

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: THE LOSS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH IN SOUTH WESTERN ANGOLA UNION

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This study identified what causes losses of membership (often referred to as apostasy and missing) in the church statistics. As can be seen in table 26, and the problem statement, the Southern West Angola Union realized high baptisms and in the same five year period high losses are recorded under apostasy, missing and death.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southern West Angola faces a big challenge, that of losing members after they are baptized, that is, on one hand there is increase of members in the church, and on the other there are significant losses. The study has therefore investigated on what needs to be done to encourage the newly baptized to remain faithful, and on how these can maintain a rich devotional life in the church. Some questions to which the study is responding to are: “What causes the newly baptized to leave the church?” What can be done to reduce the losses? At the end of the study, the researcher will make recommendations to the union on what can be done to retain the newly baptized. The intention of the study is to help the Sudeste

to respond successfully to the gospel commission of Matthew 28:19-20, of not only baptizing but on how to teach and to disciple.

A survey was done on a few Pastors, church elders, selected members and former Adventists in order to identify the causes of apostasy in the church and to find possible solutions. Finally as will be seen later, the program was tried in the Central church and the results were encouraging.

This project is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction, and background, followed by the statement of the problem, then purpose, significance, justification, limitation, delimitation of the study, and methodology. Chapter 2 is literature review, chapter 3 describes the situation in Angola, and chapter 4 is an analysis of information that has been collected from the respondents. The study ends with chapter 5 which is a summary, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

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CHURCH IN SOUTHERN WEST ANGOLA UNION

A project

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by

Jose Pereira Lemos


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This project is dedicated, first to my former adviser Dr Nancy Jean Vyhmeister who opened my eyes to research. She guided me when I started, and now she is my reader, as I conclude my work. I will remain forever thankful for her contribution to my scholarship.

Secondly, this research is dedicated to work of the Lord in Angola, and to any future researchers who may want to use this research as reference point for their studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	viii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background to the Study.....	2
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the Study	3
Significance of the Study	3
Justification for the Study	4
Limitation of the Study	4
Delimitation of the Study.....	5
Methodology	5
Definition of Key Terms.....	6
Overview of the Paper	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Theological Reflection of Member Retention	9
Old Testament.....	9
God's Retention and Redemption Methods.....	9
Another of God's Method of Retention.....	10
New Testament	11
Jesus' Method	11
Paul's Method	13
The Early Church and Member Retention	15
Spirit of Prophecy	15
Contemporary Theologians.....	17
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING	19
The Country of Angola	19
Seventh-day Adventist Church in Angola	20
First Adventist Congregation.....	20
Value of Teaching.....	22
Extent of Evangelism.....	23

Statistics of the Past Five Years.....	23
Information that Raises Eyebrows	24
4. STUDY FINDINGS	25
Reasons for the Method	25
Methodology	26
Information on Apostasy and Retention	26
Environment in each District	27
Responses from the Pastors and Church Elders.....	28
Responses from Selected Adventist Members.....	36
Responses from former Adventist members.....	47
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS.....	54
Introduction.....	54
Summary.....	54
Conclusions.....	55
Recomendations.....	57
APPENDIXES	
A. MEMBERSHIP AT SWAU (2010- 2014)	59
B. MAP OF ANGOLA	60
C. LETTER FROM THE UNION	61
D. QUESTIONNAIRES	62
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	71
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	74

LIST OF TABLES

1. Most Predominant Membership Retention Strategies in Angola	28
2. Strategies used in the Local Church/District	30
3. Recommendations of other Retention Strategies	31
4. Strategies Tried and have not Worked	32
5. Reasons for not Working	32
6. Tendencies that are Destructive to Membership Retention	33
7. Reasons why Members Leave the Church.....	34
8. Strategies to Reclaim Former Member	35
9. Strategies to be Employed to keep Members Active	36
10. Background Information	37
11. Major Attraction to the Adventist Church	38
12. Respondents' Opinion for Remaining an Adventist	39
13. Opinions About Adventists	40
14. Welcome in the Church	41
15. Major Factors for Membership Loss	42
16. Retention Strategies	43
17. Personal Copies Books	44
18. Read Books	45
19. Most Liked Programs	46
20. Spiritually Enriching Programs	47
21. Programs and Attitudes	49
22. Retention Strategies for the Church	50
23. Issues Associated with Former Members	51
24. Possibility and Factors to Come back to Church	52
25. Church Visitation	52

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUA	Adventist University of Africa
O.T.	Old Testament
EUD	Euro-Africa Division
NEAU	North East Angola Union
N.T.	New Testament
N	Frequency or Number of the Pastor or Members
NORDESTE	North West Angola Union
SID	Southern Africa Indian-Ocean Division
SUDESTE	South West Angola Union
SWAU	Southern West Angola Union
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SOP	Spirit of Prophecy
VOP	Voice of Prophecy

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Out of the eight Unions in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Angola ranks number three in the number of people joining the church through baptism. The massive growth experienced country-wide led to the formation of the second union: Northeast Angola Union (Nordeste) and Southern West Angola Union (Sudeste). The creation of a second union was done in the year 2010.

Even after the formation of the two unions, membership statistics still showed consistent upward growth. What is even good now is that, the two unions, each being smaller in size than before (because of the partitioning) records numbers that are more accurate than at time when there was only one large entity (the union).

Unfortunately, as will be seen in the statement of the problem, the effectiveness that now exists in managing the growth figures has revealed a new challenge; that of losses of members through apostasy and missing. This is clearly noticeable each time statistical reports are presented at year-end meetings. This is causing great concern from both the union and division levels. It is for this reason that the researcher, being the Executive Secretary of the Union, sought permission to conduct a study and come up with findings that will help reduce the losses that come through apostasy and missing unionwide.

Background to the Study

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Angola was founded in 1923. This was a time when the country was under the colonial rule of Portugal. It was because of language (Portuguese) that Angola and Mozambique were placed under Euro-Africa Division. They operated under the above mentioned division from 1923 to 2002. According to past statistical records, there was not much of membership growth during that time. For example in 1975 there were only 25,000 baptized members in the whole country of Angola. Some of the retarding factors to growth could have been war of liberation, where the majority of people were either on the run, or were taking an active part in the war of liberation, and later, civil war which brought many things to a standstill. Because of these just mentioned activities, one can only guess that there was less concentration on evangelism.

During the above stated period, travel and meeting in groups for worship was no longer safe. Groupings for worship were either limited to a few people, or places, or non-existent in most parts of the country until 2002 when civil war ended, resulting in freedom of worship. The following year, 2003, management of Angola Union was changed from Euro-Africa Division, to Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID). At this point the church began to grow faster and stronger, both in membership and finance. This maybe, was so because of the freedom of worship, and the proximity of the supervising Division. This happened to the extent that there was a need to divide the existing Union into two, the North East and South West. In spite of the difficulties experienced, the church in Angola remained part of the worldwide church, and remains a fast growing entity even now.

Statement of the Problem

South Angola Union statistics of a five-year period (2010- 2014) show that a total of 70,579 people were baptized, and a total of 9,994 people were dropped, or lost, i.e. through apostasy (4,619), death (2,132), and missing (2,142) during the same period.¹ Those losses are 14, 1 percent of those baptized, in the same period, a situation that has raised concern at both Union and Division levels. This is what motivated the researcher, the union secretary to do a study.

With this study, the researcher's intention was to find out the reasons for such high losses, and use the findings to suggest, or recommend solutions to membership loss to the Union.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and identify the cause, or causes of the high membership losses in this Southern West Angola Union (SWAU). At the end of the study the researcher intends to recommend a possible, or possible solutions. Such to include programs that can reduce overall membership losses union-wide and such findings can be contextualized and replicated to other places of the SID.

Significance of the Study

The success of this study will enable the researcher to qualify for a Master of Arts Degree in Pastoral Theology. The result of the study will be made available for use by the two unions in Angola, that is, on how to identify causes of membership losses, and on how to achieve retention especially at local church level.

Such results will also help the local churches not only to identify, but to deal with factors that trigger the above mentioned problem of losses. The findings are also

¹ See Appendix A.

significant in that they can be contextualized to any congregation. The results of the study could also contribute to current scholarship

Justification for the Study

The high percentage of losses is evidence of an existing problem, or problems. Members are baptized, but some drop off, or are removed from membership. Without such a study and its results, the church in Angola will not accomplish its mission of the gospel to all (Matt. 24:14). If findings are properly done, they are likely to show how the total baptisms in most cases, are usually be negatively affected by losses. This could even increase if the problems of apostasy and missing are not given due attention.

What the study is investigating is in line with the Gospel Commission (Matt. 28:19-20): that we should not only “preach” and “baptize”, but also apply the retention measures Jesus mentioned in this text: “teaching” and “making disciples”. People may know the concepts, but fail to apply them. This study, therefore, reveals the need that is in Angola, for measures that will reduce, or curb losses of members in the church.

Limitation of the Study

The present study had several limiting factors. Some respondents either delayed the completion of the questionnaires, or made things difficult for the researcher to get information. These factors include:

1. Very weak bibliographic access in Angolan libraries
2. Time limit given for this project (more time was needed).
3. Yearly changes of personnel in the local churches (there was no continuity in local church for respondents to the research).

4. Financial difficulties to travel from one place to another to collect information
5. Language barrier. The researcher is a Portuguese speaking person and the study is conducted in English which is a third language to him.
6. Getting information from former members was a challenge, especially when requesting them to complete questionnaires or respond to interviews.

Delimitations of the Study

Recognizing that human life and its relationships are sublimely complex, the analysis was restricted to information officially disclosed in questionnaires and interviews.

Therefore the research was confined to four groups; pastors, elders, members of selected churches and former members, for whom questionnaires were designed and distributed. It is further confined to only two districts out of a total of one hundred and four in the union. The focus was on the areas: (a) retention strategies (b) the church's strength and weaknesses.

Methodology

Some sections of the research are library-based, especially in Chapter 2 where literature review was given prominence, and then in the chapters that follow, the use of surveys, questionnaires, and interviews were made. This helped the research to assess the extent of the problem (membership loss), possible causes, and what the possible solutions could be. As will be seen in Chapter 3, the groups identified as respondents had information that became relevant and helpful to the study. In other words, the researcher used the mixed method the qualitative and quantitative in its approach.

Definition of Key Terms

The researcher decided to define two key terms whose meanings are relevant to the study. There are member loss and member retention.

Member loss: This may mean loss through apostasy or when a member's whereabouts are just not known. According to R.C. Sproul, loss of membership in a church is a confrontive and corrective measure taken by an individual, church leader, or the congregation regarding a matter of sin in the life of a believer.² Another writer describes membership loss as closing the back door in a church.³ This could be taken to mean, reducing things, or situations that may be causing people to leave the church, or be removed from, church membership.

Member retention can be described as “a ministry of nurture to those within the gates⁴. Such nurture includes church discipline. This can be taken to mean, creating situations and programs that cause members to remain as active attenders in the church.

Overview of the Paper

This work is divided into five chapters, which are quite succinct.

Chapter 1 clarifies the objectives and the reasons for the research, showing important points of the current problem of losses of membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Western Angola Union (SWAU).

² R. C. Sproul, *In Search of Dignity* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1983), 182.

³ For more details see, R. Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growing Without Compromising your Message and your Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

⁴ Sproul., 182.

Chapter 2 presents literature review, showing how evangelism leads to church growth, and that in any congregation, losses are what need to be noted and dealt with always in any congregation.

Chapter 3 this is followed by a description of the situation of the Adventist Church in South Western Angola with respect to how, and when the church began and grew to what it is today. Some of the information comes from the statistical reports of the past years and some from personal interviews.

Chapter 4 presents methodology and analysis of data which was collected from respondents. Finally, the listing of respondents comments, suggestions, and proposals. Chapter 5 is a summary, followed by the conclusions and recommendations regarding the study. Thus, with the approach in these chapters, the researcher intends to complete the study, having the belief that God has a special care for his people and for his church especially by reducing membership loss to the greatest minimum.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

For a study of this nature to accomplish the intended goal, there had to be a review of related literature. This is where selected sources were cited in order to strengthen the researcher's findings. This chapter therefore, focuses on questions such as: (a) "has this subject been dealt with before?" (b) "How can previous knowledge help in this study?"

According to F. W. Struwig and G. B. Stead there is necessity for literature review, they state: "A brief description of the literature covering the field of study is needed."⁵ Adding to this is what Earl Babbie and Johann Mouton observe, that "Every research report should be placed in the context of the general body of scientific knowledge."⁶

According to the above sources, review of literature accomplishes the following:

- (a) It brings the reader up to date with previous research
- (b) It helps to show whether previous literature in general, agrees or disagrees with an issue or on issues
- (c) It gives the researcher a chance (if need be) to challenge previously accepted ideas or knowledge.
- (d) Review of literature can serve as bibliographic source for future researchers.

⁵ F. W. Struwig and G. B. Stead, *Planning, Designing and Reporting Research* (Cape Town, SA: Maskew Miller Longman, 2001), 43.

⁶ Earl Babbie and Johann Mouton, *The Practice of Social Research* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 565- 566.

In this review of literature, the researcher began with theological reflection on member retention. This was followed by Spirit of Prophecy guidance on matters of member retention, and then, what contemporary writers have said on the subject. In other words, on the theological perspective, examples have been selected from the Old and New Testaments, and from what other writers have said (Spirit of Prophecy included).

This is in line with what Mouton says that: “When you embark on your study, one of your first aims should be to find out what has been done in your field of study.”⁷

Theological Reflection of Member Retention

On theological reflection the researcher begins with the presupposition that God the Creator, and Jesus the Savior are models in practicing retention of members. The objective of this section therefore is to find out what the Bible says on membership loss and membership retention. Selected Bible sections are drawn, first, from the Old Testament, and then from the New Testament. The examples will be on what God, Jesus, Paul and the early Church did on outreach and retention. This is not only how they viewed it, but how they practiced an outreach that is retentional.

Old Testament

God’s Retention and Redemption Methods

The very first loss is seen at the beginning of human history. In Genesis 3:9, Adam and Eve destined to die because of violating the law of God. This was according to what God had said, “for if you eat of it (the tree) you will surely die” Genesis 2: 27, now that Adam and Eve ate, and as recorded in the Bible the curse of

⁷ Johann Mouton, *How to Succeed in your Masters and Doctoral Studies. A South African Guide and Resource Book* 5th ed. (Pretoria: Hatfield, Van Shaik Publishers, 2011), 86- 87.

death fell upon both of them. However, in Genesis 3:15 the plan of salvation was announced and later in John 3:16, God's love was revealed (for God so loved the world). One would view God's instruction on not eat of the tree as an education and a warning, which further communicated the consequences of the "eating of the forbidden fruit", death. Further, Geneses 3:15 (announcement of the Plan of Redemption) and John 3:16 are so related that the earlier is the "plan to redeem" and the latter is the fulfillment of the plan, showing the extent of God's love to humanity.

Comments on the footnotes in the NIV Bible indicate that it was God's love, which brought about the plan of salvation. Another aspect recorded in Gen 3: 9 shows a situation where God sought for Adam (calling him) "where are you?" This is an indication that even when loss has taken place, love and redemption play a major role. According to the above writer remains clear that God places great value on each person. He wants him saved. This is an example to the church to either deter the loss of a member, or redeem one who is lost (Luke 19:10). The above example shows "Love" as a great instrument of retention. God used it, and it worked.

Another of God's Method of Retention

During the pilgrimage of Israel in the desert through Moses, God outlined methods and steps that would be followed to keep people in the faith. The text, Deuteronomy 6:6-9 is a good example. It shows what the researcher views as what kept Israelites in the Jewish faith. This is confirmed by the following statements that are drawn from this Deuteronomy text:

- (a) The words which God commanded had to be in their hearts (verse 6)
(this could mean, meditating on God's word every moment of their lives).

- (b) Teaching the children God's command, diligently (verse 7a) (the teaching component has an element of leaving one without any doubt about God's expectations and intentions in life.
- (c) "Talking of them (God's commands). "When you sit in the house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (verse 7b). This could be emphasizing total commitment to the will of God.

Commenting on this, the footnote on NIV Bible has the following to say, "Many Jews take these verses literary..." meaning the words were taken into practice in a literal way, and without any question. This is a good example to the church of the present day, putting to practice what the word of God says.

Further, the above can also be taken to mean: diligence in teaching and observation of the law were key (in Israel) to remaining faithful to God and His word. This also leaves one with the impression that educating people on God's expectations was part of life in Jewish community of faith (Mic 7:14). In this text Micah places emphasis on shepherding which in fact can be viewed as diligent caring and nurturing.

New Testament

Jesus' Method

The New Testament texts cited in this section are meant to reveal the fact that Jesus, in His ministry remains a model for retention. For example He started His ministry with twelve disciples (Mathew 12:1). When He called each one of them, He said, "follow me, I will make you fishers of men" (Mathew 4:19, Mark 1:17). What seems to come out of this text is the "making" which can be taken to mean "I will train you," or "I will put you into a school of discipleship".

According to the following texts, Jesus' "making of disciples" included involving them in the work. The following texts are fitting examples where "His disciples (a) picked up twelve baskets" (Luke 9:17), (b) sent them (His disciples) to preach, and to heal the sick (Luke 9:1-6); (c) Luke 10:1-17; He again appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two to preach. When they returned, their testimony was "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name".

So, two elements are highlighted in Jesus' ministry as in the above texts: "The call", "the making", i.e. discipling. According to this, the newly baptized, together with regular members are to be given a chance to put their faith into practice through witnessing and participating in various activities of the church.

The three-and-half years training that Jesus did to His disciples was climaxed by the commissioning as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. Here the disciples were commissioned to (i) preach, (ii) to baptize, (iii) to teach and (iv) to make disciples. As mentioned much earlier in this study, the last two words, to "teach" and "making disciples" have a strong connotation to retention. If one were to define the two terms, the meanings would be:

(a) Teach: "give information so as to help a student learn something... make someone realize or understand."⁸

So, if a student is given information, and made to understand matters of faith, their stay in the faith is almost sure.

(b) To make disciples (to disciple): "for one to be a follower of Christ on matters of Christian faith."⁹ Usually, a disciple is loyal to his teacher, or to his master, hence

⁸ Catherine Soanes, ed., *Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

Jesus' emphasis on discipleship. In His 3½ years of ministry, He lost only one out of the twelve (Judas) (Matt 26: 47-50; 27:5).

The ministry of Jesus reveals that if properly trained, disciples will eventually win others to the faith (Acts 2: 41... three thousand baptized, Acts 5:4 “the number of the men came to be about five thousand”).

The disciples of Jesus are an example that, if one is properly taught, and disciplined they become so committed that they are ready even to die for their faith or for what they believe. James (Acts 12:2) was killed for his faith and Stephen (was stoned Acts 7:54-60; 22:20) are examples of many disciples who died for their faith

Paul's Method

Paul's method has elements of retention as well. To support this study, the researcher selected a few examples from the life and ministry of Paul. For example, the Apostle Paul taught the new believers all the truth saying: “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). Here, Paul is emphasizing the importance of teaching and follow-ups. The book of Acts has many examples where the apostle always visited those who he had won to the faith.

The following text confirms this: “And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches” (Acts 15:41). Strengthening one another is an element that can lead, or result in retention. It makes each member experience being part of the group. Scripture also says, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:5).

Spending time with the members especially the newly baptized can also lead to, or result in retention. As seen in Paul's ministry, he also placed emphasis of faith in Christ when teaching the new converts. At this point he said, “Rooted and built up in

Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving” (Col 2:7). The above texts show how Paul taught and preached. He pointed believers to Christ. In other words, teaching and visitation can be strong elements that result in retention, and more still, if the believers are pointed to Christ.

In another instance Paul boldly states: “Follow my example as I follow Christ” (I Cor 11:1). In other words the apostle confirms that Christ is his role model. The apostle here could be saying: “What I do, was what Christ did.” Other elements found in Paul’s ministry are those of mentorship, and crossing racial boundaries. This is how Christ taught and demonstrated.

On this, Paul crossed racial boundaries when he co-opted Timothy and Silas, non-Jews to partner with him in ministry and serving the Lord (Acts 16:3, 22). He also referred to them as his sons in the faith (I Tim 1:2; Titus 1: 4). Such a ministry can also be referred to as ‘relational’. It has a bonding aspect, and can, in most cases be retentional. In this Paul views himself as a spiritual parent to the two young partners. These two and many others relied on him on matters of faith. To them He was clearly a role model on matters of faith.

More than 12 times in Romans 16 Paul uses the term “greet...” mentioning names of several people in one congregation. Next to each name he makes a description of the person, showing how much he knows each of these personally, also showing that he related to each individual well. This shows a pastoral concern over this group of members, revealing how much he loved and valued the people he ministered to. So, in Paul’s ministry we see teaching, strengthening believers, visitation, pointing to Christ as a role model, fatherhood, and pastoral concern over his members as fitting examples of what needs to be done in ministry. These are strong qualities of retention in a given ministry which any congregation can emulate.

The Early Church and Member Retention

The early Church, in general had a ministry that was retentional. This included belonging to a group on activity or activities, and fellowship. For the purposes of this study, two examples have been cited bellow.

1. Pray as a group. According to the book of Acts 1:14 “they gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brothers”. After reading the book of Acts through, the researcher remains with the impression that if one engages someone in prayer; his or her faith is strengthened. Praying constantly could be what gave success to the ministry of the apostles.

2. Communion and fellowship. According to Acts 2: 42 communion and fellowship were key practices used by the Apostles, and this must have contributed greatly to the unity of believers as well as to understanding doctrine, and an increase in friendship among members.

Spirit of Prophecy

The Spirit of Prophecy gives a lot of counsel and guidance on factors and programs that resulted in retention. For example, Ellen White once said:

if one member falls into temptation, the other members are to care for him with kindly interest, seeking to arrest the feet that are straying into false paths, and win him to a pure and holy life. This service God requires from every member of his church. The members of the Lord’s family are to be wise and watchful; doing all in their power to save their weaker brethren from Satan’s concealed nets.¹⁰

The emphasis here is on a caring church. This suggests a church that creates an atmosphere that is retentional; promoting love, care and support for one another. She

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Evangelismo* (Tatui: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1985), 352-353.

again observes: “That is our work; and when men and women accept the truth, we are not to go away and leave them, and have no further burden for them. They are to be looked after. They are to be carried as a burden upon the soul, and we must watch over them as stewards who must render an account”.¹¹

This can be taken to mean, those who are new in the faith should be mentored, be made to enjoy belonging to the community of faith. The newly baptized should not be left to feel lonely, but feel the joy of being part of those who are a loving and caring the church. The spirit of prophecy has a lot of information on this subject, but for the purposes of this study, only what has been cited is used for the purposes of the study.

Spirit of Prophecy also recommends introduction of activities which are meant to strengthen the new believers in the faith. Some suggestions given are: (1) Importance of repeating points of truth, (2) Careful Plans for the Follow-up series, (3) Educate them, and teach them to take charges, (4) Visit new members often, (5) Visit every family, (6) Help in beginning the new Life, (7) Teaching new believers how to meet enemy, (8) To be guided as children, (9) take the census of love Act.¹²

A person, who has gone through the above steps, will obviously remain glued to the faith because they will be having reason to belong, and to believe. In other words chapter 2 of this study shows the relationship between evangelism and retention, meaning; those who will have been won to the faith should be retained. Secondly, the sources cited above agree in many ways that preaching, teaching, evangelism, discipling are important elements that are related. Finally, as observed by other sources, love, caring relationship, are catalysts to retention.

¹¹ Ibid., 345.

¹² Ibid., 344-348.

Contemporary Theologians

Many contemporary theologians have concluded in their observations that certain methods of retention of members that are applied at present, have already been applied in the past. For example Billy Graham claims, “we have a method to speak against the sin that is so close around us (Heb 12: 1). That is, although we are not of the world, we're still in it, and we are expected to do the maximum in order to preserve it.”¹³

This preservation is the biblical doctrine in respect to the removal of sinful acts in a person or community. This is so because when it comes to Christian responsibility, dealing with, and removing sin in a person or group is necessary and can maintain a member's relationship with God.

Furthermore Mark Finley, a renowned preacher and evangelist observes that warmth, friendliness and loving concern are often the agencies which God uses to stem apostasy.¹⁴ In other words, if warmth and friendship exist in a group, the people are kept together, enjoying the relationship, and being there for one another.

According to Johannes Manger, another prominent writer:

we have to understand the nature of the Church. Because the nature of the church is divine and human, we cannot separate one from the other. It is divine because it has its origin in God, and it's human because, it is directed by men. The fact that some members do not recognize this makes them give up on faith and leave the church.¹⁵

¹³ Billy Graham, *Tempestade a Vista* 2^a ed. (São Paulo: Editora Vida, 1994), 30.

¹⁴ Mark Finley, *Studying Together: A Ready-reference Bible Handbook*, (Fallbrook, California: Hard Research Center, 1995), 200.

¹⁵ Johannes Manger, ed., *Die Gemeinde und ihr Auftrag: Studien zur adventistischen Ekklesiologie*, vol. 2 (Lüneburg: Saatkorn-Verlag, 1994), 18.

This author's views give the impression that an awareness needs to be made to members that the church belongs to God, although directed by man. It is God and man working together.

On the other hand, people join the church with the hope that in this place (the church), and with this person (the minister), with these people (other worshipers) they find especially resonant hearts. And if that doesn't happen they eventually leave the church.¹⁶ As mentioned and cited earlier, regular and new members should be made to look up to Christ as their role model.

This is supported by Russell Burrill, who considers that to be a Christian is one of the models of the New Testament, it is necessary to live a life of radical frontage, a concept that may shock the current church. He offers two reasons for this: (1) change the way of thinking of the current members and (2) change the way we do evangelism.¹⁷ For the researcher it is essential to have this biblical relation to stop apostasy and for a sustainable growth of the church.

According to the global report presented by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, at its spring council in 2007, the following was said, "it is unrealistic to hope that the church will reach a point where the retention of members will be 100%". However, this should not be an excuse that the church should not create the means to maintain and nourish the new members.¹⁸

¹⁶ Robert L. Randal, *What People Expect from Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 25.

¹⁷ Russell Burrill, *Discipulos Modernos* (Tatui: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2005), 17.

¹⁸ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. "Conserving Membership Gains: An Appeal" paper presented at Spring Meeting and Executive Committee, Silver Spring: MD, 10 April 2007, accessed 5 May 2009, http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/conserving-gains.html.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

In this chapter the researcher has explored and put into light the present situation in Angola. Included in this are the location of the country in the continent of Africa, the population, the size, the number of provinces, a bit of its geography, and what makes the country economically viable. Other factors are how the Seventh-day Adventist Church began and how it grew; the congregations, and what factors led to the current growth.

The Country of Angola

Angola is located on the West coast of Southern Africa (see Appendix B). It was a Portuguese colony until November 11, 1975 when the country won its independence. The country has an area of 1,246,700 square kilometers and is divided into 18 provinces. The capital city is Luanda. With an extension of 4,837 km, the country's land borders are located North of the province of Cabinda with Congo Brazzaville, to the North and East by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (ex-Zaire), on the East by Zambia and to the South by Namibia. Angola has a 1,650-mile coastline bathed by the Atlantic Ocean. Its main ports are Luanda, Lobito and Namibe. The highest point in the country is Mount Moco (2,620 m), located in the province of Huambo. With a privileged hydrographic network at the level of the continent, Angola's main rivers are the Kwanza, Zaire, Cunene and Cubango.

Currently the country is estimated at approximately 20,9 million inhabitants.¹⁹ Also see map on appendix 2. The country is very rich in oil and diamonds, and this makes it economically sound, yet there are still big gaps between the rich and the poor. Although there are other tribal languages such as Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kioco, Kicongo, Kuanhama etc, the main language spoken is Portuguese.

Seventh-day Adventist Church in Angola

Adventism was planted on Angolan soil in 1922 by Pastor W. H. Anderson, one of the early Adventist missionaries in Africa²⁰. It was like the parable of small seed of mustard, which was insignificant at first, and worth ignoring (Matt. 13: 31-32). However, today, Adventism in Angola has grown to high proportions.

According to the statistics of the union, membership now exceeds three hundred thousand people. The remarkable growth in membership is evident in a country which, as mentioned earlier had been affected by a devastating civil war. The way that people responded to issues of faith (after the civil war) can be likened to the membership growth experienced in the time of the apostles (Acts 3-4). As what happened then (time of the apostle), credit for massive growth is given to the Holy Spirit (as in Act 1:8).

First Adventist Congregation

The first congregations in the country were organized in a segregative way. The whites worshipped on their own and blacks on their own. One of the evidences is that of two churches in the first Adventist mission station Bongo. Even right now,

¹⁹ “Geografia de Angola,” accessed 14 October 2014
<http://www.portalsaofrancisco.com.br/alfa/angola/geografia-de-angola.php>.

²⁰ “Revista 75º Aniversário da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia em Angola, (Huambo: Casa Publicadora Angolana, 1997), 3.

there are two church buildings on campus. One was for whites at the time and another was for blacks. There is another evidence of segregation in Huambo city where in one church, whites used to meet for worship in the morning, and blacks in the afternoon. While some people view this in a negative way; others suggest it was caused by different cultures and worship styles, hence separate services. This could have retarded fast growth then, because fast growth that is experienced now began later when Angola was shifted from Euro-Africa Division (EUD) to Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID). At this time there was no longer any segregation.

It was in the center of the country especially in the Huambo province where Adventism message was first received. As time passed, the faith began to extend to other places. This was confirmed at interview with Pastor Pedro Balança de Freitas the former Angola Union President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In 1923 when W. H. Anderson arrived in Central Plateau of Angola, he found that 100% of the populating were “Ovimbundu” tribe in the current provinces of Huambo, Benguela, Huila and Bie, and 80% of the “Ovimbundu” tribe were in the current provinces of Kwanza Sul, Kuando-Kubango.²¹ From there he recognized immediately that “teaching” was one of the most pressing needs among the natives. He began to establish primary, elementary and secondary schools, and to prepare native teachers to work. After a decade, about ten of the schools were educating hundreds of native children.

²¹ Alexandre Justino, *Pregoeiros da Verdade Presente: História da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia em Angola* (Portugal: Algarão, Relgrafica, 2007), 108.

Value of Teaching

Because of an added component of teaching to evangelism, massive conversions were experienced among the native population. The first school was established in 1927 in Bongo Adventist station, followed by organization of churches. People who completed their study were placed in the villages as evangelists. Beside their religious activities, they kept running two rudimentary schools in which children and young people were taught. From 1961, began the so-called central schools, endowed with good school buildings and dormitories, one for boys and the other for girls. Students studied “teaching” until the fourth grade. As a result of the “teaching”, by 1975 after independence, 24,182 members had joined the church in the regions of Central, East, North and South of the country.²²

As mentioned earlier church growth slowed down a bit during the civil war in the period 1975- 2002. This war ended in 2002 after devastating the country for several years, resulting in populations migrating in large numbers to seek refuge in cities.²³ During this period of the civil war, Adventism, although in a slow pace, grew stronger in cities than in the country side. This was because the majority of the population converged in cities to seek refuge. As people ran to seek refuge in cities and to neighboring countries, they carried with them the message of salvation (Adventism). This is the case with Cabinda, the city in north of Angola and Kuando-Kubango, the city in south of Angola that people scattered in these cities taking the gospel with them. At that time the numbers or the figures of apostasy was reduced. Probably due to suffering, people turned to God in large numbers and sought refuge in

²² Ibid., 196.

²³ Ivo Figueiredo, *Revista Cidades e Municípios: Huambo o lugar da Esperança*, 92^a ed. (Luanda: C & M Editora, 2007), 40.

the Lord and consolation in His word, or there was no proper record keeping and monitoring.

Extent of Evangelism

According to statistical reports in union records, out of 18 provinces that the country has, 17 are already having Adventist presence, with growing congregations, except for one province of Zaire. According to church records in 2010 the number of baptized members that Angola had, was, 347,856. If one compares this with the population figure of Angolan territory then, (17,237,000) we may have a proportion of 1 Adventist to 49 non-Adventists. However currently, the national statistics taken in 2014 show a population of 24,300,000, while the church has a membership of 254,592, making a current proportion 1 Adventist to non 95 non-Adventist. This is a revelation that a lot of work still needs to be done in Angola.

Statistics of the Past Five Years

The number of churches and the union membership in Southern West of Angola is shown in the statistics of 2010 to 2014. Since this study focuses on Southern West Union of Angola at this stage, the researcher has not taken into account the North East Angola Union. Therefore, from 2010 until December 31, 2014 the Southern West Angola Union of Seventh-day Adventist Church had a total of 254,592 baptized members and 726 organized churches.

Such statistics are important because they represent people. When we count the number of those who heard the word of God in a cult, or the number of those who have joined for Christ during the year, we do it, because these numbers represent individuals or people who are important to God. This confirms how statistics play a major role in church growth.

Information that “Raises Eyebrows”

On the appendix A, the figures reflected (statistics 2000-2014) leave one with many unanswered questions. Some of them may seem to be answered in some of the findings. These are:

1. Number of churches and companies: 1,995 congregations. The ratio is 1/13 meaning that only one pastor is in charge of 13 congregations.
2. Membership is 242,016, meaning it's an average of 1,542 members per pastor.
3. In the period of year 2010 to 2014, a total of 70,579 new people joined the church through baptism, while a total of 9,994 people were lost, i.e. through apostasy (4,619), others through missing (2,142) and 2,132 through death. The latter is a figure that may in future, need to be investigated separately to see if there was any common cause of deaths or people died from just natural causes.

In fact, these statistics show a glaring lack of balance of pastor/church ratio, and pastor/member ratio. The losses revealed by the statistics in question raise ‘eyebrows’, requiring that something be done to investigate the losses. On death, the researcher suggests an investigation to see whether the cause, or causes may be identified, and corrections in the lives of the people made.

This appendix A shows the growth of each year (years 2010-2014) and is divided into two parts: On one side are the numbers added over the five years through baptism, profession of faith and letters and the other side are those lost over the five years through death, letters (transfers), apostasy, and missing (whereabouts unknown). Also, there are adjustments which for whatever reasons the figures have not been released and are in the column of members added or which were introduced by mistake than are in the column of lost members. Finally the table shows a growth of 7.8% within five years.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY FINDINGS

In this chapter the researcher investigated, identified and analyzed what the respondents view as causes of membership loss and what the church needs to do not lose the newly baptized. In essence the study reveals what the church's strengths and weakness are on issues of member retention in South Western Angola (Sudeste).

The chapter also contains data analysis which is drawn from information received from respondents. Using this information the researcher has drawn conclusions, and made recommendations which show what the union should do on this issue. These findings will be submitted to the union at end of the study. Such conclusions and recommendations are bound to be relevant because they are drawn from actual findings, and selected respondents.

Reasons for the Method (Statistical Method)

First, the findings were done using the statistical method which consists of checking data samples, obtaining the percentile dice over the degree of apostasy and missing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Western Angola. In essence the findings were done using the mixed method (quantitative and qualitative).

Advantages of the mixed method are discussed in the following section on methodology.

Methodology

The rationale for using this method is that the mixed method has some advantages as pointed out by the following sources: According to the book edited by Du Ploog-Colliers, F. , Davis, C and Bezuidenhout, R; “Mixed methods research combines method associated with both quantitative and qualitative research, where the aim is for quantitative and qualitative to supplement each other”.²⁴

What they really mean is that in the qualitative method, information is drawn directly from the respondent who is led to giving unrestricted information. Yet the quantitative approach has tendency of leaning more on numbers, and specific responses. Concurring with this are Cohen, L. Manion and Marrison, K. who observe that: “Mixed methods research addresses both the “what” (numerical and qualitative data) and “how” or why (qualitative) types of research questions.”²⁵

It was with this in mind that the researcher preferred mixed method approach. Selected target group were pastors, elders, members (25 of each group) and former members of the church. As will be seen in this chapter, various interviews were made, and questionnaires distributed to the relevant (selected) groups in the Southern Union of Angola. The responses from these groups became an eye opener to the researcher on what needs to be done to avoid loss of members at local church level.

Information on Apostasy and Retention

A group of churches in a district often referred as “center” were selected from the rest of other districts in Central Association. The researcher’s aim was to know the

²⁴ R. Bezuidenhout, C. Davis and F. Du Plooy-Cilliers, eds., *Research Matter*, (Cape town: Jutta Publisher, 2014), 33.

²⁵ Cohen, L. Manion, and K. Marrison, *Research Methods in Education* (Nashville: Abingdon 2011), 25.

opinions of four groups of people on apostasy and retention of members. Included in these are four groups: 25 pastors, and 25 elders from different churches, groups of 25 regular members from the same district and 5 former members of the Adventist church. The respondents who are former members are few in this study because they are a group that the researcher realized are hard to convince into responding to such a study. Some of them have bitter feelings against the church, or against certain individuals in the church. Others have lost trust in the church.

The surveys/questionnaires of the study were different, except those that were directed to pastors and elders. These were similar. The research was done with permission from the leadership of the Central Association (Central Conference). Samples of questionnaires used are shown in Appendix C, D and E

The district pastors, church elders, members of the churches, as well as the former Adventist members were informed about the purpose of the survey and they agreed to collaborate in giving information. Before completing the forms, all the respondents received instructions and guidance regarding how to complete the questionnaires. They were to select a response relevant to their situation, out of possible responses provided. The respondents were also advised that the questionnaires should have no names, and that the results obtained would remain anonymous, and confidential.

Environment in Each District

On the other hand the researcher had to consider the environment of each district, whether rural and urban. This was because some of the pastors and elders who run the districts operate in rural areas, where the apostasy rate is not as high as the ones that have districts in urban areas. This allowed the researcher to check the chances of performance as they relate to membership gains and losses.

Responses from the Pastors and Church Elders

The study sought to find out what the most predominant membership retention strategies were in Angola. From this there were seventeen responses whose percentage weight is as follows in Table 1:

Table 1. Most Predominant Membership Retention Strategies in Angola

Predominant membership retention strategies in Angola	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
Bible study	24	96%	23	92%
Public campaigns (Ensuring members involvement and participation and organization)	24	96%	20	80%
Door-to-door ministry (Witnessing)	23	92%	21	84%
Nurturing (Bible Study, Sabbath School Lessons Study and Prayer)	23	92%	20	80%
Classes of Fishers of Men (Bible study classes for recently baptized members)	19	76%	22	88%
Having a list of all members (with their contact information) in each zone and getting them to know each other	18	72%	21	84%
Personal relationship (how members relate to one another)	17	68%	16	64%
Empowering new members (involving members in the church activities)	16	64%	19	76%
Visitation (Senior members, pastors, church elders and deacons should visit new members)	16	64%	14	56%
Friendship among members (love one another, companionship)	14	56%	21	84%
Evangelism in Small Groups	11	44%	15	60%
Implementation of morning and evening family worship	11	44%	9	36%
Building new churches	10	40%	21	84%
VOP Lessons	9	36%	13	52%
Study of the Spirit of Prophecy	9	36%	8	32%

Table 1 describes the most prominent membership strategies as suggested by pastors and local churches elders. Both respondents agree that Bible study, public campaigns (ensuring members involvement and participation and organization) are the leading suggestions in respect to membership retention at a local church. However, they seem to unanimously agree that VOP lesson and study of the Spirit of Prophecy are less effective on member retention. In spite of those in agreement, church elders and pastors, seem to have different opinions regarding the importance of classes of fishers of men (Bible study classes for recently baptized members).²⁶

The study sought to find out which strategies of membership retention had been tried by the church/ district. The results are shown in table 2.

Table 2 is a description of the strategies that are used in the local church or district to insure the retention of members. The table highlights the fact that pastoral visitation done by church leaders and adequate teaching of candidates before baptism are rated the highest working strategies for membership retention. Nevertheless, VOP lessons, Spiritual Parents (ensuring that every new member has a senior member as his/her mentor), prayer groups are seen as less effective strategies according to pastors and local church elders. However as shown in Table 1, continued teaching after baptism seems to remain an unresolved issue.

²⁶ See Table 1

Table 2. Strategies Used in the Local Church/District

Membership retention strategies used in the local church or district	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
	N	%	N	%
Visitation (Pastors, Church Elders, Deacons and seniors members should visit new members)	24	96%	24	96%
Complete teaching of candidates before baptism (discipling)	24	96%	21	84%
Empowering new members (involving members in all church activities)	19	76%	23	92%
Continue teaching after baptism	19	76%	22	88%
Evangelism in small groups	19	76%	21	84%
Intercessory prayers	17	68%	19	76%
Morning and evening worship at home	13	52%	11	44%
Formation of prayer groups	11	44%	17	68%
VOP Lessons	8	32%	6	24%
Spiritual Parents (Ensuring that every new member has a senior member as his/her sponsor)	4	16%	6	24%

The respondents were requested to suggest/ recommend other retention strategies that could be used for outreach in the Angolan congregations. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Recommendations of other Retention Strategies

Recommended retention strategies	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
Splitting a church that has numerous members (church planting)	21	84%	23	92%
Fellowship programs	21	84%	19	76%
Sabbath school classes in zones	20	80%	18	72%
Witnessing programs	19	76%	21	84%
Morning and evening worship at home	15	60%	17	68%
Health courses	14	56%	19	76%
Infra-structure improvement (churches)	14	56%	17	68%
Empowering new members (involving members in all church activities)	12	48%	16	64%
Distribution of Christian literature	11	44%	10	40%
Help for social and spiritual problems (counseling)	8	32%	12	48%

Ranking on the above eighteen points drawn from responses are the splitting a church that has too many members, fellowship programs, Sabbath School classes in zones, and ensuring a better place for worship. Most of these will be recommended for implementation.

The study sought to find out which strategies had been tried and had not worked. Explanations were required. The results are shown in Table 4. Among the suggested strategies, Table 4 describes the ones that have not been effective when implemented by pastors and churches elders, while table 5 explains the pastors' and church elders' perceptions on the reason why those strategies were not effective. Even those listed suggest that the respondents may have not fully understood the question. However, some of the responses rated reveal that church leadership should be alert to some of the things mentioned in the responses above.

Table 4. Strategies Tried and Have not Worked

Strategies tried and have not worked	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
	N	%	N	%
Morning and evening worship at home	23	92%	24	96%
Empowering new members (involving members in all church activities specially in the choir)	22	88%	20	80%

Table 5. Reasons for not Working

Reason for not working (the above strategies)	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
	N	%	N	%
Baptism without follow-ups	21	84%	19	76%
Lack of time for family worship	19	76%	20	80%
Instruction without follow-ups	18	72%	16	64%
Lack of continuity in church programs	18	72%	16	64%
Lack of competent qualified teachers (Bible class)	17	68%	17	68%
Spiritual Parents (Ensuring that every new member has a senior member as his/her sponsor)	15	60%	12	48%

The study sought to find out what elements or tendencies in the local church were viewed as destructive to retention. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Tendencies that are Destructive to Membership Retention

Destructive tendencies	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
	N	%	N	%
Gossip	24	96%	23	92%
Conformism and Worldliness	23	92%	21	84%
Interpersonal conflict	23	92%	20	80%
Idolatry	21	84%	24	96%
Lack of transparency in the church management	21	84%	24	96%
Music which is viewed by some as profane	21	84%	23	92%
Members tendency in staying in positions for long time (beyond their mandate)	20	80%	22	88%
Lack of hospitality	20	80%	16	64%
Favoritism in the church	19	76%	23	92%
Senior members antipathy	16	64%	18	72%
Pastor's constant absence due to the numbers of churches in his responsibility	15	60%	24	96%
Use of derogatory language	14	56%	12	48%
Lack of fellowship	13	52%	15	60%

Responses show how some tendencies, e.g. gossip, idolatry, conflicts, lack of hospitality and lack of friendship are destructive to retention. It is also important to note that beside the four last items, all items described on the table are considered very destructive tendencies.

The study sought to find out what the pastors and elders state as the reasons why members are leaving the church. The results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Reasons Why Members Leave the Church

Reason for leaving the church	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
	N	%	N	%
Lack of relationship among brothers (members)	21	84%	23	92%
Lack of love among brothers (members)	17	68%	21	84%
Fear of losing one's job (specially because of the Sabbath)	17	68%	19	76%
Difficulty in keeping the Sabbath because of study	16	64%	20	80%
Lack of socialization in the church	13	52%	16	64%
Lack of interest in church activities	12	48%	14	56%
Persecution on the part of parents	11	44%	15	60%
Negative attitude in the leaders of the church	9	36%	11	44%
Lack of use of spiritual gifts because of low empowerment	9	36%	7	28%
Negative interpretation of the Adventist doctrine	5	20%	7	28%
Non-acceptance of the church advices	3	12%	5	20%

As described in Table 7 the main reason why members are leaving the church, according to pastors and elders is the lack of relationship among the brethren.

The study sought to find out what the respondents thought could be done to reclaim them. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Strategies to reclaim former members

Strategies to reclaim former members	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
	N	%	N	%
Constant visitation (Senior members, pastors, church elders and deacons should visit them)	24	96%	23	92%
Need of the spirit of forgiveness	24	96%	23	92%
Need of unconditional acceptance among members	24	96%	21	84%
Showing former members more affection and treat them with love	23	92%	20	80%
Look with sympathy	23	92%	19	76%
Reconciliation among the disputing members and party	22	88%	24	96%
Not judging former members, but helping them	22	88%	24	96%
Leave their problems, i.e. hearing them, motivating them, inspiring them and praying with and for them	21	84%	24	96%
Solving their spiritual issues with the utmost urgency	12	48%	9	36%

According to the pastors and elders, some of the strategies that can be used to reclaim the formers members are constant visitation, unconditional acceptance, sympathetic look and reconciliation for those who are in dispute.

The study sought to find out from the respondents that if given a church that lacked retention, what strategies would they employ to introduce, or activate retention. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Strategies to be employed to keep members active

Strategies to be employed to keep members active	Pastors (25)		Church Elders (25)	
	N	%	N	%
Creating a map of follow-up of members	23	92%	19	76%
Handling members problems with impartiality	21	84%	23	92%
Constant meetings for motivation	21	84%	17	68%
Distribution of tasks in the church to include new members	17	68%	13	52%
Promoting lay preachers' seminars	15	60%	12	48%

Table 9 suggests that the church should create a map to follow-up the members, and also develop the spirit of handling the problems of the members with more impartiality.

Responses from 25 Selected Adventist Members

The first part of this section asked about background information of respondents and the researcher lists as follows in Table 10.

Table 10. Background Information

Background Information	Responses Church Members (25)
1. Gender:	15
Male	10
Female	
2. Marital Status	10
Married	8
Single	3
Widowed	2
Divorced	2
Separated	
3. Age Range:	9
18- 25 yrs	7
26- 33 yrs	6
34- 40 yrs	3
41- 50 yrs	-
51- 60 yrs	-
61 and over	-
4. Highest Education	-
Primary School	-
Secondary School	17
College	8
University	
5. Length of time in the church	
Less than 1 year	2
1-5 years	4
6- 10 years	9
11- 19 years	6
20 years	4
Since birth	-
6. Baptized	100%
Not baptized	0%

On the second part the researcher stated the following: “In the scale of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates “cold” and 5 indicates “very warm,” respondent to state:

1. The study sought to find out what the respondent’s major attraction to the Adventist church was. The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Major Attraction to the Adventist Church

Major attraction to the Adventist church	Members (25)	
	N	%
Adventist since birth	17	68%
Doctrine	13	52%
Warm fellowship	10	40%
Positive Attitude	9	36%
Preaching service	6	24%
Sabbath School Program	6	24%

Table 11 shows the major attraction of the church in its Adventist message. The data shows that the major portion of the respondents are Adventists. It would seem this is due to fact that they were born into Adventist families. However, those who were born in non-Adventist families, it would seem, were mainly attracted by the doctrines of the church.

2. The study sought to find out what mad the respondents remain Adventists. The results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Respondents' Opinion for Remaining an Adventist

Opinion for remaining an Adventist	Members (25)	
	N	%
Adventist since birth	17	68%
Doctrine	13	52%
Warm fellowship	10	40%
Positive Attitude	9	36%
Preaching service	6	24%
Sabbath School Program	6	24%

In Table 12, responses show why the respondents are still Adventists. Just like on table 11, table 12 which show that the majority of the people responding are remaining in the church due to the fact that they were born into Adventists homes. The second highest are those who remain as members because they agree with the doctrines of the church. However, fellowship is seen as the least factor in terms of membership attraction. The facts that pose a challenge to the church are the Sabbath school programs, preaching service and a positive attitude. These are viewed as less effective. It makes one remain wondering why?

3. The study sought to find out the respondents' opinion on Adventists (attitudes). The results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Opinions about Adventists

Opinions about Adventists	Members (25)	
	N	%
Friendly	20	80%
Have only few friends they warmly relate to	15	60%
Are caring	13	52%
Are people oriented	11	44%

Table 13 shows the opinion that the respondents have about Seventh-day Adventist members in which they are part. The respondents' perception seem to be mixed and unclear because on one hand they show a high percentage of the fact that they have a close group of friends in the church. Also in another percentage they show the church as less caring and less people oriented.

4. The study sought to find out how the respondents rate the welcome by the following in the church. The results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14. Welcome in the Church

Welcome in the church	Members (25)	
	N	%
Ushers	22	88%
Sabbath School Leaders	19	76%
Elders	17	68%
Pastors	15	60%
Choristers	9	36%

Table 14 shows the respondents' view on those who welcome people into the church. The ushers are the ones perceived to be better in welcoming the people.

However, pastors and elders are not seen as welcoming as do the ushers.

- The study sought to find out the numbers of people who left the church due to apostasy, lack of interest, to join other faiths (whom the respondents know). The results are shown in Figure 1.

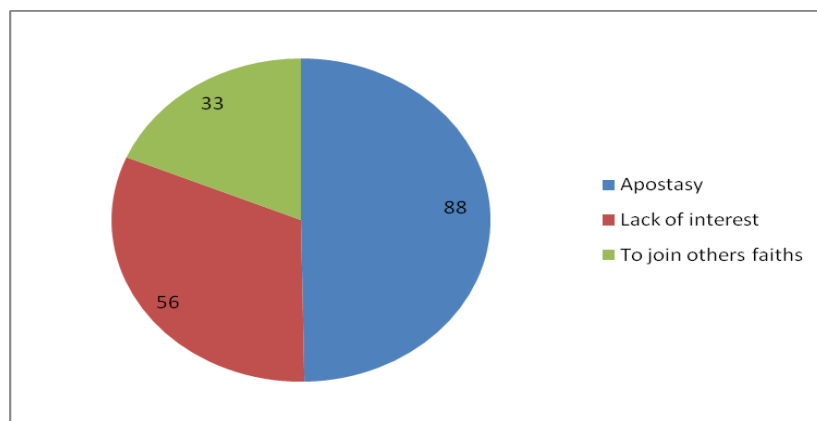


Figure 1. People Who Have Left the Church

According to the figures the highest number is through apostasy.

6. The study sought to find out what the respondents saw as the major factors that contributed to membership loss. The results are shown in Table 15.

Table 15. Major Factors for Membership Loss

Major factors for membership loss	Members (25)	
	N	%
Lack of love among brethren	21	84%
Lack of visitation (Pastor, church elders, deacons and senior members)	21	84%
Slander, gossip in the Church and among the brethren	19	76%
Profane or secular songs and music in church	17	68%
Lack of involvement (to assign activities to newly baptized members in the church)	15	60%
Lack of follow-up after baptism	14	56%
Lack of being approachable of senior members to the newly baptized	12	48%
Fear of losing one's job (specially because of the Sabbath)	10	40%
Lack of special programs for the newly baptized	10	40%
Violation of God's commandments	7	28%

Table 15 shows the opinion of the respondents regarding the major factors contributing to loss of members. The responses show that lack of fellowship and lack of pastoral visitation are the highest factors. Consequently on table 16 the same respondents are suggesting that pastors should visit more often, and church members should avoid gossip practices as well as other things that cause people to leave the church.

7. The study sought to find out what the church should do to retain members.

The results are shown in Table 16.

Table 16. Retention Strategies

Retention strategies	Members (25)	
	N	%
Constants visitations (Pastors, church elders, deacons and senior should visit)	23	92%
Avoid slander and gossip (members should change their attitudes)	21	84%
Promote unity and harmony among the members	21	84%
Give more attention to the newly baptized and assigning them responsibilities	19	76%
Intercessory prayers (members should pray for each another)	17	68%
Promote joyful worship service and avoid the repetition of things	16	64%
Help to solve spiritual and economic problems (counseling)	14	56%
Promote more evangelistic campaigns	13	42%
Meet and study the books of the spirit of prophecy	10	40%

8. The study sought to find out what how many close and warm friends the respondents had within the congregation, in another Adventist congregation or among non-Adventists. The results are shown in Figure 2.

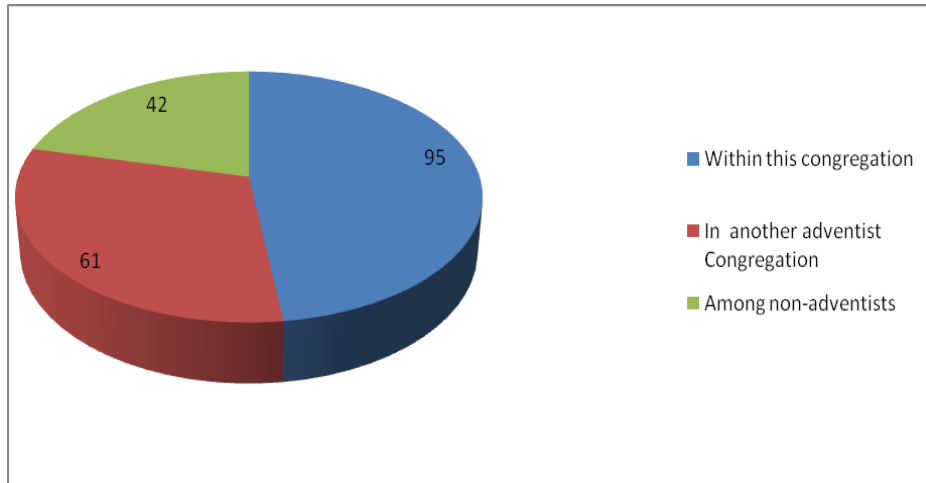


Figure 2. Number of Close and Warm Friends

The scale here shows more friends within the Adventist family. A person in this situation has reason to stay in the church because he has a wide circle of friends who are members of the church.

9. The study sought to find out if the respondents had personal copies of the following books. The results are shown in Table 17.

Table 17. Personal Copies Books

Personal copies books	Members (25)	
	N	%
Bible	23	92%
Hymn book	22	88%
Lesson Quarterly	19	76%
Adventist Belief Doctrines	10	40%
Spirit of Prophecy Books	9	36%

10. The study sought to find out how often the respondents read the following, other than listening to a sermon or a lesson study. The results are shown in Table 18.

Table 18. Read Books

Read books	Daily	Once/ week	Occasionally	Once/ month	Not at all
Bible	32%	44%	12%	8%	4%
Lesson quarterly	28%	48%	16%	4%	4%
Spirit of prophecy books	16%	20%	32%	24%	8%
Denominational History	8%	12%	16%	40%	24%

Table 18 reveals the need that is there to promote a reading culture in the Adventist church. There would be more of spiritual growth in members, even the newly baptized if the reading culture is introduced, cultivated and developed, especially on books or literature that lead to spiritual growth.

11. The study sought to find out which programs the respondents liked most.

The results are shown in the Table 19.

Table 19. Most Liked Programs

Most liked programs	Members (25)	
	N	%
Witnessing Programs	17	68%
Lesson Discussion	15	68%
Preaching Service	6	24%
Sabbath School	6	24%
Other (Health Program)	10	40%

The programs that are liked most, according, to the above responses are witnessing and lesson discussion.

12. To list at least five programs that spiritually enrich the respondent, following (see Table 20) were the responses.

This suggests that probably more of such programs should be made available, or the church does not have much variety on programs.

Table 20. Spiritually Enriching Programs

Program	To be introduced	To be modified	Reason/ Comments
Lesson Study		√	More time should be given because the 30 minutes are too short for discussion.
Announcements		√	The announcements take more time for divine service. The information should be written on paper and been distributed to all members
Doctrine Study	√		To mature our members in our believe, because the time our members stay in the baptismal class is not enough

Lesson study and study of doctrine have been mentioned earlier in this chapter as strengths. The repeating of these shows their importance in the life of a believer. On announcements, the respondent could be suggesting that announcements should not be allowed to take too much time from actual worship. The point is misplaced but relevant.

Responses from Former Adventist Members

Former members were an interesting but most difficult group to deal with and even to reach. So, for this study only five were identified. They were not only difficult to deal with, but also difficult to reach. Those reached were from the same city where the researcher is based. To reach them, the researcher contacted the district pastor of the central Church of Huambo. With him, and the church clerk, he looked through the church register to identify the apostasies which the church has. This facilitated the identifying of former Adventists. The researcher was then careful in his questions not

to hurt anyone of them. The questions were in the form of a questionnaire but carefully formulated. Each respondent answered according to what really made him/her leave the church.

In part A of the questionnaire the researcher asked them:

Question 1: The study sought to find out from the former members why they were no longer members of the Adventist Church and what they, at the time were doing for their spiritual lives. The results are as follows:

- Due to military service
- Lack of involvement in the activity of the Church
- Because of the negative behavior on the part of some members
- Due to circumstances in the world
- There is no difference between the church and the world

When asked what they were doing at the time for their spiritual life, most of them responded that they had no commitment with any church.

Question 2: The respondents were asked what their views of the Adventist Church and its programs were, and the church attitudes towards them in general. The results are shown in Table 21.

Table 21. Programs and Attitudes

Attitudes	Programs
They preach the truth but they don't have love	Goods programs
Opportunists	Enjoyable
Hypocrites	Well organized
Proud of the Sabbath	Not boring
Lack visitations	

According to Table 21 Adventists may have good programs but their attitudes should change. Otherwise these will not attract them (former Adventist) to come back to church.

Question 3: What are the main things you found lacking in the people, and in the programs of the Adventist Church?

To this question most of the information was almost the same as in question 2

Question 4: The study sought to find out the respondents opinion on what the church should do: a) To improve on retention of its members; b) To achieve successful reclamation. The results are shown in Table 22.

Table 22. Retention strategies for the church

Retention of its members	Successful reclamation	Other (Specify)
Visitation to be made	Avoid tribalism and regionalism	To have confidence in the issues of the church
Continue to love and be kind	Promote unity	No comment
Avoid gossip	Improve on communication	No comment
Improve on fellowship	Support for the needy	Humanitarian programs

On part B of the questionnaire the researcher asked them about the major attraction to Adventism and the responses were as follows:

Question 5: On the scale 1 to 5 the study sought to show the respondents' view on whether the following characteristics existent in the Adventist church they associated with.

- a) The Adventist church is God's remnant
- b) The fellowship is good and strong
- c) I experienced love from members
- d) Church standards are based on the Bible
- e) Belief in all church doctrines
- f) The church's teachings and practice match
- g) Worship and the church's program met people's needs

Table 23. Issues Associated with Former Members

	Remnant	Fellowship	Love	Biblical Standards	Doctrines	Teachings and Practice match	Relevance to people's needs
Strongly disagree		1	2			1	
Moderately disagree	1	2	1	1	1	2	2
Indifferent		1	1		2	1	1
Moderately agree	2	1	1	1		1	2
Strongly agree				2	1		
No comment	2			1	1		

There are two people who did not comment, if the Adventist church is God's remnant, and two people strongly disagree that they experienced love from members and one also strongly disagrees that fellowship and teachings and practice match.

Question 6: The study sought to find out the possibility that the respondents could come back into church membership, and what factors would lead to that. The results are shown in Table 24.

Table 24. Possibility and Factors to Come Back to Church

Possibility of coming back to church	Factors that would lead to this
No, now a member of another church	My relatives are from another church, I was the only Adventist
Yes	If the church members visit me frequently
Not at the moment	As long as my husband belongs to another faith I have no choice
No possibility of coming back	No comment
I might come back	As long as the church atmosphere changes

As we see there is hope for some to come back. The church should not stop to visit or to contact the former members. The study sought to find out if the former members were visited by the church. The results are shown in Table 25.

Table 25. Church Visitation

Response	By whom?	How many times?	Under what circumstances?
Yes	Friend	Many times	When there was a camp meeting or congress
Yes	Church members	2 Times	When I was in mourning
Yes	My Neighbor	Several times	When there was a special program in the church
Yes	Church Pastor	Once	When I was sick
Yes	Mr Pedro	3 Times	Week of prayer

Table 25 shows that most of the former Adventists contacted through this research had been visited, and this is a good sign that they were not completely forgotten by the church. In essence the respondents are saying while doing the

visitations, it is important to show love to one another, to help others so that all will develop spiritually, mentally and emotionally. Love and positive attitude have to be practiced in the Adventist churches to reduce the apostasy, and missing in the congregation.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes what is presented in chapters 1-4. In these chapters an investigation has been made on what causes high membership losses union wide. Further, the conclusions that are made in this chapter are relevant because they are based on actual results of the study. It is hoped that the results, if accepted for implementation, will help the Sudeste in reducing, or curbing membership losses that are currently being experienced by this Angolan union.

Summary

Each of the five chapters is important in its own way as it makes it's a contribution towards responding to the pending question, "why are the apostasy and missing rates so high in a given year?" Chapter 1 lays the background to the study, and states the problem, 'why so many losses in membership?' Chapter 2 focuses on, and explores what various written sources have said on church growth as it relates to retention. The first source cited is the Bible which points to God as a good example on matters of retention (Gen. 3:15 and Deut. 6:6-10). Here we see Divine instruction, warnings, teachings and reclamation of that which is lost. The chapter also cites Jesus as a role model on a ministry that is retentional. Again, on what is drawn from the New Testament, Paul is cited as an apostle who emulated Christ in this unique ministry which had elements of retention (I Corinthians 11:1) He says: "Imitate me as I imitate Christ". While he preached and taught, his ministry was relational. He was fatherly, with a ministry that was characterized by mentorship, love, patience, etc.

Finally, the SOP and other contemporary writers, (i.e.) what they have said about a retentional ministry. In essence, what is said above is: in ministry, the focus should not only be preaching and baptizing; but teaching, training, discipling, loving and caring for one another should exist within members. According to the sources, members should not take each other for granted, but be there for one another.

Chapter 3 puts into light and perspective the general situation in Angola. That is, the country, language, effects of the civil war, and how Adventism came about, and how it grew to be what it is today. In Angola, Adventism had simple, humble beginnings, but has now grown into two unions whose membership is almost half a million.

Chapter 4 first presents methodology, and the reason for choosing the suggested method (mixed method). Secondly, the chapter presents data, and analyzes the data that has been collected from respondents. Chapter five is a summary of the study, followed by conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusions

Following are some of the conclusions that the researcher was able draw from the findings:

(1) Pastor member ratio which now stands at 1 is to 1,654 needs should be addressed. If addressed, and the ratio reduced, the pastor will have more time to spend with the members.

(2) Leadership training needed. From the responses made by elders and pastors, the knowledge of what needs to be done to attain retention was given.

Leadership training is needed to equip those responsible so that they can have an effective ministry. In short, one would say, some leadership training is needed to equip this group on an effective ministry.

- (3) Such training should focus on implementation of recommended strategies, and these should cascade down to the members. They must be taught on what it takes to be a caring and loving church. That is, members should be there for one another.
- (4) Preparation of baptismal candidates should be adequate. Elders and pastors, in their responses recommended Bible study and doctrine to be done with the newly baptized
- (5) Some essential spiritual growth sources are missing among members. According to respondents: possession of hymnbook; the Bible, SOP books, Bible doctrine manual, etc, can help equip the newly baptized. In this, a reading culture will be developed so that the newly baptized can read and find out the truth for themselves.
- (6) Attitudes: According to the respondents: friendship is lacking in many churches: -So friendship evangelism should be part of a day-to-day ministry in a church setting. New members should be made to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of security.
- (7) There is need for trained and well oriented spiritual guardians to mentor the newly baptized
- (8) In some of the responses, pastors and elders differ a lot. They need to work together and share ideas
- (9) Some of the findings show that former members love the church, but only “cry out” for change of attitudes on the part of the regular members. Most are willing to come back if things change.

Therefore this study and its results could be beneficial if the union takes the recommendations seriously, adapt and put them into practice. This can be done

successfully if each church, or the union itself could have yearly, or quarterly self-evaluations, and honestly learn from. If they want to succeed, they should act on the results of the self-evaluations. Secondly, this study can be a lesson for other entities especially the fast-growing ones, so that their leadership does not take member retention for granted. The intentions of the study therefore is to emphasize, or suggest that there should be an existence of loving, caring congregations, where people worship and fellowship together in a loving way, and are there for one another.

Recommendations

Conclusions just made can now be followed by, or turned into recommendations. Having drawn conclusions from findings, the researcher now makes recommendations, and suggests them for adoption and implementation by the Sudeste. The intention of this is to help the union to improve on matters of retention so as to reduce membership losses.

1. The local leadership (pastors and elders) should meet from time to time to discuss matters of losses and retention so that they will have the same level of understanding on the issue and what needs to be done.
2. According to the respondents
 - (a) Friendship evangelism is lacking in the Adventist church in Angola. This should be introduced, and taught
 - (b) Negative attitudes: Members, including church leadership should avoid having negative attitudes towards one another and against the newly baptized
 - (c) Spiritual guardians should be trained, and made acquainted with their roles. Their work to be monitored and evaluated if possible, yearly.

- (d) Former members: To be visited, loved and invited for special programs and functions.
- (e) Church elders to be trained by the pastor on matters of leadership
- (f) Reading culture to be developed at a local church level.
- (g) Involvement to be put into practice by every congregation.
- (h) The Pastor/ elder should be more time spent with the baptismal candidates in order to educate them on Bible study and doctrines of the church. Those who teach should be encouraged to be patient as they teach the doctrines to the new members. Instructors are advised not to look for quantity but quality of material to be presented. It is better to have ten qualified members than 500 unqualified doctrinally. There is also a need to follow-up the newly baptized members; the visits should be done in honor of God and the presence of worship.
- (i) There should be promotion of high Christian standards where some programs or sermons should speak against the following: gossip, conformism and worldliness, interpersonal conflict, idolatry and lack of transparency in the church management.

APPENDIX A

MEMBERSHIP AT SOUTHERN WEST ANGOLA UNION: (2010-2014)

Year	Churches	Compan- ies	Church Membership at Beginning of Period	Members Added During Period				Members Subtracted During Period					Church Membership at End of Period
				Baptisms	Profession of Faith	Letters Received	Ajust- ments	Letters Granted	Deaths	Dropped	Missing	Adjust- ments	
2010	581	1.074	207.939	13.484	64	564	1.466	553	298	1.184	338	80	221.064
2011	632	1.081	221.064	11.208	38	765		817	239	1.167	312	5.432	225.108
2012	632	1.081	225.108	9.180	53	576	1.542	1.026	332	1.035	597	7.854	225.615
2013	702	1.163	225.615	19.977	30	717	166	469	420	1.233	544	1.823	242.016
2014	726	1.269	242.016	16.730	0	1509		1101	843	1101	351	2267	254.592

APPENDIX B

MAP OF ANGOLA



Map No. 3727 Rev. 4 UNITED NATIONS
August 2008

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

APPENDIX C

LETTER FROM THE UNION

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE ASSOCIATION



União Sudoeste de Angola
dos Adventistas do Sétimo
Dia
Sede: Rua Teixeira da Silva,
Huambo, Angola
Mailing: Caixa Postal. 3
Huambo – Angola
Tel e Fax (244)- 2412 20316

The Executive Secretary
Central Association of Seventh Day Adventist Church

Huambo, 14 the September 2014

Dear Sir

I write to confirm that Pastor José Lemos is hereby to duly authorized to do his research at the Central Association of the South Western Angola Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, based in the city of Huambo, in Huambo Province of Angola. We request your office therefore to assist him in all possible ways do carry out his research.

Your assistance to him will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely in Christ's Service

G.B Siamuzoka

Chief Financial Officer



APPENDIX D
QUESTIONNAIRES

TO PASTORS, ELDERS, REGULAR MEMBERS, AND FORMER MEMBERS

South Western Angola Union Mission

Interview Guide for Pastors/ Elders

NB: *All responses to this questionnaire will be treated with anonymity.*

Pastor	
Elder	

1. What in your view are the most prevalent retention strategies in Angola?

2. Which strategies of the membership retention have you tried in your church/district?

3. Suggest/recommend other retention strategies that can be used for outreach in the Angolan Congregations?

4. Which ones if any have you tried and have not worked? Explain.

5. What elements or tendencies in the local church do you view as destructive to retention?

6. In your opinion, what do former members state as their reasons for leaving the church?

7. What do you think could be done to reclaim them?

8. If given a church that lacks retention, what strategies would you employ to introduce, or activate retention?

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY FORM

NBs: All responses to this questionnaire will be treated with anonymity.

Name of Church: _____ Association: _____

Kindly respond to the following statements and as per instruction given, ticking (√) appropriate section.

A Background Information

1. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
2. Marital Status: Married _____ Single _____ Widowed _____ Divorcee _____
Separated _____
3. Age Range: 18-25 _____; 26-33 _____; 34-40 _____; 41-50 _____; 51 and over _____
4. Highest Educational Level Reached:
Primary School _____; Secondary School _____; College Education _____; University
Education _____
5. Length of time in the church
Since Birth _____ other: _____ days/ weeks/ months/ years
6. Are you a baptized member of the Seventh-Day/ Adventist Church?
Yes _____ No _____
If yes, when were you baptized?

B In the scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “cold” and 5 indicates “very warm”, state:

<i>I. What was your major attraction to the Adventist Church?</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Born in an Adventist Family					
2. Doctrine					
3. Warm Fellowship					
4. Positive attitude of other members					
5. Preaching Service					
6. Sabbath School Program					

<i>II. What makes you remain an Adventist?</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Doctrine					
2. Warm Fellowship					
3. Positive attitude of other members					
4. Sermons					
5. Born and grew up in Adventism					
6. Other (Specify)					

<i>III. In your own opinion, Adventist:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Are friendly					
2. Have only a few people they warmly relate to (have a circle of friends)					
3. Are caring					
4. Are people oriented					
5. Other (Specify)					

<i>IV. How do you rate the welcome by the following in the church:</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Ushers					
2. Choristers					
3. Sabbath School leaders					
4. Diacone/ Diaconases					
5. Elders					
6. Pastor					
7. Other members					

C. How many people do you know, that have since left the church due to the following:

- a) Apostasy _____
- b) Lack of interest _____
- c) To join other faiths _____
- d) Other (Specify) _____

D. What do you see as the major factors that contribute to membership loss?

E. In your opinion, what should the church do to retain membership?

F. How many close and warm friends do you have,

- a) Within this congregation? _____
- b) In another Adventist congregation? _____
- c) Among non- Adventists? _____

G. Do you have a personal copy of the following:

- a) Bible Yes ___ No ___
- b) Hymn book Yes ___ No ___
- c) Lesson Quarterly Yes ___ No ___
- d) Adventist Belief Doctrines Yes ___ No ___
- e) Spirit of Prophecy Books Yes* ___ No ___

(*) If yes, give titles of the Spirit of prophecy books that you have?

H. How often do you read the following, other than during the sermon and lesson study?

- a) Bible: daily ___, once/ week ___, occasionally ___, once/ month ___, not at all ____.
- b) Lesson Quarterly: daily ___, once/ week ___, occasionally ___, once/ month ___, not at all ____.
- c) Spirit of Prophecy Books daily: daily ___, once/ week ___, occasionally ___, once/ month ___, not at all ____.
- d) Denominational History: daily ___, once/ week ___, occasionally ___, once/ month ___, not at all ____.

I. Which programs do you like most:	1	2	3	4	5
Sabbath School					
Lesson Discussion					
Preaching Service					
Witnessing Programs					
Other (Specify)					

- J. List at least five programs that would spiritually enrich you more if they were either modified or introduced (Indicate program, tick appropriate place and state reason or comment).

Program	To be introduced	To be modified	Reason/ Comments
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONNAIRES
FOR ASSESSING FACTORS ON FORMER MEMBERS (THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN
DROPPED AND THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH)

NB: *All responses to this questionnaire will be treated with strict confidentiality.*

PART A: Interview Questions

1. Why you are no longer a member of the Adventist Church and what do you currently do for your spiritual life?

2. What is your current view of:
 - a) The Adventist Church and its programs?

- b) Attitudes of Adventists towards you, in general?

3. What are the main things you found lacking in the people, and in the programs of the Adventist Church?

4. What in your opinion, should the church do:
 - a) To improve on retention of its members

b) Successful reclamation

Other (Specify)

PART II

MAJOR ATTRACTION TO ADVENTISM

5. On a scale 1 to 5, and in your view, do you see any of the following as having existed in the Adventist church (es) you associated with?

Chosse one of these responses

1= strongly disagree
 2= moderately disagree
 3= neither agree nor disagree
 4= moderately agree
 5= strongly agree

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| h) The Adventist church is God's remnant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i) The fellowship is good and strong | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j) I experienced love from members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| k) Church standards are based on the Bible | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| l) Belief in all church doctrines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| m) The church's teachings and practice match | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| n) Worship and the church's program met
People's needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. What is the possibility that you might come back into church membership, and what factors that would lead to that?

7. Have you ever been visited or contacted by the church since you were dropped or left the church? If so, state by whom, how many times and what were the circumstances?

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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Academic Record:

2006- 2015	MA Pastoral Theology: Candidate - AUA Headquarters, Nairobi, KENYA.
1991-1996	BA in Theology at Adventist University of Friedensau- Germany
1985-1989	Evangelist Diploma at Bongo Adventist Seminary
1976-1984	Primary and Secondary School at Luena- Moxico, Angola

Duties and Responsibilities

2010 - 2015	Executive Secretary of the Southern West Angola Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
2001- 2009	Executive Secretary of the Angola Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
2000	Frontline Pastor, South Field- Lubango, Angola
1997-1999	Lecturer at Adventist Seminary in Huambo
1990	Frontline Pastor, East Field- Luena, Angola