

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A PROGRAM FOR CHURCH GROWTH IN NKETA-EMGANWINI DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

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Nketa-Emganwini church district was experiencing a problem of low growth rate because its membership was not committed to the church and its mission as most of them had joined the church instead of belonging to it. This church district depended solely on public evangelistic meetings for soul winning. Preachers were the only active participants in these programs and the attendees were mostly church members. There was minimal fellowshiping.

The Bible, Ellen G. White's writings and contemporary literature were reviewed in relation to church growth with an objective of discovering causes of its decline and solutions to that. Questionnaires completed by the surveyed group were scrutinized. All these processes led to the development of a remedial program to alleviate the problem of a declining growth rate. It covered six months starting from July 2010. It focused on the formation of bonding groups that would result in parishioners belonging to the church and being committed to its mission.

Six months after the remedial program had been designed and implemented Nketa-Emganwini church district started realizing baptisms as a result of the activities of bonding groups. There was a decrease in the number of people that were apostatizing. Six hundred and twenty bonding groups (620) had been formed. Some of these groups got involved in witnessing for Christ programs on a weekly basis while others started Bible study groups targeting their unbelieving friends. Quite a number of them began assisting the needy by providing them with material support. As a result the district baptized five hundred and fifty (550) people in the year 2012.

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NKETA-EMGANWINI DISTRICT,
ZIMBABWE

A project
presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Leadership

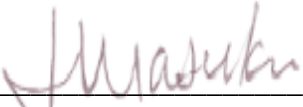
by
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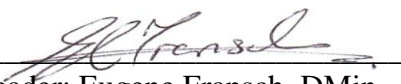
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Date: January 2015

Dedicated to Nketa-Emganwini District Seventh-day

Adventist Churches and the West Zimbabwe Conference Administrators

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Nketa-Emganwini church district is one of the forty five church districts in West Zimbabwe Conference under Zimbabwe Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Zimbabwe. It is in the city of Bulawayo. It covers two high density suburbs of Nketa and Emganwini. The national statistics office in Bulawayo reports that as at March 2010 the total population for Nketa and Emganwini high density suburbs is one hundred and fifty eight thousand one hundred and thirty two (158132)¹. This church district was established in 1994 with only one organized church namely Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist church. According to the West Zimbabwe Conference secretariat department, the names of the churches which are now part of this church district and the dates on which they were organized are as follows:

1. Nketa 8 was organized in June 1994
2. Nketa 9 was organized in September 1999
3. Emganwini Main was organized in June 2000
4. Maranatha was organized in December 2005
5. Emganwini West was organized in April 2010

Whereas Nketa-Emganwini church district was organizing churches after every five years, statistical records indicate that for the five year period (2006 – 2010) this

¹ National Statistics Office, Zimbabwe 2010.

church district realized a 13% membership increase inclusive of transfers from other districts, reclamation of backsliders and acceptance of members on profession of faith. Membership transfers, reclamation of backsliders and acceptance of members on profession of faith, though resulting in membership increases in churches, do not result in ultimate church growth. The net result in membership increase in the Conference statistical records is 9%. For the same duration the average membership increase for West Zimbabwe Conference was 29% and that for Zimbabwe Union Conference was 25%. Nketa-Emganwini church district attained a percentage membership increase that is far below the West Zimbabwe Conference average percentage membership increase.

Jesus gave the church a Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20), “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world” (KJV). White’s appeal is that “let every soul copy the Pattern, and become missionaries in the highest sense, winning souls to Jesus.”²

Statement of the Problem

Nketa-Emganwini church district percentage membership increase for the years 2006 to 2010 was 9%. During the same period West Zimbabwe Conference achieved 29% as its average percentage membership increase. Although this church district has been organizing churches after every five years from the 1994 to the year 2010 its resultant membership increase rate has been minimal. This situation has resulted in a

² Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughter of God* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1955), 150.

need to find out the cause for this low percentage increase in membership and to develop an intervention strategy.

Purpose of the Study

Nketa-Emganwini church district has been experiencing low conversion growth translating to a percentage growth rate that is far less than the average percentage growth rate for the West Zimbabwe Conference. It is therefore the objective of this study to:

1. Find the cause for this church district's underperformance in conversion growth.
2. To establish methods that will enable this church district to achieve a high percentage of conversion growth.
3. Pioneer a program of church growth study in Nketa-Emganwini church district.

Significance of Study

This study is intended to increase the conversion growth rate of Nketa-Emganwini church district. In turn local church members will be rejuvenated in evangelism. It may serve as a pilot project for other districts in West Zimbabwe Conference.

Definition of Terms

1. Multi church district – this is a district that has more than one church.
2. District pastor – a pastor who is working in a district.
3. Bonding groups – units in the church formed to provide members with a social and spiritual support system as a way of creating an atmosphere conducive for evangelism in all its facets.

4. Disciple - person, who has been born again, joined to the church, identified his or her spiritual gifts accepted the responsibility of a role in church compatible with those gifts, and is committed to fulfilling that role without continual external motivation.³
5. District board – this is a board that is composed of all local district leadership.

Delimitations of Study

While this study focuses on Nketa-Emganwini church district churches, it utilizes information from various sources that add value to its study of church growth.

Methodology

The study used a program development approach in this research.⁴ The following plan was followed in this program:

1. Chapter 2 reviews literature that relates to church growth, rate of church growth, causes of decline in growth rate and how these problems can be solved.
2. Chapter 3 deals with the Description of the Local Setting, Method of Sampling Used, and Description of the Local Church Leaderships, Data Collection Instruments, Data Collection and Interpretation Methods.
3. Chapter 4 deals with Program Design, Implementation and Evaluation.

³ James W. Zackrison, *The Great Commission Model: A New Way of Life for Your Church* (Southern California Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1993), 8.

⁴ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 163.

4. Chapter 5 deals with Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review literature on issues related to church growth, hindrances and motivational factors. The focus will be on literature in general, Biblical perspectives, the writings of Ellen G White and any other sources that may provide valuable information to the study.

Legitimacy of Church Growth

Growth is a characteristic that is shared by both living and non-living things including churches. It has been pointed out that various church members, as part of the body, share a common life and have Jesus Christ as their one common head.¹ These form God's family that He adopted as His children who live on the basis of the new covenant.² In that case, it is legitimate to expect the church to grow as does living organisms. A decline or stagnation in its growth is an anomaly.

Factors Hindering Church Growth

A decline or stagnation in the growth of a church is symptomatic and should not be ignored. Such an indicator could be communicating some underlying problems which will have to be resolved before a church can achieve a healthy growth pattern

¹ Charles L. Chaney and Ron S. Lewis, *Design for Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1977), 16.

² General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 134.

again. This section aims at finding out through literature review possible causes of decline or stagnation in church growth.

Local Church Leadership

The capacity of a church in the area of soul winning can be enhanced or jeopardized by the calibre of its local leadership. Having failed to understand their function, some individuals refuse to share power and do not see others as children of the Lord.³ Consequently, most of the members who are not in leadership become docile avoiding all duties including evangelism rendering the church less effective in this endeavour. As a solution, there should be mutual trust between leaders and followers with the two groups sharing the work realizing rewards together.⁴ Glatts comments that delegating the work to more members of the church might lead to unprecedented growth.⁵ Lack of leadership development is another factor that negatively affects the growth of the church. Growth should be accompanied by the development of sufficient, capable leaderships to serve the new members and when that does not take place membership increase will cease.⁶ Many people have been led to avoid the church because of the behaviours of its leaders. Media reports indicate

³ Richard J. Krejcir. Church Diseases! Retrieved August 5, 2012 from <http://www.churchleadership.org/apps/articles/>

⁴ Peter Coutts. Taken from “Congregational Awareness Studies – Four Self-Directed Studies for Church Leaders,” produced by Evangelism, Church Growth and Worship, of the *Life and Mission Agency* (2002), 6.

⁵ Tom Glatts, “Advantages of a Multi church District,” *Ministry*, October 2012, 16-18.

⁶ Ron Jenson and Jim Stevens, *Dynamics of Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 13.

that some church leaders are engaging in sex scandals or other forms of sinful living.⁷ This type of behaviour repels instead of attracting people to the church. When checking on the growth of a church one needs to consider its age as well because the older a church is the lower the growth rate. According to Brown, failure by an old church to achieve reasonable numerical increase might be a result of failure to effect changes in leadership style, congregational dynamics, and ministry vision.⁸ It is the responsibility of local leaders to study their congregations and effect necessary changes.

Local Church Members

The quality of life of practicing Christians will determine whether their neighbours will be attracted to the church or not. Some individuals who have been members for more than five years become lukewarm thus losing their ability to draw their confidants to God.⁹ Their characters lack transformation that results from connecting with the deity. Although at one time faithful, they have become less committed as there are so many pressures on their time.¹⁰ If the course of things continues this way, there will be a total loss of the sense of mission and the community will not be positively impacted for Christ. The extreme mobility of people living in

⁷ Editor, "Hindrances to Church Growth in Botswana" *The Botswana Gazette*, 18 February 2010.

⁸ Daniel A. Brown, "Help! My Church Won't Grow," *Ministry Today*, 2014.

⁹ Kevin Harney, "Effective Outreach Begins at Home," *Outreach Magazine*, April 2014.

¹⁰ Michael Moynagh, *Changing World, Changing Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2001), 11.

urban areas is negatively affecting soul winning activities.¹¹ People of the same locality become disconnected making the formation of meaningful relationships that may lead to conversions difficult. It may be true that, “authentic love endows a church with much greater magnetic power than all the marketing in the world.”¹² If non-believers observe the non-existence of genuine love among those who have embraced the faith, they will be repelled instead of being drawn to their way of life. A study of Christianity has also revealed that most of the professing followers of Jesus remain at the conversion phase with only a few reaching the level of discipleship.¹³ Accordingly, only a few of them will be ready to do the Lord’s work including evangelism. In some congregations there could be some hurting persons that are reluctant to take part in any of the activities of the Christian body because they would have had an unpleasant encounter with local leaders.¹⁴ If such constitute a significant fraction of parishioners then that institution will be negatively affected.

The Church and Its Vicinity

The growth of the church largely depends on its consciousness of the fact that its surrounding community is composed of people from various ethnic groups. Such societies are made of large groups glued together by different cultures making it

¹¹ Barry Gane, *Building Youth Ministry* (Riverside, California: Hancock Center Publications, 2005), 129.

¹² Christian A. Schwarz, *Color Your World With Natural Church Development* (Emmelsbull, Germany: NCD Media, 2005), 120.

¹³ Rick Carr, *Starting House Churches with New Converts*. Retrieved August 6, 2012 from <http://www.dawnministries.org>

¹⁴ Ed Stetzer, “3 Reasons People Are Not Involved in Your Church,” *Outreach Magazine*, June 2014.

difficult to lead them through the conversion experience.¹⁵ Churches in such a locality experience a low growth rate and at times insignificant growth. It has also been noted that changes in the society result in large numbers of people relocating to other places and new people coming in to take their spaces.¹⁶ The resultant membership might be less, equal or more than the original membership before any movements. It is likely that the ultimate growth will be trivial. Krijcir comments, that there is also a possibility for church members to congregate in such tight knit cliques resulting in outsiders failing to come in.¹⁷ A change in priorities takes place and non-believers in the neighbourhood are no longer considered as a main concern.¹⁸

Effects of Non-Evangelistic Church Activities

The substance, orientation, and objective of any activity of a congregation determine whether it will contribute to its growth or not. It has been noted that some Christians concentrate on satisfying their needs while ignoring their surrounding non-believing communities. Consequently their programs do not have an evangelism component.¹⁹ This could be an indication that a Christian body does not understand the purpose of its existence. A lack of outreach has been identified as a possible cause

¹⁵ Peter C. Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986), 183.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁷ Richard J. Krijcir, *Church Diseases!* (2007 - 2013 Institute of Church Leadership Development - All Rights Reserved).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁹ Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1995), 63.

of low membership increase.²⁰ According to some writers, “the primary reason the small-membership church tends not to grow is because it is too inward-oriented and most of the resources are concentrated on serving the members and on institutional survival. The small church tends to focus on nurture, not mission.”²¹ At other times the problem is an exclusive type of evangelism that only targets individuals related to local church members.²² Such an act is contrary to the command of Jesus which says: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:10-20). All nations are to be made disciples.

Witnessing is a key component in the work of the church. According to the above information, having no deliberate plans for soul winning or targeting only certain sectors of the community could result in diminutive growth.

Lack of Evangelism Training Programs

Training is an essential component in the life of any organization including religious entities. It may take the form of “organized activity aimed at imparting information and/or instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him

²⁰ Vertie Whitney. *Church Growth*. Retrieved August 5, 2012 from <http://www.ezinearticles.com/expert/author/VertieWhitney.com>

²¹ Lyle E. Schawler *Growing Plans: Strategies to Increase Your Church's Membership* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1983), 19.

²² J. Waskom Pickett, *The Dynamics of Church Growth: A Positive Approach for World Missions* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1963), 29.

or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill.”²³ One of the major responsibilities of a church is to equip its entire membership through education in all areas of the work including evangelism.²⁴ Consequently, it will achieve all its goals including soul winning. On the contrary most religious organizations are not eager to coach their parishioners in this area, resulting in failure to allocate resources for this purpose.²⁵ This leads to the conclusion that coaching is not considered an essential duty. Lack of instruction results in lack of knowledge and that leads to failure in fulfilling Jesus’ commission to witness in one’s personal circles.²⁶ Individual members are deprived of the knowledge they need in order to market their faith in their communities. According to the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists lack of training is one of the six basic reasons why people do not participate in soul winning.²⁷

From inception into the church to spiritual maturity, individuals need to learn some basic skills, some advanced skills, and some specialized skills in the area of their

²³ Training. Business Dictionary. Retrieved August 6, 2012 from <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition>

²⁴ George E. Knowles, *How To Help Your Church Grow* (Atlanta, GA: The Ministerial Association, 1997), 45

²⁵ Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1995), 161.

²⁶ Jard Deville, *The Psychology of Witnessing* (Atlanta, GA: The Ministerial Association, 1996), 10.

²⁷ Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Personal Ministries Handbook*, 2002, 13.

primary ministry.²⁸ To facilitate effective learning, one method is to group members according to the number of years they have spent in the church and relevant training programs arranged for each group.

The above observations indicate that training plays a role in the growth of a church. When church members are trained they may:

1. Have courage to evangelize.
2. Have an ability to lead people to making decisions for Christ.

Church Growth Enhancing Factors

Membership Empowerment

Empowerment is “enabling, endowing, investing; authorizing, licensing, commissioning.”²⁹ Knowles comments that, Christ constantly sought others who could minister and spent much of His time equipping them for effective ministry.³⁰ Knowles further comments that, by so doing He was speeding up the growth of the work. The apostle Paul as well encouraged those he trained to seek others they could train.³¹ If church leaders could spend time providing their followers with necessary resources and information to carry out the Lord’s work the church would experience much

²⁸ Monte Sahlin, Velino Salazar and James W. Zackrison, *How to Set-up and Run an Evangelization and discipleship Cycle for Your Church: A Systematic Approach to Church Growth and Retention of New Members* (Church Growth Resource Series, 1993), 15.

²⁹ Philip, D. *The New American Roget’s College Thesaurus In Dictionary Form* Third Revised Edition.

³⁰ George E. Knowles, *how To Help Your Church Grow* (Atlanta, GA: Review and Herald Graphics, 1997), 37.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

growth. One way of providing knowledge about ministry is through modeling.³² As a consequence students are moved from theoretical understanding to observation of actual simulated ministry experiences.³³ Some leaders do comprehend the need to empower other Christians for ministry and so they equip, support, motivate and mentor individuals to become all that God wants them to be.³⁴ One advantage of doing this is relieving one's self of too many responsibilities. The goal according to Coutts is to create visionaries out of followers who will also want to see their church grow.³⁵

Membership Involvement

The mission of the church is to lead people through a conversion experience. Technology has contributed much towards the fulfilment of this assignment but the most effective method is to have church members testify about what God has done for them. The theology of the priesthood of all believers suggests that all Christians have ministries to perform.³⁶ If all church responsibilities including soul winning were to be done by local leaders only, numerical growth would be minimal. According to

³² James A. Cress, *Common Sense Ministry* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999), 76.

³³ Aubrey Malhurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2004), p. 155.

³⁴ Christian A. Schwartz, *Natural Church Development* (Church Smart Resources, 1998).

³⁵ Peter Coutts. "Congregational Awareness Studies – Four Self-Directed Studies for Church Leaders", produced by Evangelism, Church Growth and Worship, of the Life and Mission Agency (2002), 1.

³⁶ Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 2002), 26.

Hadaway, for growth to take place there should be a desire, intentionality and the involvement of church members.³⁷

Migration of Church Members

At times the growth of a local church does not signify ultimate organizational numerical increase. Often the movement of Christians from rural areas to the cities raises the growth rate of urban churches.³⁸ This is not conversion growth as there would have been no baptisms. Holland concurs with this observation as she states, “some churches grow by taking Christians who come from other places.”³⁹

Discipling Church Members

If members reach a level of discipleship, the church experiences phenomenal growth resulting from their commitment to its programs inclusive of evangelism. As a way of ensuring the accomplishment of their disciple-making process, vibrant and growing congregations organize their key programs around it and everything else is eliminated.⁴⁰ Then most of the activities will be aimed at strengthening the faith of each individual. The success of the program will result in members becoming true disciples who purposefully organize their lifestyles in a way that allows them to set

³⁷ C. Kirk Hadaway, *Facts on Episcopal Church Growth* (Publication of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society and Faith Communities Today, 2005), 13.

³⁸ Editor Roger E. Hedlund, *Church Growth in the World*, (Nagar, Bombay: F.C. Durham, 1977), 23.

³⁹ Frank Alexander, Leonard Syanzalu, and Grace Holland, *Helping the Church to Grow* (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1981), 56.

⁴⁰ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples*. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 1.

aside specific time for the Lord's work.⁴¹ When this happens then the evangelism program of the church will become a process-giving rise to a high growth rate.

Lifestyle of Church Members

The lifestyle of church members plays a crucial role in the soul winning undertaking of any church. Faithful Christians live in a way that is attractive to unbelievers. Accordingly they lead them to a commitment or take them to a meeting where such a commitment takes place.⁴² This serves as a foundation for close relationships that will lead to high membership retention. High standards of the Christian life should be upheld and worldliness avoided.⁴³ The Seventh-day Adventist church believes the authenticity of this concept understanding that "Christians win unbelievers not by looking and behaving like the world but by revealing an attractive and refreshing difference"⁴⁴ Getz concurs by stating that the great evangelistic impact of a group of believers in a society is based upon an individual and collective testimony before the unsaved world, reflecting love, unity and godly living.⁴⁵ There is no time when a worshiper of God is exempted from reflecting the character of Christ. Transformed lives serve as magnets to pull non-Christians to Jesus. Warren points out

⁴¹ James W. Zackrison, *The Great Commission Model: A New Way of Life for Your Church* (Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993), 9.

⁴² John, Hayward. *Dealing with Church Decline*. Retrieved September 19, 2012 from www.church-growth-modelling.org.uk

⁴³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 137.

⁴⁴ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 286.

⁴⁵ Gene A. Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Chicago, IL: The Moody Press, 1977), 39.

that, “in any church where lives are changed, marriages are being saved, and love is flowing freely, you will have to lock the doors to keep people from attending.”⁴⁶

Effective Planning Methods

According to Easto, preparation enhances the success of both religious and non-religious undertakings. Considering beginning any adventure with planning as a principle will pave way for greater achievements.⁴⁷ Switzer also stresses that, evangelism programs should be well designed just like any other. Chances of reaching desirable possible outcomes are thus enhanced.⁴⁸ Chaney and Lewis both stress that, reducing strategies to suit human capabilities and resources is not proper as plans must go beyond what can be accomplished without the help of God.⁴⁹ Individuals and organizations should not only worry about the process but also about quality. According to authors Magravan and Hunter, when it comes to church growth, goal setting is an indispensable part of a congregation’s premeditated approach.⁵⁰ The Seventh-day Adventist church strongly recommends that arrangements should be made with the newly baptized members in mind. Local church leaders are encouraged to ensure that these individuals are involved in youth events, Bible study groups, Sabbath services, community service projects, singing groups, social programs,

⁴⁶ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 51

⁴⁷ Larry, Easto, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Small Business for Canadians* (Ontario, Canada: Prentice Hall, 2000), 67.

⁴⁸ Merlin Switzer, “Strategic Thinking in Fast Growing Organizations” (Journal of Strategic Leadership, Volume 1, Issue number 1), 2008, pp. 31-38.

⁴⁹ Charles L. Chaney and Ron S. Lewis, *Design for Church Growth* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1977) 34.

⁵⁰ Donald Magavran and George G. Hunter, *Church Growth Strategies that Work* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1981), 25.

outreach and witnessing activities.⁵¹ According to McIntosh, guests should also be considered. Most visitors are used to well-organized programs and for them to come again to church after visiting for the first time, worship needs to be done well.⁵² Putting this strategy into practice may lead significant church growth. Lemmons advises that, scripture provides God's will about His work and hence it should be consulted when devices for the work are being made.⁵³

Church Planting

Church planting has been found to be one of the leading causes of church growth. It has been stated, "the single most effective evangelistic method under heaven is planting new churches."⁵⁴ By nature, newly planted congregations, unlike old ones, have the ability to reach people and lead them to a commitment to Jesus Christ.⁵⁵ These assemblies are vibrant with members that are still zealous to do the Lord's work. The membership is relatively low and as a result everyone is actively involved in most church activities. Studies have shown that planting new churches increases membership growth rate.⁵⁶

⁵¹ The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 1994), 110.

⁵² McIntosh, "Church Growth," retrieved August 5, 2012 from <http://www.McIntosh's Church Growth Answer Book.com>

⁵³ David Lemmons, "Church Growth – As God Would Have It," *Banner of Truth*, April 2002, 1.

⁵⁴ C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 11.

⁵⁵ Peter, Roennfeldt. "New Church Life," retrieved August 6, 2012 from www.newchurchlife.com

⁵⁶ Loren Mead, "Understanding Church Growth," retrieved August 5, 2012 from http://www.channingchurch.org/YOD/Understanding_Congregational_Growth.pdf

The Biblical Perspectives

In the Old Testament epoch “God fearing families in the lineage of Adam, Noah, Shem, and Abraham were guardians of His truth. These households, in which the father functioned as the priest, could be considered the church in miniature.”⁵⁷

White also confirms “God had a church when Adam and Eve and Abel accepted and hailed with joy the good news that Jesus was their Redeemer.”⁵⁸ On the other hand the church is referred to as “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). At times the church was also called the “the body of Christ” (1 Cor 12: 27).

The next section is divided into two components namely the Old Testament and the New Testament View Points. Both components aim at discussing some Bible passages from which church growth principles will be drawn resulting in finding out possible causes of decline or stagnation in church growth.

The Old Testament Viewpoint

This part of the Bible does not explicitly deal with church growth but focuses on conceptual growth. The following component considers the Biblical perspective relating to factors that encourage and hinder church growth according to the Old Testament.

⁵⁷ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 136.

⁵⁸ Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant* (1999), 51.

Impediments to Church Growth.

Custodians of the truth. Some custodians of truth contributed towards the decline in the growth of the church and the effects of their actions can still be witnessed even today. Eve disregarded God's word concerning the forbidden fruit and instead believed the serpent, thus ushering in scepticism to the whole human family. (Gen: 4, 5). Only Noah and his family escaped the flood, as they were the only ones who believed God when He said that there would be a flood (Gen 7:7). Vacillating between the worship of the living God and idols by the Israelites resulted in other nations failing to differentiate between the creator and idols. (2Kgs 17:12) Rejecting a theocratic kingdom and choosing to be led by human beings weakened the spirituality of Abraham's descendants. (1 Sam 8:6). This deprived them of the power needed to assist others through a reconciliation process with the Lord. The apostasy of God's worshipers had a negative influence on the spread of the word of His word (2 Kgs 21: 1-9). By choosing to sacrifice what God had not recommended, Cain negatively influenced the later generations leading them to depart from the Lord's will (Genesis 4:3). He also hampered the spread of the truth by killing his brother (Gen 4:8).

Moses and Aaron deprived God the glory that was due to Him when they claimed to have been the ones who had provided people with water from the rock (Num 20:12). Intermarriages with unbelievers introduced God's children to idol worship consequently depriving them of spiritual growth (Num 25: 1-3). The Israelites' sinfulness led them to be defeated by their enemies and this encouraged those rivals to cherish their gods instead of wanting to worship the creator. (Josh 7:5).

The above points provide enough evidence that the caretakers of the truth contributed significantly to the low growth rate of God's Old Testament church. Even today, some who profess to be Christians could be the cause of stunted church growth.

Pagan nations. God uses His followers to lead non-believers through a conversion experience and the attitude of these two groups of people towards each other influences this process either positively or negatively. Egyptian bondage stalled the spreading of knowledge about God to pagan nations (Exod 1: 14). Worship of idols was prevalent during the Old Testament era and various nations were not keen to abandon their gods to worship the creator (Judg 10:6). Israelites committed adultery with the Moabites and, in that state, they were not qualified to represent God (Num 25). Every time Israel indulged in sin, she would be conquered by rival nations leading to the assumption that idols were more powerful than God (Josh7:5). This is a description of how pagan nations affected the spread of the knowledge about God by the Israelites.

Local church leadership. Organizations exist to carry out different missions. The function of leadership is to facilitate the organization's success in this regard. The Israelites' task was to introduce the creator to the inhabitants of the earth and their leaders were to facilitate the execution of this undertaking. The selfish ambition of King Jeroboam led him to entice the Lord's worshipers under his kingdom to venerate calves of gold in the process diverting them from their divine instituted task (1 Kgs 12:28). Hophni and Phinehas's ungodly leadership plunged the nation into a spiritual dungeon where they were not given their full rights to offer sacrifices according the dictates of scripture (1Sam 2:17) It might be that a leadership wrangle between Moses, Aaron and Miriam temporarily caused an impasse in the spiritual affairs of the nation thereby slowing down the spread of the knowledge about God (Num 12:1). Possibly Aaron's weak leadership paved way for idol worship, resulting in people failing to set an example for true worship (Exod 32:8) There is a high probability that Moses slowed down the pace of the Lord's work when he, prior to his father in law's advice,

overloaded himself with too many responsibilities(Exod 18:13). Above is enough evidence that the leadership played a role in slowing down the spread of the knowledge about God to pagan nations.

Church Growth Enhancers. The subsequent factors contributed to the growth of the nation that represented the church of God in the time of the Old Testament. The same factors may contribute to the growth of the church in the present day.

Biological growth. Children born to godly families are exposed to biblical teachings at an early age and this prepares them for a conversion experience. A very high percentage of the numerical growth experienced by the Israelites was a result of biological growth (Gen 46:27). Moses chose to go and suffer with his own people rather than remaining in pharaoh's palace being called a son of pharaoh's daughter most likely because of the teaching that he got from his mother(Exod 2:11). For biological growth to lead to significant church growth, parents should be diligent in teaching their offspring about God. The prophet Samuel was born and dedicated to God at a very young age (1 Sam 1: 20). The fact that God promised Abraham that he would father a great nation is confirmation that He considered biological growth as significant growth (Gen 17:4).

Commitment to faith. God intervenes on behalf of individuals whose lives are endangered because of their unwavering faith in Him and, in the process; people get to know about him resulting in some individuals being converted. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into extraordinarily hot fire yet they did not suffer any burns and it is possible that that led Nebuchadnezzar's subjects to believe that those three young men worshiped the deity, (Daniel 3: 1-30). The lions did not maul Daniel when he was thrown into their den and for this reason King Darius proclaimed God's supremacy. (Daniel 6:22). Joseph was released from prison and inaugurated as a

governor in Egypt after having been used by the Lord to interpret Pharaoh's dream. (Gen 41:16). It is likely that he took advantage of his office and spread the news about the creator.

The above incidents and many others played a significant role in arousing in humanity a desire to belong to the church of God. If incidents of similar nature might take place today they would probably enhance church growth.

Some outstanding events. Perhaps the outstanding events recorded in scripture led to an increase in the number of people who worshiped the creator. The Israelites walked across the red sea on dry ground but Pharaoh and his army drowned there and this served as a testimony to other nations that the deity of the Israelites was omnipotent (Exod 14:28). It is likely that the answering of Elijah's prayer on Mount Carmel caused those present to acknowledge the Lordship of the God of Elijah (1 Kgs 18:38). The walls of Jericho tumbled without being subjected to any pressure from the chosen nation clearly indicating that divine power was involved and probably because of this incident some individuals started worshiping the Lord. (Josh 6:20). It is possible that when the queen of Sheba visited Solomon she was introduced to the living God who provides wisdom (2 Chron 9:12).

The extraordinary nature of these occurrences necessitated their relay to the neighbouring nations. Consequently the number of people who worshiped God may have increased.

Captivity. Believers are always obligated to live according to the Lord's will wherever they are. During captivity the children of Israel were brought in close contact with idol worshipers but they were not to emulate how they worshiped. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to be thrown into a fiery furnace instead of worshiping an idol and as a result they witnessed for the Lord in a foreign land.

(Dan3:17). It was because of the testimony of his slave girl that Naaman came to know about Elisha resulting in him knowing about the creator. (2Kgs 5:2) While in captivity, Joseph managed to live according to the Lord's will thus avoiding adultery with his master's wife. (Gen 39:9) Daniel pointed Nebuchadnezzar to God as the interpreter of dreams instead of taking the glory for himself. (Dan 2:28). All the above-mentioned captives took advantage of their captivity and became ambassadors of God in a foreign land.

The New Testament Viewpoint

The New Testament biblical perspectives consider factors that encourage or hinder church growth. This is inclusive of the factors that were in existence during the time of Christ and the period when He had gone to heaven.

Impediments to Church Growth. The study of the New Testament reveals factors that had a negative effect on the growth of the church.

Lack of spirituality. It is God who facilitates the conversion of unbelievers causing them to desire to belong to His church. The responsibility of Christians is to proclaim the word of the Lord and to exemplify its practicality in their day-to-day living. A lack of spirituality renders one to be unable to confront evil powers that are holding non-believers captive. Probably this is why the disciples failed to cast out a dumb spirit. (Mark 9:28, 29). The seven sons of Sceva were overpowered by a demon-possessed man, because of the same deficiency (Acts 19:14-16). For the evangelism activities of the church to be fruitful the participants should be spiritually strong.

Love of wealth. It is possible for the rich to presume that life is solely dependent on wealth. Because of contentment they might be led to reject anything that seeks to shift their attention from material resources. Jesus Christ advised His followers to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first then they would receive

all the other things. (Matt 6:33). The region of Gadarenes was not evangelized because of materialistic minded pig owners. (Mark 5:1-19). Masters of a girl that was possessed with a spirit of divination had Paul and Silas imprisoned for having freed the girl from the demon and they thus slowed down the pace at which the gospel was being preached (Acts 16:16). Instead of celebrating her salvation, their focus was on losing a source of income (Acts 16:19-23). The rich young ruler missed an opportunity to be a disciple when he found it hard to sell his riches and share the proceeds with the poor. (Luke 18:23). The love of money caused Ananias and Sapphira to be unfaithful (Acts 5:2). People's attitudes to wealth determine the value they place on matters pertaining to salvation.

Shortage of workers. A certain number of workers can only perform a specific amount of work at a particular point in time. Jesus' disciples were twelve and would spread the gospel only as much as twelve individuals could do (Mark 3:14). It was also pointed out that whereas the harvest was ripe labourers were few. (Luke 10:2). When only few members are involved in evangelism, the church will achieve a growth that is proportional to the effort of those people.

Bickering in the church. Squabbles among members might cause cliques that negate fellowship which might lead to some individuals losing interest in the corporate work of the church including evangelism. In the New Testament church there were wrangles along tribal lines that threatened the work of evangelism (Acts 6: 2). A strong team of evangelists had to part ways because of a quarrel about John Mark (Act 15:39). Whereas the above is true, it is also crucial to note that in both cases the solutions that were chosen resulted in the involvement of more people in the Lord's work.

Local church leadership. Some religious leaders did not appreciate who Christ was resulting in them strongly opposing Him. Pharisees would convene meetings to discuss how they could destroy Him. The authority behind His work was attributed to the prince of devils. The chief priests were also against Christ (Matt 12:14; 9:34; 6:59). Accordingly, individuals who were supposed to enhance the growth of the church negatively affected its growth rate.

Persecution of Christians. It was because of their faith in Jesus Christ that most disciples were persecuted during the New Testament church era. This maltreatment was meant to bring misery upon Christians consequently acting as a deterrent to anyone who would want to embrace the same faith. Paul and Barnabas were persecuted for preaching the gospel to Gentiles who were more receptive than Jews resulting in hampered evangelism among this community (Acts 13:50). Before his conversion experience on the road to Damascus, Paul used to persecute Christians thus denying them freedom of worship that enhances church growth (Acts 9:1). The imprisonment of Peter reduced the time that he would have spent spreading the news about the Lord (Acts 12:5). It is necessary to note that while it is a hindrance, generally persecution promotes church growth.

Church growth enhancers. The apostle Paul states that he “planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1 Cor 3: 6, 7). The process of helping people to belong to the church requires that believers work in cooperation with each other rather than competing against one another. Only the Lord has the ability to work on the hearts of human beings. The method of making disciples as recorded in Matt 28: 19,20 includes teaching new believers all that Christ commanded and baptizing them in the name of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit. The

amalgamation of human effort and divine power is key to this course of action. The successive factors contributed to the growth of the church during the New Testament period.

Prevalence of unity in church. The New Testament church was full of activity by both members and leadership possibly signifying that all the affiliates were not nominal but belonged to the church. This is inclusive of the three thousand souls that were baptized when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 41). Unity prevailed among disciples and possessions were owned communally (Acts 4:32). There was much dependence on prayer (Acts 1:14; 3:1; 6:4; 10:31; 12:5; 16:13, 16). Christians upheld the apostles' doctrine and their fellowship bonds were strong (Acts 2:42). They had fellowship meals and enjoyed the favor of all people (Acts 2:46, 47). The sick were healed and the demon possessed freed (Acts 5:16). The apostles were determined to spread the good news (Acts 5:38; 13:2; 14:26). Exponential growth was experienced due to the permitting conditions that prevailed among members and their leadership.

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was about to go to heaven He “commanded them (the disciples) that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me” (Acts 1:4). Compliance to this instruction resulted in the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit who empowered them to reach out to those who had not accepted Christ. The disciples were not the ones who were adding more members into the church but the Bible states that “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). For the Lord to add more members, the disciples were to give in to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. The miracles that crowned their ministry emanated from the working of the Holy Spirit.

Local church leadership skills. In Luke 10:1-24 Jesus epitomized what all church leaders need to do as a way of enhancing church growth. He delegated both authority and tasks to His disciples giving them ample instructions that they required to perform their assigned duties. Reporting time was made available to those who had been sent when they had carried out their assignments.

It is to be noted that subordinates are to be skilfully led to volunteer to do the work rather than being coerced. The ability to delegate tasks to subordinates is one of the skills that are crucial.

Productive evangelism methods. There are more than one techniques of evangelism and the prevailing situation at any particular moment determines the method to be exploited. Jesus used the one-on-one method of evangelism when evangelizing Nichodemus (John 3:1-17), and the woman of Samaria (John 4:6-28). Philip applied the same method (Acts 8:26-40). When preaching to great multitudes Christ resorted to public evangelism (Matt 13:1-3). The apostle Peter also employed this method resulting in three thousand people being converted (Acts 2:41). John the Baptist is another person that utilized it (Luke 3:7).

The aptitude to know which method of evangelism should be used in a particular situation is crucial as this could increase chances of success. Though a lot of time has elapsed since the preaching of the apostles, the same methods of evangelism used by the apostles seem to be still effective today.

Summary of the Biblical View Point

A study of the Bible revealed that church growth takes place regardless of the continuous presence of factors that seek to hinder or slow it down. The Old Testament dealt with conceptual growth while the New Testament dealt with actual expansion. Since both leaders and members faithfully participated together harmoniously, a tremendous membership increase was experienced. Christianity was considered a life style and all the believers lived together as a community practicing all that they had been taught. Their fellowship facilitated the unity of purpose that was crucial to the success their mission.

The following section reviews the writings of Ellen G. White with an intention of discovering her concepts of factors that hinder church growth and those that enhance it.

Ellen G. White's Perspectives

Ellen G. White wrote extensively in the area of evangelism. A number of her books will be studied with an intention of coming up with factors that enhance or hamper church growth.

Factors Hindering Church Growth

Neglecting the Holy Spirit. Human beings work in partnership with the Holy Spirit in the work of soul winning. Their task is to spread the good news of salvation while the Spirit's duty is to convert unbelievers. Failure by gospel workers to recognize the importance of the third person of the Godhead in the conversion of unbelievers results in stagnant or stunted church growth.⁵⁹ The priests and rulers

⁵⁹ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 62.

rejected His conviction concerning Christ and hence they worked in opposition to a divinely instituted program.⁶⁰ Certainly, the neglect of the Holy Ghost results in apostasy.⁶¹ Members and local leaders need to always be in a good relationship with the Comforter to facilitate the success of the Lord's work.

Lack of membership involvement. The church exists to give unbelievers an opportunity to reconcile with divinity and for this reason all believers should be involved in furthering the interests of God's kingdom on earth. Sometimes ministers have a tendency of not involving church members in the Lord's work thinking they alone are to do it and the result is meagre result as far as numerical growth is concerned.⁶² On the other hand not much has been accomplished because most of the Christians have left all the work to be done by gospel workers.⁶³ It is important to understand that the work of saving souls in this earth will be finished if all that have embraced the faith would be involved, uniting their efforts with those of pastors and church officers.⁶⁴ Unless the issue of lack of membership involvement is addressed the growth rate will always be the low.

Church members not committed to the Church's mission. The most dangerous enemy of an entity is one that fights it from within. One might assume that all who profess to belong to the church are always true to its mission but evidence

⁶⁰ Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999), 305.

⁶¹ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911) 504.

⁶² E. G. White "Right Methods in Labor." Review and Herald, Nov. 18, 1884.

⁶³ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 113.

⁶⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies Volume 9* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947), 117.

from some of White's writings indicate that there are times when this is not so. There have been some individuals who, like scribes and Pharisees, hedge up the way of those who would accept Christ.⁶⁵ Amongst these are workers who are content with mediocre performances.⁶⁶ It is also noted that there are people within the church that are involved in criticizing and fault-finding as a result slowing down the progress of church growth.⁶⁷ Satan is also leading other people to hinder the work instead of helping to advance it.⁶⁸ Some young people do not live according to the teachings of the Bible making their characters to be similar to those of unbelievers.⁶⁹ This could cause unbelievers to shun the church.

Mishandling of scripture by some Church members. The church is the only place on earth where one can find total truth about God and His kingdom. It is for this reason that some people go out looking for churches where they can belong. Unfortunately, there are individuals who do not accept the truth and hinder others from accepting it by misinterpreting scripture.⁷⁰ This in turn stifles the growth of the church. Many people who have no real faith in God or in His word but accept some principles of truth are accepted as Christians giving them an opportunity to introduce error that

⁶⁵ Ellen G. White, "Christ's Denunciation of the Pharisees," *Review and Herald* (August 29, 1899): 8.

⁶⁶ Ellen G. White, "Methods of Labor," *Pacific Union Recorder* (June 29, 1905): 9.

⁶⁷ Ellen G. White, "How to Receive God's Blessing," *The General Conference Bulletin* (April 2, 1903): 5.

⁶⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church vol. 1* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947), 547.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 496.

⁷⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy Volume Three* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1878), 412.

affects church growth negatively.⁷¹ False doctrines obstruct the work of the church including evangelism.⁷² It is crucial to the success of the church in all her endeavours to ascertain whether all members understand scripture or not. If they do not, then ways need to be sought to assist them in this regard.

Loss of focus by local leaders and members. God gave the church the responsibility of making disciples of all nations and for her to succeed in this adventure both local leaders and members should be focused on that. When minor matters occupy the attention of the church, the divine power, which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, becomes extinct.⁷³ The goal is to have unity in the church as this is conducive for growth but at times divisions arise as a result of comparison of man with man and this hinders the progress of the gospel.⁷⁴ Failure by church leaders to contextualize some elements of Christianity has contributed to a low church growth rate.⁷⁵ In the time of the apostles Satan used sorcery as a way of hindering the work of the gospel and he is still using the same method today.⁷⁶ Time after time the whole congregation should be reminded about the purpose of its existence.

⁷¹ Ellen G. White, *Darkness Before Dawn* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1997), 6.

⁷² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1888), 56.

⁷³ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Canada, Ontario: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 50.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁷⁵ Ellen G. White, "A Study of Principles – No. 5 Methods of Labor Where Prejudice is Strong," *The Review and Herald*, Apr 6, 1911, 9.

⁷⁶ Ellen G. White, *Sketches from the Life of Paul* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1883), 328.

Church Growth Enhancers

Partnering with God. Nehemiah had his “eye and heart ... uplifted to God, the great Overseer of the whole work, the one who put it into the heart of His servant to build.”⁷⁷ This indicates that he was aware of the fact that the success of the work depended on the Lord and so he kept on communicating with Him. Church leaders need to emulate what Nehemiah did and always keep communicating with the Lord as well. When they do this their relationship with God will always remain strong.

Bonding with Christ. The central character in Christianity is Christ. Belief in Him and not about Him is crucial to the formation of strong bonds between Jesus and parishioners.⁷⁸ It is true that “unity with Christ establishes a bond of unity with one another. This unity is the most convincing proof to the world of the majesty and virtue of Christ and of His power to take away sin.”⁷⁹ This bonding of church members is regardless of any element or characteristic that would normally divide them.⁸⁰ Consequently, church activities inclusive of evangelism will be enhanced and success realized.

Membership empowerment. It is crucial to the growth of a church that incumbent local church leaders realize that the saviours’ commission is given to all

⁷⁷ Ibid., 176.

⁷⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 94.

⁷⁹ Ellen G. White, *Mind Character and Personality* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1977), 30.

⁸⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911) 460.

who believe in His name.⁸¹ This way the local church leaders will be inspired to find ways to enable all church members to work for God in the area of soul winning. On the other hand ordinary church members are to be made aware of the fact that “in order to grow in spirituality, they must carry the burden that the Lord has laid upon them,-- the burden of leading souls into the truth.”⁸² The advice to gospel ministers is: “Do not lead people to depend upon you as ministers; teach them rather that they are to use their talents in giving the truth to those around them. In thus working they will have the co-operation of heavenly angels, and will obtain an experience that will increase their faith, and give them a strong hold on God.”⁸³ When a gospel minister heeds this advice, the result will be an empowered group of ordinary church members. The ultimate result will be an exceptional church growth.

It is further stated that, “those who have the spiritual oversight of the church should devise ways and means by which an opportunity may be given to every member of the church to act some part in God’s work.”⁸⁴ No person is exempted from taking part in the work of evangelism. The most important point to note is that it is God who is calling all individual members to work. Local church leaders need to understand that, “the work of God in this earth can never be finished until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work, and unite their efforts

⁸¹ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 110.

⁸² Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), 200.

⁸³ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1925), 69.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

with those of ministers and church officers.”⁸⁵ All people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and personal saviour should participate in the Lord’s work and thereby assist in completing the work.

Supervision of the work of the church. Nehemiah is given as an example of a leader who excelled in the area of supervising the work. It is reported that, “he did not fold his hands. With tireless vigilance he constantly superintended the work, directing the workmen, noting every hindrance, and providing for every emergency. ... With timely words he encouraged the fearful, approved the diligent, or aroused the laggard.”⁸⁶ One of the duties of a leader is to supervise the work and this also has an influence on the success of the soul-winning program of any church. If a supervisor supervises well the work succeeds.

Clear evangelism procedures. There should be a clear procedure of evangelizing. The lack of this procedure might lead to confusion resulting in some church members withdrawing from participating in the soul winning venture of the church. It is crucial to understand that “it is not enough to show how much needs to be done, and to urge the youth to act a part. They must be taught how to labor for the Master. They must be trained, disciplined, drilled, in the best methods of winning souls to Christ.”⁸⁷ Local church leaders need to orient themselves with a variety of soul winning methods. This will make it easy for them to select suitable methods to be used at different times and in different areas where soul-winning programs are conducted. The most commonly used method is public evangelism but one needs to

⁸⁵ Ibid 352.

⁸⁶ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, 175.

⁸⁷ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), 210.

understand that there is also house-to-house work in the homes as a way of reaching certain classes that cannot be reached by public meetings.⁸⁸ In addition to public efforts the gospel is to be taken to where people are. It is true that “the presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or churches.”⁸⁹

The major factor to be considered when choosing a method of evangelism should not be monetary resources but the caliber of people to be reached.⁹⁰ The movement of time should also be considered in the choice of the method to be used. The nature of the communities today necessitates that “some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the work in the past; but let no one, because of this, block the way by criticism.”⁹¹ The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 requires that those conducting evangelism programs should go to where prospective church members are. To be effective soul winners local church leaders and ordinary church members “are not to wait for souls to come to us; we must seek them out where they are. When the word has been preached in the pulpit, the work has but just begun. There are multitudes who will never be reached by the gospel unless it is carried to them.”⁹²

⁸⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, Volume Nine (Ontario, Canada: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1947), 111.

⁸⁹ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 193.

⁹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 68.

⁹¹ Ellen G. White “The Work in the Cities,” *Review and Herald*, Sept. 30, 1902, 16.

⁹² Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1941), 229.

Summary of Ellen G. White's Perspective

White suggests that there is need for the whole church to be involved in evangelism. Local church leaders need to acknowledge that the commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 is to all people who have accepted Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour. She further asserts that training the whole church in soul winning will encourage all members to participate in the work of the church including evangelism. This will lead to unprecedented growth of the church. Proper methods and planning are a prerequisite to the success of the Lord's work. Strong bonds between church members are a proof to the world of the majesty and virtue of Christ and of His power to take away sin. Satan is using non-believers and some individuals in the church to hinder church growth.

The review of the Bible, Ellen G. White's writings and literature by contemporary authors revealed causes of low church growth. Information from all these sources will be utilized in the analysis for the development of an intervention strategy to alleviate the problem of low growth rate in Nketa-Emganwini church district.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

This chapter presents a description of Nketa-Emganwini church district's local setting and provides an outline of how the study was carried out. The sampling method that was used, data collection procedure followed, the reclamation of instruments used for collecting data and data analysis are also dealt with.

Local Setting of the Group

When the study was conducted in 2010, Nketa-Emganwini church district had four thousand four hundred and eighty five (4485) church members and most of them were below the age of fifty. Five hundred and thirty four (534) of them constituted a team of local church leaders. There was a district board whose function was to coordinate district programs and it was made up of two hundred and fifty two (252) local church leaders in strategic offices. At that time the pastor membership ratio was 1: 4485.

In Nketa and Emganwini high-density suburbs there were leaders who had been chosen by the local communities to implement different programs such as assisting bereaved families.

These high-density suburbs were characterized by house churches that had mushroomed, providing the society with a wide range of churches to choose from. General popular religious sentiments lured people by promising them prosperity and protection from mystical powers.

People Groups

The local populace included the following people groups:

1. The Ndebele speaking people.
2. The Shona speaking people.
3. The Tonga speaking people.
4. The Sotho speaking people.
5. The Kalanga speaking people.

The Ndebele speaking citizens were dominant.

Method of Sampling Used

As already mentioned in chapter one Nketa-Emganwini church district was composed of five churches, three in Nketa high density suburb and two in Emganwini high density suburb.

This study uses the cluster sampling methodology. Vyhmeister points out that, “cluster sampling selects sample clusters or groups out of the population and studies all members of those groups.”¹ For the purposes of this study, churches in Nketa-Emganwini church district were separated according suburbs and one church was chosen from each suburb. Emganwini West and Nketa 9 Seventh-day Adventist churches were picked to be surveyed. The total membership for Nketa 9 was four hundred and seventy six (476) and that of Emganwini West was two hundred and seventy seven (277) totalling to seven hundred and fifty three (753) church members. One hundred and seventy nine (179) of these members were in leadership. The two

¹ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Your Guide to Writing quality Research papers for Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan , 2008), 157.

selected churches were a representative sample as it is stated that, “a sample must be large enough to represent the population and it must contain the same types of people in the same proportion in which they appear in the total population.”²

As indicated above, the overall membership of the two churches at the time of sampling was seven hundred and fifty three (753) and an equal number of questionnaires were administered. Out of the seven hundred and fifty three (753) administered questionnaires seven hundred and forty four (744) were completed and returned. Data was also gathered through personal observation.

Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were delivered to Nketa 9 and Emganwini West Seventh-day Adventist local church administrators on June 5, 2010. This took place in the morning prior to Sabbath morning services. The local church leadership was involved in the administration of the questionnaires after being given clear instructions on procedures to be followed. The respondents were advised to bring the completed questionnaires the following week. Seven hundred and forty four (744) questionnaires were completed and returned.

Data Presentation and Interpretation Process

There were five sections on the questionnaire. Section A dealt with demographic data, sections B to E had closed questions with ordered choices for areas that needed to be considered to find out factors that affected church growth rate. Table 1 shows the variables each question was testing.

² Nancy Jean Vyhmeister. *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MD: Zondervan, 2001), 165.

Table 1. Section and Variable

Section	Variable
A	Demographic data
B	Inception into church membership.
C	Membership involvement
D	Soul winning methods
E	Planning

Section A: Demographic Data

Table 2 shows the demographic data for Nketa 9 and Emganwini West Seventh-day Adventist churches when the study was done. There were more females than males. Most of these females were below the age of 26. A further analysis of the table indicates that two hundred and thirty seven (237) of the females were less than 21 years of age. In most cases people in this age bracket are still dependent on their parents.

Table 2. Demographic Data

	Total	Sex		Education Level		
		Female	Male	College/ University	Grade 7 /Advanced level	No formal education
Age in years				Total		
12-15	137	80	57	-	137	-
16-20	100	72	28	-	100	-
21-25	110	72	38	13	97	-
26-30	89	62	27	71	18	-
31-35	60	33	27	39	21	-
36-40	80	44	36	57	23	-
41-45	50	33	17	11	39	-
46-50	56	37	19	20	36	
51-55	30	24	6	21	9	
56+	32	23	9	15	12	5
Totals	744	480	264	247	492	5

There were more members with either a grade seven certificate, ordinary level certificate or an advanced level certificate as compared to those with college and university qualifications. Those with no formal education were in the 56 years plus age bracket. A good number of members had a formal education and it can be concluded that they were able to understand simple concepts. Most of the members were in the school going age.

Section B: Inception into Church Membership

Question 1 of section B aimed at finding out how the respondents became church members. Four hundred and ten (55%) respondents indicated that they came into the church through baptism, one hundred and thirty four (18%) reported that they became church members through re-baptism and the other two hundred (27%) were transferred from other churches. Among all the respondents none were accepted into church membership on profession of faith. The above 27% had been members and later apostatized. These responses indicate that almost half of the members were not embracing the faith for the first time.

The objective of the second question in this section was to find out how the respondents came to know about the Seventh-day Adventist church. Three hundred and seventy (50%) of the respondents indicated that they were born into Adventist families; one hundred and thirty (17%) reported that friends introduced them to the church. Two hundred and forty four (33%) of the remaining respondents said that they heard about it through evangelistic efforts and no respondents indicated that knew about the church as a result of reading magazines. The fact that fifty percent of the surveyed individuals had a relationship with the church from birth might be suggesting that the degree of one's connectedness with a church increases chances of conversion.

For this reason a spirit of fellowship needs to permeate all activities that are carried out as this will encourage the creation of friend ships.

The last question in this section sought to find out for how long the respondents had been church members. Seventy seven (10%) respondents reported that they had been church members for less than a year, one hundred and nine (15%) said that they had been in the church for more than a year but less than two years and two hundred and thirty three (31%) respondents stated that they had been church members for between three years and five years. The remaining three hundred and twenty five (44%) respondents indicated that they had been church members for five years and above.

Section C: Involvement in Church Activities

The aim of this section was to find out whether Nketa-Emganwini church members were involved in church activities or not. The first question intended to find out whether the respondents considered participation in church programs helpful or not. All the seven hundred and forty four (100%) respondents reported that participating in church programs was helpful to the participants. They all reported that the participant's faith would be strengthened. They also said that strong social relationships would be formed and ones' knowledge of how programs are run would be increased. Question 2 was aimed at finding out about the respondents' involvement in church programs. Fifty-seven (8%) respondents indicated that they were always involved in church programs while three hundred and seventy one (50%) reported that they had never been involved in church programs. The remaining three hundred and sixteen (42%) indicated that their involvement in church programs was occasional. The responses showed that less than 50% of Nketa-Emganwini district church members were actively involved in the evangelism programs of the church. To the

question that sought to discover whether Nketa-Emganwini local church leaders involved other church members in the work of the church or not, only twenty-two (3%) individuals reported that the pastor availed opportunities to them to work. Sixty-one (8%) respondents indicated that church elders availed opportunities for them to work and one hundred and eighty eight (25%) reported those departmental leaders availed opportunities to them to work. The remaining four hundred and seventy three (64%) indicated that no one had ever availed an opportunity to them to work in the church.

Responses to the last question in section B specified that almost fifty percent of the parishioners pointed out that they had been church members for five years and above. One would have expected that such individuals have become mature Christians and are active participants in the activities of the church. On the contrary, responses to the last question of section C indicated that an equally big number is docile. The possible reason could be that many of those in the church just joined the church without belonging to it. To them, Christianity is not yet a lifestyle.

Section D: Evangelism Methods

This section was dealing with evangelism methods and the aim was to know the evangelism methods that Nketa-Emganwini district was using. Five hundred and twenty one respondents (70%) indicated that Nketa-Emganwini district was using only public evangelistic meetings as a method of soul winning. One hundred and seven (14%) reported that the district used two methods of evangelism and those were; public evangelistic meetings and Sabbath school visitors days. Forty seven (7%) respondents indicated that four methods of evangelism were used in Nketa-Emganwini district and those methods were: Public evangelistic meetings, Sabbath School visitors days, free literature distribution and one-on-one method of evangelism. The remaining

sixty nine (9%) respondents reported that Nketa-Emganwini district won souls through Sabbath school guest days. There were only two questions in this section and the second question sought to find out who were evangelizing in Nketa-Emganwini district. Only ten (1%) respondents indicated that all church members were involved in soul winning activities of the church. Six hundred and eighty (91%) respondents reported that only local church leaders were involved and one hundred and eighteen (15%) respondents indicated that preachers were the only ones that were involved in soul winning. It is interesting to note that even though this church district is heavily dependent on public evangelism for its soul-winning endeavour its growth rate is low. Most people have a defective concept of evangelism and so they leave preachers to do all the work.

Section E: Planning

There was only one question in section E and this question sought to find out how planning was being done in Nketa-Emganwini district. Six hundred and fifty five (88%) respondents indicated that church boards were the ones who planned the work in Nketa-Emganwini district and sixty nine (9%) reported that the church board and the business meetings were the ones that planned the work in Nketa-Emganwini district. The remaining twenty two (3%) respondents indicated that the church elders are the ones that plan the work in Nketa-Emganwini district.

Apparently, in this church district ordinary members are just executors of plans formulated by leadership and therefore lack program ownership. Consequently they do not fully commit themselves to the success of those activities.

Data from Personal Observation

Local church leaders, being assisted, by a few church members that were selected randomly to assist in different programs, mainly ran Nketa 9 and Emganwini

West Seventh-day Adventist churches. The prayer ministry consisted of a few members who had been elected during the annual selection process.

Discussion groups were big with only a few individuals monopolizing the discussions. No arrangements were made for the visitation of absent class members. This was regardless of the fact that some people would have missed church for more than one Saturday.

Check lists of local Church records, membership registers, communion services and material support were scrutinized. Some people had their names appearing only in the church register indicating that they were docile. A discussion with church leadership during the morning church services revealed that there were no deliberate plans to boost attendance to these meetings. An analysis of zonal record books indicated that some church members were not attending mid-week prayers while others attended occasionally and only a few were regular attendees.

Jacoby argues that:

When the people are rooted in the Word (Luke 8:13, Colossians 2:6-7), locked into the fellowship (Hebrews 3:12-14), checking their own hearts in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28), and prayerful (1 Peter 4:7), they will *naturally* share their faith, live joyfully and zealously, and give ungrudgingly.³

It is likely that Nketa 9 and Emganwini West Seventh-day Adventist churches church members lack the commitment component in their Christian experience and as a result they fail to support some of the regular church programs.

³ Doug, Jacoby. (2000, November 20) Statistics and Church Growth, p. 9.

Summary

There were more youths than adults in Nketa-Emganwini church district and these included those that were still attending school. Juveniles are a group with a sense of belonging and hence most of them are easily lured into neighbourhood social clusters. According to the demographics, some young people did not have their parents in the congregation. This could have been a limiting factor in their participation in religious activities.

Most people had formal education and this would possibly enhance their data processing skills. Information from personal observation and responses to questionnaires revealed that churches in this church district did not have a deliberate program to exploit the spiritual gifts of all members.

It appears there was no connectedness among Nketa-Emganwini district membership. Members were many but most of them joined the church without belonging to it. This anomaly resulted in the development of a remedial program aimed at cultivating relationships among members of this church district. The program, its design, implementation and evaluation will be dealt with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Designing the Program

A program development research methodology was used as an intervention strategy to correct the problem of low church growth in Nketa-Emganwini church district. According to Vyhmeister program development is “another specialized form of research.”¹ A program is whatever steps are taken to solve a problem and this might involve classes or seminars.²

There is need to understand that for a program to be successful the impetus should be felt by the leadership first then by the rest of the church members.³ The first step towards designing the program was assisting the local church leadership responsible for influencing the entire church membership to feel the impetus. In line with the advice above, the program would include the conducting of classes. Formulating goals and objectives was indispensable as that would be the basis for program evaluation.

A local church administrators’ meeting was convened with the objective of imploring their support for the program. They in turn were to meet with the rest of the

¹ Doug, Jacoby. *Statistics and Church Growth* (Los Angeles, California, ICOC Unity Conference, 2000), 163.

² *Ibid.*, 163.

³ Frances A. Schaeffer. *Equipping Pastors, Churches and You!* Retrieved August 5, 2012 from <http://www.churchleadership.org>.

church elders for the same purpose. The initial meeting took place on the 9th of July 2010 and the leaders were taken through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (S.W.O.T) analysis process.

The strengths of Nketa-Emganwini church district were that the district membership was young with youthful vigour and was educated enough to read with understanding. On the other hand it appears that members joined the church without belong to it. Consequently, bonding of church membership was weak. The immediate community comprises of young families with school going children. Functional associations characterize the same community where church members have roles.

A needs assessment was conducted and four (80%) local church leaders out of five (100%) indicated program development was mandatory. The fifth (20%) local church leader was of the opinion that the program was not needed.

Local church leaders' meetings were convened in the various churches. The local church administrators met again on 23rd July 2010 and the curriculum for the program was unveiled to them. The conjecture is that the challenge of coming up with or re-establishing a clear strategy is often largely an organizational one and depends on leadership.⁴ The curriculum would include a close study of the early Christian church as depicted in the book of Acts. Its duration would be two Sundays; 26th of September 2010 and 17th of October 2010. These were the days on which the district board members, the group that was targeted by the program, would be available.

The training program focused on local leadership who in turn were expected to deliberately incorporate the principles that they would have studied into all church activities inclusive of seminars and sermons.

⁴ Michael E. Porter, "What Is Strategy?" *Harvard Business Review*, November – December 1996, 77.

Seeing that the Seventh-day Adventist church document gives a leeway that the tenure of office for local church leaders can be two years, churches were asked to adopt the two year term as a way of facilitating continuity.⁵ As a result, the trained personnel would have ample time to implement the learnt concepts.

Materials and Tools Used During Presentations

Electronic devices inclusive of laptops, overhead projectors and a public address system were used to enhance learning. A district committee comprised of all local communication directors was formed to operate these gadgets. Information presented on power point was also available in the form of hand outs.

The Venue for Training Sessions

Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist church was used as a venue for both training sessions. This venue had adequate training facilities. Accessibility was also considered in the choice of this place.

Content of the Training Program

The whole training program centred on a need to create an atmosphere conducive for the bonding of church membership. Since Christianity is a lifestyle, parishioners are expected emulate what early Christian church members were doing which included caring for one another, participating in church activities and having close fellowship. The ultimate result would be a high church growth rate. The following topics were covered:

1. Practical Christianity,

⁵ General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 71.

2. Mentoring and Coaching,
3. Impacting the Community for Christ,
4. Inculcating Christian Principles to Everyday Life,
5. Benefits of Fellowship,
6. An Overview of the Book of Acts, and
7. Bonding Groups.

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation exercise was in two stages. The first stage was the evaluation of the training sessions and the second stage was the evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention strategy. Questionnaires and personal observations were used in the first stage and church records including quarterly reports were analysed in the second stage. An evaluation committee was established consisting of all head church elders. Questionnaires intended for this purpose were made available to these local leaders to distribute to all the attendees for completion. The team of communication directors assisted in the compilation of responses that were then analysed.

The rest of the information regarding the program design is presented in the tables below.

Table 3. Objectives Supporting Goal Number One

Objective	Person Responsible	Time Frame
i) To help members to consider Christianity as a life style.	Church pastor and local church leaders.	On-going.
ii) To develop Seventh-day Adventist Christians who are positively impacting the community.	The church pastor	26 September 2010
iii) To help members value fellowship.	The church pastor	26 September 2010

Table 4. Objectives supporting goal number two

Objective	Person Responsible	Time Frame
i) To help Nketa-Emganwini members to portray true Christian characters during the week.	Local church leaders and Local pastor.	On-going.
ii) To facilitate the bonding of church members.	Local Pastor and local church leaders.	On-going.

Table 5. Objectives supporting goal number three

Objective	Person Responsible	Time Frame
i) To help Nketa-Emganwini church district membership to inculcate Christian principles into their daily lives.	Local leadership and the local pastor.	Weekly.
ii) To help newly baptized members to make friends in the church	Local church leaders.	Quarterly

Program Implementation

When the program design had been completed the implementation stage followed. Head church elders played a leading role in this stage and they made sure that all district board members attended.

Training Session Number One

The first training session was conducted at Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist church on 26 September 2010 as planned. The intention of this session was to assist the district board members to appreciate that the church does not exist in a vacuum and that there were many more competing interests for the same people the church was targeting. Moreover it was to point out the need for church members to aid each other to inculcate spirituality into their day-to-day living. The last objective was to develop local church leaders with an understanding that evangelism is not an event but a process.

The church district board members were at the venue by 9 am as expected. Two hundred and forty seven (98%) out of two hundred and fifty two (252) district board members attended the training seminar. The following program was used:

Table 6. Training program for Nketa-Emganwini District local church leaders part 1

Time	Activity	Comment
09:00am-09:30am	Welcome and opening remarks	It was done
09:30 am-10:30 am	Practical Christianity.	It was done.
10:40 am-11:40 am	Mentoring and coaching.	It was done.
11:50 am -12:50	Group discussions.	It was done.
13:00pm– 14:00 pm	Lunch	It was done.
14:00 pm-15:00pm	Impacting the community for Christ.	It was done.
15:00 pm-15:30 pm	Evaluation and closing remarks.	It was done.

The topics covered on this day dealt with the life of church members in the community making it clear that they needed to exemplify true Christianity to their neighbours. There is always a need for members to visit one another for the purpose of strengthening each other. When non believing neighbours of celebrated Christians decide to accept Jesus as their Lord and personal saviour they will do that whole heartedly. These will not just join the church but they will belong to it. It is also crucial that members befriend unbelievers, as this would pave way for evangelism. As a way of enhancing unity, local church leaders were implored to organize programs during which individuals would be afforded an opportunity to mingle with their fellow worshipers and get to know each other better. The leadership was also reminded of the need to coach and mentor the newly baptized affiliates.

According to the discussion that was held, the missing element had been practical Christianity. For a long time many people had been acting as if Christianity was a part time ministry. Some had always thought that they could live anyhow without worrying about how they were impacting their neighbours. The attendees longed for the bonding that was experienced by the apostles as recorded in Acts chapter two.

An evaluation exercise took place at the end of all the presentations and its outcome will be dealt with under the section 'Program Evaluation.

Training Session Number Two

This training session was conducted on 17th October 2010. It focused on the need to inculcate Christian principles in one's everyday life. In chapter two it was evident that the growth of a church depended much on the spiritual condition of its members hence a need to help members attain spiritual maturity. This bonding groups system would strengthen members spiritually and motivate them for evangelism. They would be assisted to grow spiritually and as a result become committed and involved in the entire life of the church activities.

Two hundred and forty nine (99%) district board members attended this session which took place at Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist church on 17 October 2010. The following program in Table 7 was used.

Table 7. Training Program for Nketa-Emganwini District Local Church Leaders Part II

Time	Activity	Comment
09:00am-09:30am	Welcome and opening remarks	It was done
09:30 am-10:30 am	Inculcating Christian principles to everyday life	It was done.
10:40 am-11:40 am	Benefits of fellowship	It was done.
11:50 am -12:50	An overview of the book of Acts	It was done.
13:00pm–14:00 pm	Lunch	It was done.
14:00 pm-15:00pm	Bonding groups	It was done.
15:00 pm-15:30 pm	Evaluation and closing remarks.	It was done.

The lessons in this session focused on the concept of bonding groups as a way of ensuring spiritual Christian-maturation growth. Loners easily succumb to sin and once they do the surrounding community becomes resistant to the evangelism endeavours of the church. Bonding groups are the best way of helping members to belong to the church. For this support system to be effective, members of a bonding group will have to obey the biblical principles. People in a bonding group were to be fifteen or less and were expected to participate in all church programs in addition to assisting fellow needy members.

The training session ended with an evaluation exercise whose results will be dealt with under the section ‘Program Evaluation.’

Formation of Bonding Groups

Bonding groups were meant to provide church members with a spiritual and social support system as a way of creating an environment conducive for maturation in Christian experience. When individual members would achieve spiritual maturity, the church would then experience the kind of fellowship that existed in the church of the New Testament. The formation of the bonding groups was such that they would be able to achieve their intended goal. During apostolic age, church members were able to cater for each other's material needs. They grew in fellowship to the extent that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (Act 4:32). Among bonding groups members were the needy and the privileged, all belonging to the same age bracket. The selection was done with the help of the local church leadership. Each bonding group had a leader, secretary, events coordinator and needs manager.

By 31 November 2010, all the five churches had formed the bonding groups totalling to six hundred and twenty (620). Bonding groups' membership ranged from seven (7) to fifteen (15) members.

Orientation Process

To ensure the implementation of the program an orientation exercise was carried out in which all church members were involved. The book of Acts was studied in an endeavour to get concepts that would guide bonding groups activities.

An outline of the job description of the bonding group leader, secretary, events coordinator and needs manager was outlined. All that took place in the first two weeks of December 2010

The Function of Bonding Groups

The concept of bonding groups came up as a result of the study of factors that hinder and enhance church growth. According to the literature review, the numerical growth of a church results from its qualitative growth. When applying the bonding groups concept, there was need to avoid leading church members into forming close bonds with each other to the extent of repelling those wanting to connect with the church. The purpose of the bonding groups was to provide members with a support system that helps them in their spiritual growth. When members succumb to spiritual challenges the surrounding community is led to shun the church. Members would be provided for by their immediate Christian communities in times of material needs thus experiencing brotherly love which is necessary for church growth. It would be difficult for members to apostatize while belonging to a group of spiritual individuals functioning as their spiritual guardians. Adding members to a church where apostasy is rife does not result in ultimate growth.

Program Evaluation

The evaluation exercise was carried out in two phases with the training sessions being evaluated in the first phase, program implementation and effectiveness of the bonding groups concept was appraised in phase two. Questionnaires were used in each phase.

Evaluation of Results

Members' comments during both training sessions indicated that they valued the lessons and considered the whole exercise beneficial. Discussions during their fellowship meetings centred on the topics that had already been covered. There were few members who seemed not fascinated.

The same questionnaire was used for both training sessions and it had only one section containing three questions. One question sought to find out whether respondents rated the lessons as practicable or not, the other dealt with the understandability of the material presented and the last one centred on the eagerness of respondents to implement what they had been taught.

All the two hundred and forty eight (100%) board members that were present rated the lessons as practicable. Two hundred and forty (97%) of those present indicated that the lessons were understandable while eight (3%) reported that they could not understand some concepts that had been presented. Those who were eager to implement the concepts they had learnt were two hundred and forty (97%) and the remaining eight (3%) said that they needed more information before implementing.

Table 8 indicates an increase in the number of people that were baptized in the years 2011 and 2012. The bonding groups concept was introduced at the end of 2010 and so its contribution towards the growth of the church was insignificant. A steady increase in the number of people baptized in 2011 and 2012 is an indication that this concept is a worthy intervention strategy to the problem of a low church growth rate.

Table 8. Baptism Records for the Years 2010-2012

Year	Membership at the beginning of the year.	Number baptized	Membership at the end of the year
2010	4485	398	4890
2011	4890	437	5360
2012	5360	550	5910

Local Church Leaders' Monthly Reports

An analysis of the reports revealed that by the end of 2011 eighty seven percent (87%) of the members belonged to bonding groups. Those that did not belong to groups were mostly the elderly members of the church. Thirteen bonding groups had collectively assisted a member during a wedding. In 2012 most of the groups had received additional members in terms of new converts.

The ratio of new church members to old church members for the years 2010 to 2012 was; 1:11, 1:11, and 1:10. This is an indication that ratios have improved significantly from what it was in 2009. At that time there were sixteen old members for every new convert. The ratios are expected to continue decreasing as bonding groups continue to work.

Bonding Groups Leaders' Quarterly Reports

Bonding group leaders were to render quarterly reports rather than monthly reports and they were to report on what they were doing for their immediate communities. Some had held Bible studies with non-believers while others reported having assisted the needy non-believers in their vicinity in addition to holding Bible studies.

Departmental Reports

The morning services and personal ministries departments reported an increase in the number of people volunteering to participate in church programs. It was reported that seventy five percent (75%) of the people that had been baptized six months after the inception of bonding groups had had contact with a group. Groups had solely led some of the candidates through the conversion experience. Youth department leaders recorded an increase in the number of youths attending youth meetings. They

attributed that to bonding groups' activities among the youth. Church clerks reported a decrease in issues of apostasy.

Summary

It can be concluded that qualitative growth is a prerequisite for sustainable numerical increase. There is a close connection between the quality of members and their perception of the spiritual aspect of life. Their passivity can be attributed to joining the church instead of belonging to it. Christians of such a quality demonstrate ignorance about that Christianity is a life style. Sustainable growth results when there are no losses of parishioners. Properly functioning bonding groups can greatly enhance membership retention as well as spiritual maturation. The spiritually mature individuals understand their responsibility and their accountability to God. Member-to-member bonds are enhanced thereby creating a community of believers who can assist its members who are in need of material resources.

Bonding groups could be a solution to most of the challenges that churches experience, which are the decisive causes of low or diminutive church growth. This includes failure by members to live according to their faith thus causing a negative impact to the community.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Nketa-Emganwini church district is one of the urban church districts under West Zimbabwe Conference in the Zimbabwe Union Conference territory. It is in Bulawayo, which is the second capital city of Zimbabwe. This church district was experiencing diminutive growth which necessitated the carrying out of a research to find out the causes of this problem and to come up with a solution. A review of the Bible, Ellen G. White's writings and contemporary literature revealed that stunted growth might result from the fact that local members had joined the church without embracing Christianity as a lifestyle. There was minimal evidence, in their characters, of transformation by the Holy Spirit. They did not solely depend on scripture provisions for their protection. All this signified that they had not yet reached a point of belonging to the church. Consequently, these individuals could not fully commit themselves to the church and its mission. After having come up with a solution to that problem, the need for a remedial program was apparent.

According to a study of the local setting, the Ndebele speaking people in a highly populated area dominate this church district. A questionnaire with five sections was used as the instrument for data collection and this was complemented with personal observations.

The analysis of demographic data indicated that most of the church members in this district were below the age of fifty in 2010 and had formal education. .

A remedial program targeted at the entire believing community was developed. Classes were conducted for local leaders during which they were given ample information needed for the success of the program. The training sessions were conducted on two Sundays culminating with the formation of bonding groups as a practical solution to the problem of stunted growth in Nketa-Emganwini church district. An orientation exercise took place in December 2010.

The evaluation of the program revealed that bonding groups were an effective solution to the problem of low church growth in this church district. The decrease in the ratio of old members to new members indicated the success of the whole undertaking.

Conclusion

Qualitative growth is the basis for quantitative growth and this is also true in the area of church growth. A compromise in the quality of church members culminates in low or stunted growth. Most of the causes of low church growth centre on the spiritual maturity of the members. The study indicates that numerical growth of a church is improved by the spiritual growth of its members. Spiritually mature members are responsible and committed to the programs of the church including evangelism. The behaviour of worshipers determines whether non-believers will desire to belong to the church or not.

The inception of bonding groups in Nketa-Emganwini church district led to the decrease in the number of members who apostatized. Before the formation of bonding groups, the church would get new converts only as a result of evangelistic efforts but now some come as a result of bonding groups' activities. These groups were also created to provide spiritual and social support required by church members.

Recommendations

The church is expected to both provide spiritual support to its members and lead non-believers through the conversion experience. The concept of bonding church members appears to be an effective method in helping the church to carry out these functions. The same principle is modelled in the New Testament church as recorded in the book of Acts. Members of the church then were knit together in close fellowship and this is what bonding seeks to achieve. It is recommended that:

1. Local churches are encouraged to form bonding groups as a way of creating a spiritual and social support system for parishioners.
2. That all newly baptized members be encouraged to belong to bonding groups as this would strengthen their faith through fellowship and mission consciousness.
3. Local churches are encouraged to formulate evangelism programs with a purpose of assisting non-believers to belong to the church rather than just joining it.

APPENDIX A

NKETA-EMGANWINI DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information on how Nketa-Emganwini district operates. Confidentiality will be maintained.

Instructions

In section A you are required to tick in the appropriate box. Each of the questions in sections B, C and D is followed by four possible answers marked a, b, c, and d. Which of the possible answers describe your church? Only one of them should be the correct answer. Circle the letter marking the one answer that is correct according to Nketa-Emganwini district. The last question in section D requires you to write your answer in the spaces provided.

1)

Section A: Demographic Data

Please tick in the provided boxes.

Age in years	Sex		Education Level		
	Female	Male	College / University	Grade seven-Advanced level	No formal Education
12-15					
16-20					
21-25					
26-30					
31-35					
36-40					
41-45					
46-50					
51-55					
60+					

Section B: Introduction into the church

1. How did you become a member of Nketa-Emganwini district?

- a. I was baptized at Nketa-Emganwini district.
 - b. Through rebaptism.
 - c. I was accepted on profession of faith.
 - d. I transferred from another church.
2. How did you come to know about the Seventh-day Adventist church?
- a. I attended an evangelistic effort.
 - b. I was born into an Adventist family.
 - c. Through a friend.
 - d. A small group of people visited me.
3. For how long have you been a church member?
- a. Less than a year.
 - b. One year to two years.
 - c. Three years to five years.
 - d. Five years and above.

Section C: Involvement in Church Activities

1. How does being involved in church programs assist a church member?
- a. Their faith is strengthened.
 - b. They build strong social relationships.
 - c. They get to know how things are done in church.
 - d. All the above.
2. How often are you involved in church programs?
- a. I am always involved.
 - b. Occasionally.

- c. I have never been involved.
 - d. None of the above.
3. The following church leaders have availed opportunities to you to be involved in church activities.
- a. The district pastor.
 - b. The church elder.
 - c. Local church departmental directors.
 - d. None of the above

Section D: Soul Winning

1. Which of the following methods are used to win souls into the church at Nketa-Emganwini district?
- i) Evangelistic efforts.
 - ii) Sabbath School guest days
 - iii) Free literature distribution.
 - iv) One to one evangelism.

Write your answer in the following blank spaces:.....

2. Who are involved in soul winning?
- a. All church members.
 - b. Only local church leaders.
 - c. Preachers.
 - d. Invited guest speakers.

Section E: Planning

1. Who plans the work in Nketa-Emganwini district?

- a. The church board.
- b. The church board plans then the plans are brought to the business for approval.
- c. Church elders.
- d. Departmental councils.

APPENDIX B

MONTHLY BONDING GROUP REPORT FORM

Name of church

Name of the bonding group

Date of submission.....

The report was submitted by:.....

1) Number of souls won to Christ this month.

Answer:.....

2) Number of Bible studies conducted with back sliders.

Answer:.....

3) Number of Bible studies conducted with non-Adventists.

Answer:.....

4) No of souls baptized this month through the efforts the bonding group.

Answer:.....

5) Number of prayer meetings held by the bonding group.

6) Number of bonding groups formed as a result of dividing the parent bonding group.

Answer:.....

APPENDIX C

EVALUATION SHEET

Name of church.....

Date.....

1. Did the training achieve its objectives?

Answer:.....

2. List five things that you consider as objectives of this training program.

Answer:.....
.....
.....

3. Were the presentations understandable?

Answer:.....

4. What can be done to improve the training program?

Answer:.....
.....
.....

5. Comment on the

program.....
.....

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