pastor Osaforo-Aduamankwaa Newman
- 11) Preparation of sermon and time management- Pastor Frank Duah

Facilitators

- a) Pastor Opoku Addai James, MA Religious Studies, University of Cape Coast
- b) Pastor Stephen Kofi Anokye, MA Leadership, Adventist University of Africa
- c) Pastor Newman Osaforo-Aduamankwaa, MA Missions, Adventist University of Africa
- d) Pastor Frank Duah, PGD Babcock University, Nigeria
- e) Pastor Isaac Adjei-Mensah, BA Theology, Griggs University, Maryland USA
- f) Miss Owusu Vivian Love, MA Guidance and Counseling, University of Cape Coast

Daily Program

Wednesday 19th October,2016

3:00pm –Arrival

3:00pm-5:00pm Registration

5:00pm-5:45pm Supper

6:00pm-7:00pm Welcome and Introduction

7:00pm-8:30pm Season of Prayer

Thursday 20th October,2016

4:45am-5:00am Alone with God

5:00am-6:00am Sabbath School Lesson Study

6:00am-7:00am Wash down

7:00am-8:00am Breakfast

8:00am-9:00am Devotion

9:00am-11:00am Lecture I: How to Influence and Invite Others to Christ

11:00am-11:30am Break

11:00am-1:30pm Lecture ii: Effective Visitation and its Importance in

Membership Retention

1:30pm-2:00pm Break

2:00pm-4:00pm Lecture iii: Follow-up activities and Its Importance in

Establishing New Converts in the Church

4:00pm-6:30pm Break and Supper

6:30pm-7:15pm Devotion

7:15pm-8:00pm Group Discussion

8:00pm-8:30 Submission of group report

8:30pm-9:00pm Season of Prayer

Friday 21st October,2016

4:45am-5:00am Alone with God

5:00am-6:00am Sabbath School Lesson Study

6:00am-7:00am Wash down

7:00am-8:00am Breakfast

8:00am-9:00am Devotion

9:00am-11:00am Lecture IV: Introduction of the new converts into the church

11:00am-11:30am Break

2:00pm-4:00pm Lecture VI: How to plan and lead church service (worship
service)

4:00pm-6:00pm Sabbath Preparation and Supper

6:00pm-7:00pm Vesper service

7:00pm-7:30pm Group Discussion

7:30pm-8:00pm Submission of Group Report

8:00pm-8:20pm Season of Prayer

SATURDAY 22ND OCTOBER, 2016

5:15am-5:30am Alone with God

5:30am-6:30am Devotion

6:30am-8:30am Wash down/Breakfast

8:30am-12:30pm Worship

12:30pm-2:30pm Break and Lunch

2:30pm-4:30pm Lecture VII: Effective Communication in Building Community

relationship

4:30pm-5:30pm Vesper Services

5:30pm-6:30pm Supper

6:30pm-8:30pm Lecture VIII: Causes of Membership Loss in the Church

8:30pm-9:00pm Group Discussion

9:00pm-9:30pm Submission of group report

9:30pm-9:40pm Prayer

SUNDAY 23RD OCTOBER, 2016

4:45am-5:00am Alone with God

5:00am-6:00am Sabbath School Lesson Study

6:00am-7:00am Wash down

7:00am-8:00am Breakfast

8:00am-10:00am Lectures IX: How to develop interest in Bible Studies and

Prayer

10:00am-10:30am Break

10:30am-12:30am Lecture X: How to Organize Effective Nurturing Program

12:30pm-1:00pm Break

1:00pm-3:00pm Lecture XI: Preparation of Sermon and Time management

3:00pm-3:30pm Group discussion

3:30pm-4:00pm Consecration Service

4:00pm-4:45pm lunch

4:50pm Departure

After the workshop, the participants became interested in the program for acquiring such skills to be used in the Lord's Vineyard. They developed team spirit and were poised for God's work. They were committed to using their different gifts and abilities to work in harmony and unity to fulfill the purpose of the church. Their commitment to deep spiritual and strong moral character is a necessary attribute of Christian Leadership. This must be a continual process whereby the elders make time each day for bible study, meditation, and prayer. As Christians, you cannot hope to have the prayer to lead your people in God's way unless you commit to daily devotions.

Strategies to Retain Both New and Old Members in the Church After the Workshop

As Jesus put it in the great commission in Matt 28:18-20, all His followers be ensured that the church growth is their priority. Because of this, strategies need to be developed to retain members in the church. Pastors should create awareness of members lost from the church and educate the church on how to prevent it.

Post Baptismal Class

Post baptismal class should be organized for educating new converts in doctrines of the church. Also, involve them with someone who is more experienced in order to form missionary couples to mentor the new converts. This companionship will be his or her spiritual guardian to care, encourage, and engage him or her in the activities of the

church. God is waiting for members to become channels through which the current of life shall flow to the world that many be converted.⁷³

Proper Integration of New Converts

After Baptism, the church should integrate new converts into the church community. The new converts should be helped to identify their spiritual gifts and through that assign them to the various ministries in the church. Again, they should be assigned Sabbath School Classes or Small Groups that will help integrate them. It is the responsibility of the unit or Small Group where the newly converted people will participate in developing friendship, pray with him or her—immediately if he or she misses church meetings, showing him or her that his or her absence was felt in the church. They should also help to solve some of their problems and prepare them to testify for Christ and of win souls for His kingdom. They should not be left out to feel isolated, instead make sure the new converts are recognized appreciated and shake hands during and after worship service.

Another way to retain new converts is proper nurturing. Nurture flows from the heart of loving God who desire to seek those who just join the faith grow in Christ. He is a dedicated physician who tenderly cares for his patient. He nurses each one to health. He applies the healing balm until they are whole (Jer 8:22).⁷⁴ God is a loving parent who

⁷³White, *Christian Service*, 21.

⁷⁴James A Cress, “New Members Need,” *Ministry*, December 1993, 27.

instructs, guides, corrects, and disciplines his children. Even if they fail, He never gives up (Isa 49:1).

After baptism, the new converts are spiritual infants in the church. There should be an intensive nurturing by both the Pastor and Elders of the church. The rapid evangelism growth in Acts 2 necessitated a carefully thought through process of nurture to enable them, thus the new believers, to become strong disciples. New believers are just like newborn babies that a lot of time, energy, and care. Failure to provide for their needs implies spiritual child-abuse. Assign all new members a caring spiritual guardian who will patiently nurture their growth.⁷⁵ Someone will be in charge of taking care of the new converts with proper monitoring and nurturing. The pastor and elders should spend much time after baptism to nurture spiritual babies. They must be thought how to labor for the master. They must be trained, disciplined and guide in the method of winning souls for Christ. The truth must be presented as it is in Jesus. “Line upon line, precept upon precept here little there little.”⁷⁶ Bible studies should be paramount to the new converts as they become conversant with Scriptures.

Intensive Visitation

It appears that all human beings are socially inclined. They need love and care. When Leaders of the church visit members most notably the new converts, they feel loved and valued. Their relationship becomes strong, and their social needs are met. If

⁷⁵Cress, “You Can’t Teach,” 15-17.

⁷⁶Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1915), 336.

not, they leave and look for friends outside the church for companionship which have them into their former lifestyle. For the church to retain the converts intensive visitation should be initiated. This could be done through proper pastoral, elder, and team members visitation.

The Pastors should consider every Pastor's visit as a divine opportunity to communicate God's love through our time, presence, attention, and care. It is essential that when we leave their homes, we have left more of God's character and promises rather than our own wisdom and thought in their minds and hearts.⁷⁷ The pastor should let the church members feel their presence in their homes, hospitals, and even in their workplace.

God has given pastors the responsibility of shepherding His flocks. Paul says in Acts 20:28 that "keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer. Be shepherd of the church of God which he bought with His own blood." Peter echoes this in 1 Pet 5:1-3 that "to the elders among you I appeal as fellow elders and witness of Christ's suffering who also will share the glory to be revealed. Be shepherd of the God flock that is under your love and care, watching over are willing as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonesty gain, but eager to serve."⁷⁸

Such a relationship provides a climate where an expectation of receiving care during a crisis is maintained. It will also help the pastor to win the heart of the new convert and support the pastor to win the heart of the new convert and assist the pastor to

⁷⁷Arrais, *Wanted A Good Pastor*, 79.

⁷⁸Ibid., 80.

win the heart of the new convert and help them have confidence and trust in the church, the Pastor and Lord.

The new convert may be doctrinally convinced but not socially integrated into the church. Although they have been baptized, they feel they are still outsiders. They still feel uncomfortable with the new group of people. These people have to be invited to church social events and introduce their children to other proponents.⁷⁹

The pastor should live a life of Services and Sacrifice. He should sacrifice part of his time to visit both old and new members. The pastor's presence, care, and visit are very essential to the ministry. Moreover, it would be appropriate for the pastor as a caring person to reach out even without an invitation. If the pastor visits regularly, he is more likely to hear about the crises, illness and know the needs, and attend to it. Regular visitation allows the pastor to establish a caring relation.

New members are in great need of direct and personal care frequently visit may necessary to help disciple them. Time spent with them will not be wasted.⁸⁰ Every effort should be made to educate the new converts. The work of the apostles of Christ was to educate and train men and women to publish the good tidings of the crucified and risen Saviour. Anybody converted to the gospel ministry is under the obligation to the Lord Jesus, to teach others the way of salvation.⁸¹ The Pastor, laity, and

⁷⁹Finley, "Evangelism's Big Picture," 9-11.

⁸⁰Arrais, *Wanted A Good Pastor*, 81.

⁸¹Ellen G. White, "The Necessity of Labor", *Review and Herald*, March 13, 1888

especially the elders should put away selfishness and spend precious time with the new converts and teach them doctrinally.

Involvement of the New Converts

Elders need to involve the new members into church activities for them to grow and mature in their Christian experience. New Converts are to be involved in Youth events, Bible Study group, social program, Sabbath Service, Community Service projects, Outreach, and Witnessing activities. One should remember that new members are automatically to involve themselves in these programs.⁸² Once one recognizes the challenges they face, he or she should assist with their relief. They should not be ignored or blamed for their shortcomings instead give them credit that will help them grow in Christian life.

Evaluation

Pre-program

For the researcher to evaluate the program, a duly district leadership meeting was called. The church leaders were invited from the various churches within the district to a workshop from 19th to 23rd October 2016 to know how best and effective each church can help to retain the members. Due to the consciousness of the leaders at the workshop ten (10) month down the line 16th August 2017 at District camp meeting, another survey was conducted in all the churches. This time around, there was a significant improvement

⁸²Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association, *Minister's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1994), 110.

in the membership. Many members have rekindled their faith due to revival, intensive visitation, proper follow-up and other appropriate programmes. The new converts baptized within this period; about 93% were still in the church.

Table 11. Improvement of the Churches

Churches	Pre Project Survey Membership	Post Project Survey Membership	Baptism For The Period	Baptism Remains	Percentage
AHODWO	184	218	20	19	95%
TREDE	95	120	17	17	100%
SOKOBAN	106	115	8	8	100%
AMPAYOO	40	52	7	6	86%
DABAN	54	61	7	7	100%
MPATASIE	40	60	6	5	83%
KONKORI	15	18	2	2	100%
KWANWOMA	25	40	4	3	75%
AFRANCHO-ODUMASI	12	15	2	2	100%
AMPABAME	40	51	8	6	75%
TOTAL	611	750	81	75	93%

From the table above, one can deduce that the strategy that the researcher put in membership was increased from 611 to 750 in terms of percentage it was 23%, which is commendable. For church to grow in qualitative and quantitative there should be post baptismal class to educate and indoctrinate the new converts. The new converts needed to be nurtured and integrated into various ministries for them to use their spiritual gifts. The members should not forget to change their negative lifestyle and build proper

relationships. Pastors, elders and laity should inculcate the habit intensive visitation to help the church grow and retain the members.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study dealt with the issue of church membership retention in Ahodwo District situated in Ashanti region, Ghana. The first chapter of the study addressed the need for the church to retain its members. There are many challenges which hold back members from holding to the faith. The low rate of follow-up activities, lack of intensive visitation, lack of proper nurturing and many others. The primary purpose of the researcher was to find out the causes of poor retention that lead to loss of church members. The second chapter examined some theoretical foundations of membership loss and retention. Such foundations include, the Bible, which is the source knowledge and widely reviewed before other writers and Ellen G. White, a renowned religious writer, and other theories on the retention of church members.

The third chapter described the local setting and investigated the reason for the poor membership retention and how it affects the church growth. The ideas came about as results of questionnaires and interviews conducted in Ahodwo district from these; the researcher identified the need to conduct a workshop for the church leaders.

The fourth chapter was based on the development of a training program for church leaders based on the data from the survey. A detailed training program was

designed, and five ministers were invited to train church leaders. After the program development, there was implementation and evaluation.

God ordained membership retention in the Bible, notably in the Old Testament God choose Israelites (Exod 19: 6) and New Testament Jesus affirms it in the great commission that the disciples could be added unto the fold (John 15: 16). However, it has never been perfect even through the early church until today. Although it was not with the early Seventh-day Adventists yet membership retention has become a global problem in the church.

According to Angel Oliver of Adventist News Network, for the past 50 years the church lost 1 in 3 new converts. The first global summit of the Seventh-day Adventist focused on membership retention.⁸³ This means that for every three individuals that accept the three angels' message, one leaves the church. There is need for all Adventists at all levels of the church to contribute towards winning and keeping souls for Christ. Ministers are called to teach, preach, visit, and encourage members.

The need to educate old members in all local churches and districts on how to help new converts to be established in the faith cannot be overemphasized. New converts should be taught and be involved in soul-winning activities and keeping so that the work can be accomplished. The neglect of nurturing activities in many churches has given rise to membership loss as many new converts leave church soon after baptism. The leaders at all levels should make it paramount to train old members on nurturing new converts and visiting both old and new members in the church. Pastors/elders should develop strategies

⁸³Oliver, "First Retention Summit," para. 2-5.

of visiting every member at least twice a week in such places as Ahodwo district. Poor quality of weekly workshop program, social interactions. Lack of integration of new converts among others leads to the loss of new converts.

Conclusion

In as much there is an increase in the yearly membership recorded at Ahodwo district in Ashanti South Ghana Conference. This paper can also help dealt with the causes of low retention and effective means to retain both old and new members in the church. This paper has also revealed that membership loss in Ahodwo district is due to: lack of visitation, lack of post-baptism pastor's Bible class, and lack of follow-up, lack of effective nurturing, negative lifestyle of the old members, negative influence of the old friends and family, and negative influence of other religious groups. However, the Ahodwo district address all these challenges and retain its members. This can be done through training of elders and lay-people to assist the minister. The workshop that was organized by researcher at Ahodwo district for the elders and laity addressing strategies for effective membership retention

Recommendations

For further studies, one could carry research on nurturing and its effects on membership retention. The pastors and elders must team up for visitation. Church elders need continuous training to avoid poor program planning. Church members should learn proper ways of integration and appropriate follow-up methods to enhance post-baptismal classes.

Furthermore, proper relationship and integration are needed. To achieve effective nurturing and retention in the Church, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. Pastor's Bible class should be organized in every Church to improve Bible Studies
2. Proper Follow-up. After baptizing the new converts into the Church, one or two people should be left behind to take care of the Church.
3. Intensive visitation. The Pastor and the Elders must team-up to visit members regularly. They should know their people and their people should know them.
4. Proper fellowship will bring intimate union among the believers that would develop a kind of brotherhood the new converts and the Church.
5. Proper integration of the new converts. After baptism, the Church should help identify their spiritual gifts and invited them to join various ministries.
6. Proper nurturing. Post baptismal class should be organized for the new converts to help increase their knowledge in the doctrine.
7. Proper relationship. There should be an adequately assigned into small groups or units where they will participate in developing a friendship.
8. The Church leaders should be trained to take care of the Church
9. Proper and exciting programs should be organized to help the Church grow.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INVITATION LETTER

Dear.....

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A WORKSHOP

The district pastor and the district executive committee held on 2nd October, 2016, voted that there will be a special workshop Church on membership retention from 19th – 23rd October, 2016. The venue for the Workshop is Ahodwo SDA Church premises. The following Church leaders are expected to be in attendance

For organized churches

- 3 Church elders
- Church secretary
- Personal ministry leader
- Personal ministry secretary
- Women ministry leader
- Adventist men leader
- Stewardship leader

For each company church

- Church leader
- Church clerk
- Personal ministry leader

The following leaders are to represent the district

- The district elder
- District secretary
- District Personal ministry leader
- District Personal ministry secretary
- District Women ministry leader
- District Adventist men leader
- District Stewardship leader

Thank you for your cooperation I hope to meet you at this special workshop.

Yours in his service

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adjei-Mensah Isaac', is placed over a light blue rectangular background.

Pastor Adjei-Mensah Isaac
(District Pastor)

PERMISSION LETTER

P. O. Box 28
Bekwai - Ashanti
Ghana

5th September, 2016.

Dear in Christ,

PERMISSION TO HOLD RESEARCH AND TRAINING WORKSHOP AT AHODWO
DISTRICT

I write to seek permission from Ashanti South Ghana Conference of Seventh-day Adventist church to hold research and training workshop at Ahodwo district.

The training workshop on church membership retention for elders, departmental leaders and laity will take place at Ahodwo church premises. The date set for the workshop will be 19th October 2016 to 23rd October 2016. The five-day workshop will be intensive and for that matter a place has been secured for the participants.

I am counting on leadership of conference and hope to get a favorable response. Thank you.

Sincerely



Pastor Isaac Adjei- Mensah
(District Pastor Ahodwo)

Cc Executive Secretary
Treasurer
Ahodwo Church Board.



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

ASHANTI SOUTH GHANA CONFERENCE (ASSG)

Post Office Box 28, Bekwai-Ashanti

Email:
asgc.info.2014@gmail.com

Bankers:
Agricultural Development Bank, Zenith Bank

7th September 2016.

PR. ISAAC ADJEI-MENSAH
ASHANTI SOUTH GHANA CONFERENCE
POST OFFICE BOX 28
BEKWAI-ASHANTI

Dear Pastor,

PERMITTED TO CONDUCT A STUDY RESEARCH AND TRAINING WORKSHOP

With reference to your permission letter dated 5th September 2016 to conduct a study research on Membership Retention and Training Workshop at Ahodwo Central Church in Ahodwo District.

Since your study research topic is a major concern of the church, you are being permitted to conduct such research and training workshop as scheduled for 19th – 23rd October 2016 at Ahodwo Central SDA Church in Ahodwo District.

God be with you in your study research.

Yours faithfully,

.....
PR EVANS AMPONSAH-GYAN
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, ASSG BEKWAI
0595769694

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent: This questionnaire is intended to guide the researcher to plan and develop training materials that will help the local church leaders serve the needs of church better and effectively in terms of church membership retention. the questionnaire is for member in Ahodwo district only.

1 What is your age group?

15=24[] 25=34[] 35=44[] 45=54[] 55=64[] 65 and above []

2 Your occupation?

Student [] Apprentice [] Teacher [] Trader [] Farmer [] Others []

3 What is your sex? Male [] Female []

4 Are you an Adventist? Yes [] No []

5 How long have you been in Adventist Church?

1=10years [] 11=20yeras [] 21=30years []

6 Are you holding any office in the church? Yes [] No []

7 What is the frequency of baptism in your church?

Monthly [] Quarterly [] As the need arise []

8 What duration do your church follow up after baptism?

1month [] 2months [] 3months [] Above 4months[]

9 How many times do your Pastor or Elder visit the new members?

Daily [] Weekly [] Monthly [] Not at all []

10 Does your church have fellowship with the new members?

Yes [] No []

11 What duration does your fellowship?

Weekly [] Monthly [] Quarterly [] Not at all []

12 Does your church effectively nurture the new converts after baptism?

Yes [] No []

13 If Yes the duration of Nurturing?

less than 1Month [] 2months [] 3-6months [] Uncertain []

14 Do you think the new converts should be involved in the Pastor's Bible class?

Yes [] No [] Uncertain []

15 Are you aware of the number of new converts in your church from last year?

Yes [] No []

16 What ratio of new converts do you think remains in your church after baptism?

1:10 [] 2:10 [] 3:10 [] 4:10 [] Uncertain []

17 Do you think the lifestyle of old members have negative influence on the membership retention?

Yes [] No []

18 Do family and other religious bodies have influence membership loss in your church? Yes [] No [] Uncertain []

19 Do you think poor membership retention affects the progress of your church?

Yes [] No [] Uncertain []

20 If yes which of the following do you think will help this loss of membership.

Proper follow up activities [] effective visitation [] Post Baptismal
Pastor's Bible class [] Effective nurturing [] educating the old members of
their lifestyle [] involving or integrating the new convert into church activities []
proper fellowship with the new converts []

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Does the District have follow-ups after baptizing new converts?
2. How many weeks or months does the District use for follow – ups?
3. Does the District visit the new converts?
4. Does the District have a regular time for visitation?
5. What can the district do to prevent drop out in the district?
6. What can the district do to retain the new converts in the churches in the district?
7. What can the Elders do to help the new converts to remain in the Church?
8. Is there a way that members can do to avoid low membership retention?
9. Do you think that poor membership retention affects the progress of the Church?
10. How does lack of integration of new converts affects membership retention?
11. What the Church is not doing to prevent low membership retention?

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VITA

Personal Identification:

Name:	Adjei-Mensah, Isaac
Date of birth:	October 21, 1967
Home Town:	Bipoa, Ashanti Ghana
Marital Status:	Married
Wife	Owusu Vivian Love

Education

Adventist University of Africa Babcock, Nigeria: Candidate	Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology,
GRIGGS University:	Bachelor of Arts, Theology, 1999
Kumasi Workers College	A' Level Certificate, 1991
Bekwai SDA Secondary School	O' Level Certificate, 1988

Work Experience

Associate District Pastor	Amansie West District 1999 – 2001
District Pastor	Adubia, Juaben, Kuntense, 2002 - 2014
Conference Director	Stewardship, 2014

