

## PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

Title: STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING MEMBERSHIP IN BEGORO DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, GHANA

Name of researcher: Addai Harrison Baffour

Faculty adviser: Bediako Daniel, PhD

Date Completed: June 2014

Church growth is receiving much attention. Indeed, it is the desire of every faithful Christian to see the church growing. However, retention of church members has become the greatest challenge facing the Seventh-day Adventist church as a whole and Begoro District in particular. Adventist has the desire for evangelism and Begoro District is no exception. There has been a huge budget for evangelism and revivals in the churches and Districts every year, but membership retention in the Seventh-day Adventist church at Begoro District of East Ghana Conference is minimal.

The strength of every church is its membership. Loss of membership always affects the growth of the church. It is indeed a difficult for the pastor alone to resolve or manage loss of membership in the twenty-two churches and companies in the District. The possibility of becoming ineffective in solving the problem of loss of membership has made the pastor to depend on the lay leaders who are not well equipped with skills in dealing with new converts.

The purpose of this paper was to find out the causes of poor retention of membership and develop better and effective strategies and training modules to train lay leaders to be effective and efficient in helping the district pastor to address the problem in the District and in Seventh-day Adventist churches as a whole.

The Bible, Adventist sources and other sources on membership retention were reviewed. Questionnaires were given to selected leaders and church members to determine the training needs of the leaders for membership retention. A workshop was organized for Lay leaders. The project was evaluated after six months through head count of members in all the churches. The project was successful, the training should continue in other districts of the conference and the recommendations given should be adopted.

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING MEMBERS IN  
BEGORO DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH, GHANA.

A project

presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree  
Master of Arts in Leadership

by

Addai Harrison Baffour

June 2014

Copyrights© 2014 by Addai Harrison Baffour  
All Rights Reserved

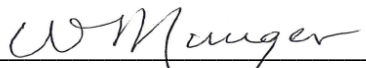
STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING MEMBERS IN  
BEGORO DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH, GHANA

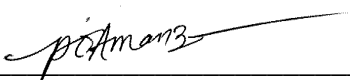
A project  
presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirement for the degree  
Master of Arts in Leadership

by  
Addai Harrison Baffour

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

  
Adviser: Daniel Bediako, PhD

  
Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies  
Willard Munger, PhD

  
Reader: Philemon O. Amanze, PhD

Extension centre: Babcock University Campus

Date of Approval: June 2014

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear wife, Esther Addai Baffour,  
to my late son Ntim Harrison, all my kids and my brother  
Inspector Owoahene Acheampong for their love,  
encouragement, support and prayers  
in making this project a reality.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	viii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	2
Purpose of the Study .....	3
Justification of Study .....	3
Delimitation .....	4
Methodology .....	4
2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP RETENTION.....	5
Membership Retention the Old Testament .....	5
Membership Retention in the New Testament.....	8
Ellen G. White and Membership Retention.....	10
Other Writers and Membership Retention.....	14
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING .....	20
A Brief Profile of the Begoro District.....	20
Pre-Program Survey & Data Presentation .....	22
Causes of Poor Retention of Members .....	34
Lack of Follow-up.....	35
Poor Quality Program, Prayer, Fasting and Lack of Fellowship .....	35
Lack of Integration of New Members.....	36
Lack of Nurturing Programs .....	37
Lifestyle of Old Members .....	37
Lack of Visitation and Motivation.....	38
Family and Other Religious Body .....	38
Poor Baptismal Class .....	39
Effect of Membership Retention to the Church.....	39
4. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION.....	41
Program Development .....	41
Program Design .....	43
Topics for the workshop.....	46

Strategies to Retain both Old and New Members after the Workshop.....	49
Proper Follow-up .....	49
Social Fellowship.....	51
Proper integration of new converts .....	52
Intensive Nurturing .....	52
Intensive Visitation .....	54
Pastoral Visitation.....	55
Elders Visitation .....	56
Visitation Team .....	57
Special Prayer and Fasting Meetings .....	58
Proper Evaluation.....	59
 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	 62
Summary .....	62
Conclusion .....	63
Recommendations.....	64
 APPENDICES .....	 66
A. Letters .....	66
B. Questionnaire .....	67
C. Pictures.....	69
 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	 72
 VITA.....	 76



## LIST OF TABLES

1. Gender of the Respondents .....	23
2. Age grouping of Respondents.....	23
3. Occupation Distribution of Respondents .....	24
4. Number of Respondents with or without Position.....	25
5. Literacy of the Respondents.....	25
6. Number of years Respondents has been in the church .....	26
7. Frequency of baptism in the church.....	26
8. Availability of vibrant fellowship for new converts .....	27
9. Duration of fellowship with new converts.....	27
10. Length of follow – up after baptism .....	28
11. Pastors and Elders visitation .....	28
12. Involvement of new converts in church activities .....	29
13. Effective nurturing of new converts .....	30
14. Effects of old members’ life style on new converts.....	30
15. Awareness of number of new converts.....	31
16. Ratio of new converts that remains in the church.....	31
17. Effects of family and other Religion Bodies.....	32
18. Involvement of new converts in post baptism Pastor’s class.....	33
19. Low Membership Rate and Progress .....	33
20. Effective Methods of Membership Retention.....	34
21. Cost Estimate of a Proposed Five Day Training Workshop .....	46
22. Pre-Project and Post-Workshop Head Count.....	60

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my profound gratitude to God, the Almighty for His divine protection, strength and knowledge He has given me throughout my education.

I am also grateful to my family for encouraging and helping me through this Masters Degree in Leadership. I am highly indebted, to the tune of infinity, to my Administrations and Executive Committee of East Ghana Conference of Seventh – Day Adventist Church for sponsoring me for the course.

My special thanks go to the Elders and members of the Seventh – day Adventist Church, Begoro and Nsawam Districts for their encouragement, contributions, prayers and support during the time of my studies.

I am also particularly grateful to my late son Ntim Harrison, former nursing student of Valley View University for spending his time to type these materials even on his sick bed. Special thanks also to the Lecturers and professors who taught us and helped us throughout our studies. I am also grateful to both Adventist University of Africa and Babcock University Administration, staff and all who made our stay in Babcock University successful.

I owe deep sense of gratitude to Dr. Z. Mathema, my professor, Dr. Daniel Bediako and Dr. Philemon O. Amanze for helping and supervising my project work.

I salute all trusted friends and colleagues of Adventist University of Africa, Babcock Campus for their moral support and guidance in getting this project done.

Last but not the least is my brother, Pastor Amponsah-Mensah, who worked tirelessly with me, to make this work reality.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Today, church growth is receiving much needed emphasis. But desiring growth is not new for Christians. From the beginning of Christianity, believers have worked untiringly and sacrificially to see the church grow. The first major evangelistic outreach on the Pentecost day yielded three thousand souls being baptized into the church. The evangelistic zeal of these early Christians was so high that “multitude of both men and women were added to the Lord” (Act 5:14). Luke says that “daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus Christ” (Act 5:42 NKJV). As a result, “The word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly” (Acts 6:7 NKJV).

The Seventh-day Adventists believe that this commission, though given to the Christian church in general, actually applies to them in the last days. According to Ellen G. White:

“To us also the commission is given. We are bidden to go forth as Christ's messengers, to teach, instruct, and persuade men and women, to urge upon their attention the word of life. And to us also the assurance of Christ's abiding presence is given. Whatever the difficulties with which we may have to contend, whatever the trials we may have to endure, the gracious promise is always ours, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1946), 15.

Further, she says “The weighty obligation of warning a world of its coming doom is upon us.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus’ commission to His followers was not merely to baptize but also to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20 NKJV). It is obvious that the church may never neglect the responsibility to evangelize. Jesus Christ is a seeking Savior: “The son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost” (Luke 19:10, NJKV). So after baptism, the church must not lose the seeking spirit.

Retention of church members has become the greatest challenge facing the church in these last days. However, Jesus told His disciples, “I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain” (John 18:16, NIV). Paul says that “keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His blood” (Acts 20:28, NIV).

Many new converts and even the old members do not stay in the church. The membership retention rate of Seventh-day Adventist church at Begoro district is about 25% per annum. The church needs to develop strategies to retain these members.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite huge budget allocations for evangelism and revivals in the Begoro district of the East Ghana Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there is a poor retention rate of membership in the district. The Annual council of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2003 voted a document on evangelism and church growth titled *Evangelism and Church Growth from Baptism to Discipleship*. This document states that:

“There is ample evidence and growing concern that evangelistic success does not always translate into proportionate growth in discipleship. In fact, too

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 16.

many instances there have been a dramatic loss of attendance and membership within a relatively short time following the evangelism.”<sup>3</sup>

This same condition is what the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ghana, including the Begoro district, is facing. Many of the pastors and elders are more interested in the number of people baptized than finding strategies to retain these baptized members.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the causes of the low rate of membership retention in the Begoro district of Seventh-day Adventist Church and to develop strategies of retaining new converts and old members so that the church can grow to achieve its goal. It will also investigate the historical background of the Seventh-day Adventist church at Begoro, its progress and factors affecting membership retention.

### **Justification of the Study**

The study will help pastors, church leaders and elders to identify the causes of poor retention rate of membership in the Begoro district. It will also help the church leaders to be aware of the dangers of poor retention rate of membership. Again, it will develop and implement strategies of retaining church members and thus curb the current situation of constant membership loss. If the study is able to achieve its purpose, it will contribute towards the growth of the church, physically and spiritually.

---

<sup>3</sup> Evangelism and Growth - From Baptism to Discipleship, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. <http://www.adventist.org/world-church/official-meeting/2003annualcouncil/-156G.html>. (19 May, 2010).

## **Delimitation**

Retention of church members is not a problem peculiar to only one district in East Ghana Conference. However, this study is specifically limited to the Begoro district of the church so as to allow for effective implementation and monitoring of the strategies that will be developed.

## **Methodology**

The research will develop a training program which will seek to address the poor membership retention in the district. In view of this, the researcher will employ the use of program development, literature review of the Bible, Adventist sources, writers from other denominations and secular writers on membership retention.

Questionnaires will be sent to lay church members in the district to ascertain their view on low retention rate of membership. Leadership training workshop will be conducted to train all local leaders to help the district pastor to address the problem

The study proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the problem, the purpose of study, justification of the study and the methodology. Chapter 2 presents a review of literature relating to the idea of membership retention in the church from the Bible, Ellen G. White's writings and other Adventist and non-Adventist theologians. Chapter 3 will present the profile of the setting, focusing on details such as the local history. It also presents the data gathered through the questionnaire. Chapter 4 designs, implements, and evaluates the strategy for retaining church members. Chapter 5 gives the summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

#### **Membership Retention in the Old Testament**

For every country, institution, tribe, family or religion to grow and maintain its status, there is the need to find ways and means of producing, protecting, caring and retaining its members or citizens. In the Old Testament the Israelites were noted to have received sojourners (Deut. 16:11; 26:11 NKJV).

However, their attitude towards foreigners was a mixed one. For instance the eunuchs, bastards, Ammonites and Moabites were not to be present in the assembly of Yahweh (Deut 23:1-3 NKJV). They also frowned upon intermarriage with non-Israelites because it may lead Israel into idolatry (Deut 7:1-5 NKJV).

But on the other hand, in the Old Testament traditions, positive reflection of attitude towards foreigners is seen. Ruth who was the principal actor in the story of the book Ruth reveals a Moabite woman who courageously chose to be part of the people of God. Isaiah 19:18, looks towards the day when Assyria and Egypt will worship God together with Israel. The prophet Zephaniah also forecast a day when all people will serve God (Zep. 3:9 NKJV). Again the prophet Malachi said that God's name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to God's name and with offerings. God's people shall be great among the nations (Mal 1:11 NKJV).

In the Old Testament the Israelites were noted to be receiving sojourners who will keep the Passover to the Lord (Ex 12:48 NKJV). They were not to assume an exclusive attitude towards foreigners. They were to welcome those who desired to join them in the worship and service to God. Being incorporated politically and economically, these strangers were also to be accepted religiously through performing of circumcision rites. Thus they become one with God's people and were permitted in the Passover rituals (Ex 12:44 NKJV). The Israelites retained their membership through circumcision. The non-Israelites after circumcision belonged to the congregation of Israel and joined Israelites to whatever God asked them to do. This increased the number of Israelites.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of the Jews in Diaspora was highly felt for instance, Daniel and Esther, both in Persian Empire. One can not overlook the significance of the dispersion of Jewish Proselytism; numerous Gentiles were exposed for the first time to God of Israel as they attended the synagogues' worship probably attracted by Monotheistic concept and high ethical idea of the Jews.<sup>2</sup> And as they listened to their reading of their scriptures often they became converted to Jewish faith.<sup>3</sup>

In order to retain the people, God gave His laws to them so that they will know their do and among the nations. The people are not to keep the Laws to themselves only but also to teach them to their children. In order to make them unique and peculiar people, God reaffirm various rules and regulations to the Israelites. He counseled them through Moses to obey His Laws and status so that they will prosper

---

<sup>1</sup> Francis D. Nichol: *The S.D. A. Bible Commentary* Vol. 1 (Washington D C: Review and Herald, 1953).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R Screiner, "Proselyte," *International Standard Bible* Vol. 3, ed. Geoffrey W Brownily (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans , 1986), 1007.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 557.



(Lev 19:1-37; Deut 5:32-33 NKJV). God also appointed Prophets and Priests for the People. These men of God were sent with message from God to the people. They were to teach, rebuke, counsel, instruct and encourage the people to obey and do what is right in His sight.

In fact, membership retention was so important that when even the people disobeyed God and went astray, He still looked for them and invited them to come back to Him. There are several instances in the Bible that God invites His disobedient people.

“For thus says the Lord God: Indeed I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seek out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them from all places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark days. And I will bring them out from the countries and will bring them to their own land. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel (Ezek 34:11-13 KJV).

He always wants to gather them together. “Gather my saints together to me” (Ps 50:5 NKJV). Throughout the Old Testament, it could be seen that God always wants to keep His people. He call them to come and reason together (Isa 1: 18 KJV) even though they have sin. He wants to retain them under His banner, protect them and make them feel happy and secured. God said “I the Lord have called you in righteousness and will hold your hands; I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people. As a light to the Gentiles to open blind eyes and to bring out prisoners from the prison house” (Isaiah 46:6, 7 NKJV). The above quotation could be deduced that God call His people, keep them and prepare them to call others to Him. He is not calling and leaving them but to retain them.

## Membership Retention in the New Testament

The retention of church membership is the greatest problem in the church in this day of opportunities.<sup>4</sup> According to James Nickel, a church with members does best reflect the New Testament model. In the book of Acts, repeated references were made to people accepting the word or believing the gospel and being added to the church.<sup>5</sup>

The origin of membership retention can be traced down to bring forth, and that your fruit should remain (1 John 15: 16 NKJV). Jesus made it emphatically clear that while it is important to bring forth fruit, it is also important that the fruit remains. George Edger Sweezy, commenting on the loss of membership lamented on how careless the church treat newly baptized members. He states that the losses, the back doors are major problem of the church in every denomination. He suggested that the best place to prevent losses from the back door should be at the front door, He stressed that if we treat new born babies as careless as we treat new born Christians, the infant mortality rate would equal appalling mortality of the church members.<sup>6</sup>

In the New Testament it could be seen that Jesus often preached, proclaiming a message of God's love. In describing His earthly mission, Jesus said: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the Poor" (Matt 4: 18) Also Mathew 9: 35 says, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages,

---

<sup>4</sup> Sindney W. Power, *Where are the Coverts?* (Nashville, TN: Boardman Press, 1958), 4.

<sup>5</sup> James A Cross, *You Can Keep Them If You Care. Helping New Members Stay on Board* (Ontario, Canada: Miracle Press, 2000), 45.

<sup>6</sup> George E. Sweeney, *Effective Evangelism* (New York: Harper Printers 1953), 45.

teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom. He taught the people every day, giving guidance through the word and calling them to confess their sins and experience transformed lives.

Jesus met the need of the people. The Bible says that Jesus “when he saw the clouds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without shepherd (Matt 9: 36). He loved people. He knew that lost people matter to God, therefore, lost people matter to Him. “The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs and won their confidence. Then He bade them follow me.”<sup>7</sup> He went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate. He took little children in his arms and blessed them, and spoke words of hope and comfort to the weary mothers.<sup>8</sup> The method of Jesus Christ to win souls and maintain them was to build relationship and meeting needs of people. He meets them at their daily vocations and manifested an interest in their secular affairs.

The believers were so passionate about sharing the story of their resurrected Lord that, “daily in the temples, and in every house they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus Christ (Acts 5: 42). As a result of their teaching and powerful preaching, “the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly” (Acts 6: 7). They placed priority on winning the lost as Acts 8: 25 declares: so when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” Wonderfully,

---

<sup>7</sup> Ellen .G. White: *Christian Service* (Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1946), 119.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

with their zeal, the church grew rapidly that new churches were planted throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria. (Acts 9: 31). This rapid evangelistic growth necessitated a carefully thought – through process of nurturing to enable new believers became strong disciples.<sup>9</sup>

The early church followed Christ method in nurturing these new converts to Christianity. After the Pentecostal Baptism of three thousand, the Bible states “they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrines and in prayers” (Acts 2: 42). From this passage, we can get three clear elements of New Testament nurture: repeated doctrinal instruction; social fellowship, and a personal devotional life of prayer. In verse 46 another element is added to it to make it four: “So continuing daily with one accord in temples.” Corporate worship was a vital part of the nurturing process. These new converts were not left on their own after baptism but were nurtured by the church. More time was spent on them.<sup>10</sup> Throughout Acts, strong evidence shows that the disciples genuinely cared for the large number of new converts who were coming into the church. They nurtured these new believers in small groups, prayer, and Bible Study. They emphasize the importance of corporate worship and praised God together (Acts 2: 42; 4: 31, 32).

### **Ellen G White and Membership Retention**

The essentiality of membership retention in any religion in our world cannot be over emphasized. The merits of membership retention have been an issue of great concern even from the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

---

<sup>9</sup> Mark A. Finley, “Evangelism Picture: From Baptism to Discipleship” *Ministry* (September 2009), 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

down to the local level. Membership retention has become essential because it keeps the religion forth going and surviving over the centuries.

Ellen G. White has given many comments and counsels about the church's mission of propagating the gospel and also keeping the members in the faith. In her book *Evangelism*, she said: "To us the commission is given. We are bidden to go forth as Christ's messengers, to teach, instruct and persuade men and women to purge upon their attention the word of life."<sup>11</sup> From this statement, it can be deduced that the work of the church does not end at baptism but to continue in teaching, instructing and persuading believers to continue to be able to establish them faithfully in the church. Beyond the Biblical teaching, presented at evangelism, there should be further Bible studies on areas such as sanctification, pre-Advent Judgment, the Sabbath, end time issue, stewardship, health reform, spiritual gifts, and witnessing.<sup>12</sup>

Carrying out the gospel commission by the church will yield positive result. Many souls would be won into the church but that is not all. Commenting on new converts in the church, Ellen G White has this to say; "Those who have newly come to the faith should be patiently and tenderly dealt with. It is the duty of the older members of the church to device ways and means to provide help, sympathy and instruction for those who have conscientiously withdrawn from other churches for the truth's sake, and that cut themselves off from the Pastoral labor to which they have been accustomed – and if the members of the church neglects this duty, they will be unfaithful to the trust that God has given them."<sup>13</sup> Looking critically at what Ellen G White is saying, it could be seen that the entire church should develop a well

---

<sup>11</sup> E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1946), 15.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

grounded methods of retaining the new converts, if not many of them would be lost. She again suggested that new converts should be encouraged to build a strong relationship with God.

In order to win souls and be able to retain them in the church, she suggested using Christ method. The church should first give proper training to all the members. She said; “very much has been lost to the cause by defective labours of men who posses ability, but who have not had proper training.”<sup>14</sup> “Raise up and send forth, messengers filled with a sense of their responsibility, messengers in whose hearts self – Idolatry, which lies at the foundation of all sin has been crucified.”<sup>15</sup> Christ called twelve disciples, trained and equipped them for the ministry.

Commenting on involving all members of the church on giving effective Bible studies and visitation, Ellen White said, “Let ministers teach church members in order to grow spiritually, they must carry the burden that the Lord has laid upon them; the burden of leading souls into the truth. Those who are not fulfilling their responsibility should be visited, prayed with, labored for.”<sup>16</sup> She further said, “they must be trained, disciplined, drilled, in the best method of winning souls to Christ.”<sup>17</sup> She continues to say, “There should be no delay in this well-planned effort to educate the church members.”<sup>18</sup> The work of winning and retaining souls should be a concern of all

---

<sup>14</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald 1948), 78.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, Vol. 9 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 117.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

members. “Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin it. There is the need to have a training school for Christ workers.”<sup>19</sup>

Before the new converts can be able to remain in the church, there should be proper nurturing. Ellen G White said;

“Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls. God’s spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and place them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those that are young in faith and experience to go to them not for purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, speak unto them words that are like apples gold in pictures of silver.”<sup>20</sup>

This statement suggests that proper nurturing should be carried out by the church. She again suggested that there is the need for proper visitation if the new converts are to be retained. This will help the church elders to know the needs of the believers and care for them,

“Go to your neighbors one by one and close to them till their hearts are won by your unselfish interest and love. Sympathize with them, pray for them, watch for opportunities to do them good, and as you can, gather a few together, and open the word of God to their darkened minds. Keep watching as he who must render the account for the souls of men, and make the most privilege that God gives you of laboring with Him in His moral vineyard. Do not neglect speaking to your neighbors, and doing them all the kindness of your power that you by all means may save some.”<sup>21</sup>

The church should do well to new converts and the community. “It is now high time that we repent. All the people of God should interest themselves in the work of doing good. They would unite heart and soul in earnest endeavour to uplift and

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>20</sup> E. G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1946), 149.

<sup>21</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 53.

enlighten their fellow men.”<sup>22</sup> The members should visit every family. “Whenever a church is established, all the members should engage activity in a missionary work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood and know their spiritual condition.”<sup>23</sup> The Primary aim of doing this is to build relationship with the people and help new converts to develop stronger relationship with their God. Proper visitation, praying and caring for one another will help strengthen the new converts in their faith.

Finally, she calls the pastors and elders to train individual members on how to give Bible studies. They should not be doing the work by themselves alone. She said;

“Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They should be instructed, and encouraged. Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible reading, how to conduct and teach Sabbath School Classes, how best to help the poor and care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted.”<sup>24</sup>

By helping the new members developing interest in Bible Studies, they will gain interest in it and help establish their faith.

### **Other Writers and Membership Retention**

Many writes have shared their concern about the poor retention rate of new converts of the church. The church yearly budget for evangelism is very high but after baptizing the new converts, they stay for a very short period and many of them leave the church. This unfortunate situation is disturbing the minds of many faithful Christians. Mark Finley, commenting on the poor retention of new converts, said:

“The rapid evangelistic growth necessitates a carefully thought through process of nurture to enable new believes to become strong disciples. Christ’s

---

<sup>22</sup> Ellen G White, “Unite Heart and Soul” *Review and Herald*, March, 13 1888.

<sup>23</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies* vol. 6 (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 297.

<sup>24</sup> Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 26.



great commission (Matt 28: 19, 20) involves much more than baptizing new convert. Any approach to evangelism that focuses primarily on the number of baptized misses the mark. He said Jesus' commission to His followers was not merely to baptize, but to make disciples – to develop faith filled, praying Christians who are growing in grace, studying His word, worshiping with His people and witnessing to the glory of His name.”<sup>25</sup>

Stressing the need of nurturing the new converts, he said; when the church fails to nurture new converts, the church fails in the mission of Christ. Evangelism is not complete without a comprehensive strategy of nurture and discipleship. He said the new converts of the New Testament church were not baptized and left on their own but were nurtured by the church.<sup>26</sup>

He again commented that these new converts need special care and attention as babies. They are spiritual babies, therefore it is the responsibility of the church to take careful steps to help each new member and develop a deep relationship with Christ.<sup>27</sup> He argued that people should not view that new members are failure even after Baptism.

“We should not feel new converts are failures if, even after baptism, they need lots of care and attention. Babies in faith are expected to be like that. At times they will stumble and fall. Lifestyle transition is difficult. It is only kindness; care and concern that will provide the environment to enable them to keep growing.”<sup>28</sup>

A concerned church growth scholar rightly opined that the product of evangelism must be disciples not decision. Failure to fulfill the great commission

---

<sup>25</sup> Mark Finley, “Poor Retention of New Converts” *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, (September, 2009), 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Sidney W Power, 67.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

through which Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to make disciples of people, teaching them to observe all things He commended will make it incomplete.<sup>29</sup>

Sidney W. Powel also says that the conservation of church membership is the greatest problem of the church in this day of opportunity. He traces the origin of membership retention by quoting the statement of Jesus, which He said, Jesus told His disciples, “I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16).<sup>30</sup>

He further makes it emphatically clear that it is important to bring forth fruits, but it is equally important that the fruit remains. While this might not be far from truth, it is however right that while it cannot be said that the church have produced more fruit than they should, it is certainly true that much of the fruit have not been altogether too lax in the conservation of the results of evangelism.<sup>31</sup> He mentioned that evangelism for today must be more than that which catches. It must be the sort that both catches and holds.

Using the language of Agriculture and Business, he said, fruit growers learn to reduce their losses and produce fruits that remains. Business also succeeds in cutting down waste. Commenting on that he said, the church should face fact of its losses, study the causes and learn how to reduce them to minimum that the fruit may remain by revising some of the procedures without compromising in the presentation of the divine revelation of the gospel.

---

<sup>29</sup> J. Cress, *You can keep Them if you care; Helping New Members stay on Board* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association Resource Center General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2000), 16.

<sup>30</sup> Sidney W. Power, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Larry K. Weeden, *The Leadership Library. The Magnetic Fellowship, Reading and keeping people* (Glendale, CA: World Book Publishing, 1976), 34.

Stanley Ott on his part notes, “Part of the task of helping new converts grow is the work of discipleship working intensively in one relationship. Yet the process can lead other church members to feel slighted.”<sup>32</sup> He stressed the need of Pastors and leaders involving all members so as to retain them. He debunks the idea that Pastor, evangelist and elder should be only ones to nurse new members. Larry K. Weelen also asserted that

“Once you bring a baby into the world, you’ve got to raise it till it’s ready to feed itself. But what’s the best way? There are many methods as there are many children psychologist, from speck to Dodson and everything in between affirm that choosing the right approach is one of a parents biggest responsibility.”<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, once people have been won to Christ, the local church has the responsibility to help them mature. Another writer, George Edger Sweazy commenting on the losses of members suggested that the place to prevent losses from the “back door should be at the front door.”<sup>34</sup> He stressed that if we treat new born babies as carelessly as we treat new born Christians, the infant mortality rate would equal the appalling mortality of church members.<sup>35</sup>

Commenting on the method used by the Apostolic church in the New Testament he said, the three thousand who were baptized on the day of Pentecost were given intensive teaching. The statement that “the Lord added to their number

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>34</sup> George E. Sweazey, 20712.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 207.

day by day, those who were being saved (Acts 2: 42NKJV). This clearly implies that more time and nurture were required within the church.<sup>36</sup>

In his book *Evangelism through Sabbath School*, Gerald R. Nash states that Sabbath school workers with a heavy burden for the eternal welfare of their members realize that soul holding program is just as important as a soul – winning one. Evangelism’s concern is not merely to teach the gospel, but to teach it to every person continuously in such a manner that those who hear the truth is saved in the Kingdom of God.<sup>37</sup>

*The Seventh-day Adventist Ministers Manual*, commenting on membership retention states that; “The most miraculous thing about Pentecost is not that three thousand were baptized in a day, but that they continued steadfastly in the Apostle’s doctrine and fellowship”<sup>38</sup> The manual further stresses that; “Too many Adventist Churches are like the fisherman who caught fish but had nothing to show for it because he put them in a sack with a hole at the bottom.”<sup>39</sup> It finally suggests that sewing up the hole in the sacks cannot replace fishing. A church that does not evangelize will fossilize. But we must realize more fully that our business involves both catching and keeping.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>37</sup> Gerald R. Nash, *Evangelism: through School* (Washington D C: Review and Herald, 1964), 60.

<sup>38</sup> General Conference of Seventh–day Adventist, *Seventh–day Adventist Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 129.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Finley, 9.

In concluding, it can be said that many writers have deeper concern about poor retention rate of new converts and as a result there is the need for the church to come out with better strategies of retaining its members.

In the next chapter we will deal with historical review of Adventism in Begoro district and people's perception of poor retention of the district.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

This chapter deals with the history of Begoro district of Seventh-day Adventist Church. The geographical area, the population and the occupation of the people in the community, was also taken in an account. It also gathers the perceptions of church members through interviews regarding the low rate of membership retention in the district.

#### **A Brief Profile of the Begoro District**

Begoro District is a community in the Fanteakwa District in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Begoro is about forty two kilometers (42km) away from Koforidua, the regional capital. Begoro, as it is known today is geographically set on a syncline of an insulating land and used to be surrounded by mountains and virgin forest which is good for crop cultivation.

The people belong to the Akim tribe. However, people from as far as East Krobos and as far West Kwahu also settled in the town in large number. One can confidently conclude that the population is heterogeneous. Agriculture is the main stay of the economy of this area. Most of the people engage in crop farming and rearing of animals. The staple food crops are cassava, yam, maize, plantain and banana. Many farmers also cultivate vegetables like tomatoes, pepper, watermelon, onion, garden eggs and cabbages in large quantities. Cattle, goats and sheep are rear in Kwahu Amanfrom and Nkankama areas where there are enough grass to feed the animals.

According to the District record and a Brief Historical Survey of the District 10th Anniversary Celebration, the District was carved from Tafo District of S.D.A Church and created as a district in 1989, with two organized churches and twelve companies. The total number of baptized members was 549. The first district pastor was Pastor E. D. Sarpaning.

After creating the district through the effort of the Pastors, Elders and the Laities, new companies and branch Sabbath schools were opened in the nearby towns and villages. At the time of the 10th Anniversary in 28th May 2000, the total baptized members was one thousand and eighty one (1081).

It is very sad to note that at the recent head count of the District sent to the East Ghana Conference of S.D.A Church on August 2012 the membership instead of progressing has drop drastically to six hundred and fifteen (615) baptized members. This fall is not as a result of death or travelling from that area or that the church have not been evangelizing and baptizing new members but it is because they come and do not stay in the church.

The district statistical report shows that one hundred and forty five members were baptized in the year 2011 alone but the head count of the churches in the District in August 2012 reveals that seventy (70) of them has gone out from the church while ten (10) of the rest have backslidden, remaining thirty five (35) who are active members. At the time of this research work, the total number of the organized churches in the District was six (6), nine (9) companies and six (6) branch Sabbath school churches.

## **Pre-Program Survey and Data Presentation**

A pre-program survey was conducted through the use of questionnaire. The survey was conducted only on Seventh-day Adventists who were sixteen (16) years and above and who have their membership in the Begoro district. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to members of the various churches in the district to ascertain their perceptions on how members should be retained in their churches and also to know why there is low retention in the churches. The questionnaire was administered on Sabbath day immediately after the divine service, because it is on this day that most members come to church.

The content and purpose of the questionnaire were explained to members. In most cases, the questionnaire sheets were collected on the same day. Out of three hundred and ten (310) questionnaires given, two hundred and fifty (250) respondents answered and returned them. The questionnaire administered was divided into two sections. Section A had six (6) questions and had to do with personal data of the respondent. Section B had fourteen (14) questions.

It covered church membership retention and the respondent's personal suggestions and observations. It tried to find out why new converts leave the church as well as people's understanding and assessment of evangelism in the district. It also dealt with the methods of winning souls and retaining them in the church. After the questionnaire was administered and analysis was made, the table 1 below represents the gender distribution of the respondents. Table1 represents the gender distribution of the respondents.



*Table 1. Gender of the Respondents*

---

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	187	75%
Female	63	25%
Total	250	100%

---

The composition of the respondents in table 1 above shows that 75% of the respondents were male, while 25% of the respondents were female. It shows that the greater response came from male since greater number of the females in the church cannot read. The age groupings of the respondents in the district are as represented in the Table 2 below.

*Table 2. Age Groupings of the Respondents*

---

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
16 – 20	25	10%
21 – 25	45	18%
26 – 30	20	8%
31 – 35	35	14%
36 – 40	55	22%
41 – 45	43	17%
46 – 50	15	6%
51 and Above	12	5%
Total	250	100

---

Table 2 is based on the age of the respondents. The data shows that the respondents between ages 16–20 were 10%, respondents of 21 – 25 were 18%, respondents within 26 – 30 ages were 8%, 31 – 35 shows 14%, 36 – 40 ages were 22% , 41 – 45 were 17%, 46 – 50 were 6%, and from 51 and above had 5% . The table shows that the highest age group that responded to the questionnaire was 36-40 years. After analyzing the questionnaire, the following table shows the occupational distribution of the respondents.

*Table 3. Occupation Distribution of Respondents*

Occupation	No of Respondents	Percentages
Student	37	15%
Teacher	50	20%
Farmer	87	35%
Trader	63	5%
Others	13	25%
Total	250	100%

Table 3, which is based out the occupation of the respondents, the data shows that 35% of the respondents were farmers; teachers were 20%,students15%, and traders25%, while 5% were from other occupations. The high percentage came from the farmers, which shows that greater numbers of the church members in the district are farmers

The questionnaire also tries to find out the number of respondents who holds positions in the church. The table below shows the number of respondents who holds office and those without office.

*Table 4. Number of Respondents with or Without Position*

Church officer	Response	Percentage
church officer	137	55%
Not yet a church officer	113	45%
Total	250	100%

Table 4 above shows that, 55% of the respondents were church officers, and have enough experience since they have attained the level of being church officers. They can help to give enough evidence on membership retention of their churches. Again the researcher tries to find out the number of the respondents who can read and write.

*Table 5. Literacy of the Respondents*

Group	Responses	Percentage
Literate	250	100%
Illiterate	0	0%
Total	250	100%

The data collected indicates that all the respondents can read and write. The next item considered was the number of years the respondents have been in the church. This would help the researcher to know their level of experience in the church concerning membership retention. Below is Table 6 showing the number of years the respondents have been in the church.

*Table 6. Numbers of Years the Respondents have been in the Church*

No of years in church	No Respondents	Percentage
1 – 5years	25	10%
6 -10years	38	15%
11 – 15 years	62	25%
16 – 20 years	50	20%
21 and above	75	30%
Total	250	100%

Table 6 shows that 30% of the respondents have been in the church for over 21 years, and 10% have been in the church for at least 5year. This means that all the respondents are aware of the problem of retention in their churches.

The next important aspect is the frequency of baptism in the churches of the district. Table 7 indicates the frequency of baptism in the district.

*Table 7. Frequency of Baptism in Church*

Rate of Baptism	Respondents	Percentage
Monthly	25	10%
Quarterly	38	15%
As the need arises	187	75%
Total	250	100%

Table 7 shows that among these churches, 75% of the respondents do not have a formal schedule for baptism. The researcher also sought to find out whether there is a vibrant fellowship for new converts in the churches that will help retain converts.

*Table 8. Availability of Vibrant Fellowship for New Converts*

Vibrant fellowship and Prayer	Respondents	Percentages
Yes	37	15%
No	200	80%
Uncertain	13	5%

Table 8 shows that majority of the respondents do not have a vibrant and steady fellowship with new converts in their church. Only 15% out of the respondents have.

*Table 9. Duration of Fellowship with New Converts*

Duration	Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 month	175	70%
1 -2 months	50	20%
3 – 4 months	25	10%
5 months and above -	NILL	NILL

Table 9 captures the duration of fellowship with new converts. It shows that the longest period churches in the respondents' areas spend with converts is less than one month as stated by 70% of the respondents. After evangelism, there is the need for follow-up activities to help strengthen the converts. Table 10 shows the length of days for follow-up activities.

*Table 10. Length of Follow-up after Baptism*

Length of time	Respondents	Percentage
Less than one month	112	45%
One month and above	13	5%
No follow-up	125	50%
Total	250	100%

Table 10 shows that 50% of the respondents are of the view that there is no followup activities after baptism in the churches in Begoro District. Forty five percent (45%) says it is less than one month. This indicates poor follow-up activities of the District which can cause problem to membership retention. In order to avert this situation the newly baptized members must continue to attend the newly baptized member's class for a period of 12 months even after their baptism

Visitation is one of the activities that can help to build converts faith and help them develop interest in the church. The below table tells how pastor and elders visit members in the district.

*Table 11. Pastor and Elders Visitation*

Pastor & Elders Visitation	Respondents	Percentage
Daily	27	11%
Weekly	50	20%
Monthly	58	23%
No visitation	115	46%
Total	250	100%

Table 11 shows that 46 % of the respondents are of the view that there is no visitation in their churches.23% says visitation is done monthly. From the table one can conclude that pastor and elders’ visitation in the District is very weak. This could also be one of the causes of poor retention of members.

It is said that practice make a man perfect. New converts involvement in church activities will help them to develop interest in the church. The next table below shows how long it takes to involve new converts in the activities of the church as indicated by 250 respondents.

*Table 12. Involvement of new converts in church Activities*

Length of time after baptism	Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 month	13	5%
1-2 Months	25	10%
3-4 Months	75	30%
6 Months	137	55%
Total	250	100

Table 12 shows the involvement of new converts in church activities after baptism. 55% of the respondents are of the view that it takes more than 6months for the new converts to be involved in Church activities. Table 12 shows that churches in the District delay in involving converts in church activities and this can damp their spirit and cause loss of membership.

After baptism new converts need adequate nurturing for them to be rooted in the faith. The table below shows respondent’s views of effective nurturing after baptism

*Table 13. Effective Nurturing of New Converts*

---

Length of nurturing	Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 Month	100	40%
1-2 Months	37	15%
3-4 Months	13	5%
Un certain	100	40%
Total	250	100%

---

Responses to question 13 shows that 40% of the respondents out of 100 people are not certain of effective nurturing program for new converts after baptism while another 40% says it is less than one month. The data reveals that there is lack of effective nurturing in the District after baptism. The researcher goes forward to investigate respondent's views of whether the life style of old members can influence loss of membership. Table 14 shows their views.

*Table 14. Effects of Old Member's Life Style on New Converts*

---

Old members life style affect new converts retention	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	187	75%
No	25	10%
Uncertain	38	15%
Total	250	100%

---

From Table 14 75% of the respondents are of the view that life style of old members can affect membership retention of new converts, 10% says no while 15%



are uncertain. Table 15 presents the percentage of awareness of number of new converts that remained in respondent's churches after last evangelism.

*Table 15. Awareness of number of New Converts*

Aware of number remained	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	43	17%
No	175	70%
Uncertain	32	13%
Total	250	100%

Table 15 shows that 70% of the respondents do not know the number of new converts left in the Churches from the past outreach. This shows that perhaps many of the members do not care much about the new converts.

*Table 16. Ratio of New Converts that Remains in the Church*

Ratio	Respondents	Percentage
2:10	137	55%
4:10	53	21%
5:10	50	20%
Uncertain	10	4%
Total	250	100%

Table 16 indicates that 55% of the respondents think about eighty percent (80%) of the new converts in the Church do not remain after baptism. Twenty one percent (21%) are of the view that 60% do not remain. This shows that the retention rate of the District's new converts is very low.

At many times when people take certain decisions they face oppositions from both family and friends. Table 17 shows respondents views about family and other religious group influence on new converts in matters of their retention

*Table 17. Effects of Family and other Religious Bodies on Membership Retention*

Family & other religious bodies influence loss of membership	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	155	62%
No	70	28%
Uncertain	25	10%

Table 17 shows that 62% of the respondents are of the view that family and other religious bodies have negative influence on membership retention of the church. Only 28% are of the view that it has not, while 10% are uncertain. This shows that new converts in the District face a lot of challenges from their family and friends of other religious bodies they once belong. This can be a great treat to their retention in their new religion. Therefore, there is the need for the new members to be properly grounded in the word of the LORD. When this takes place, no storm can move them away coupled with the plan of their retention which had been put in place.

The study sought to establish whether it will be important to involve new converts in pastor's class after baptism for a while. Table 18 shows respondents views on this matter.

*Table 18. Involvement of New Converts in Post Baptism al Class*

Post Baptismal Pastor's Class	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	162	75%
No	75	20%
Uncertain	13	5%
Total	250	100%

Table 18 shows that 75 percent of the respondents want new converts to be involved in Pastors class for further studies after baptism.

Much of the progress of a nation may depend on her man power resources, likewise the church. A Church with many members is likely to have enough resources for her development. Table 19 will investigate the respondents view on the low membership rate and progress in the district

*Table 19. Low Membership Rate and Progress*

Low membership affect progress in churches	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	250	100%
No	-	-
Uncertain	-	-
Total	250	100%

Table 19 shows that, all the respondents say low retention of members affects the progress of their churches. This underscores the need to control loss of membership through a well planned retention program. Table 20 investigated the

respondent's view of most effective method they suggest can help control loss of membership in the district.

*Table 20. Effective Methods of Membership Retention*

Method	Respondents	Percentage
1. Proper Follow-Up Activities	69	27.6%
2. Effective Visitation	50	20%
3. Effective Nurturing	48	19.2%
4. Post Baptismal Pastors Class	38	15.2%
5. Effective Fellowship	35	14%
6. Involvement Of New Converts In Church Activities	10	4%
Total	250	100%

Table 20 shows that, proper follow-up activities, and effective visitation should be intensified in the district since majority of the respondents are of the view that these two methods help a lot in membership retention. From the table next method that respondents recommend is effective nurturing.

#### **Causes of Poor Retention of Membership in Begoro District**

Based on the responses to the questionnaire, the researcher identified the following as causes of low membership retention in the Begoro district.

### **Lack of Follow-up**

After baptizing new converts into the church many of the lay team became satisfied that they have won so much and that the work has come to a close. Instead of continuing their evangelistic zeal in visiting and encouraging the new converts they leave them to their faith. Respondents to question 10 of questionnaire type B shows that proper follow-up did not take place after baptism in the District. It is important to note that these converts are still struggling with pagan influences, pressure from society and threats to their lives from former affiliations both family and religions. There is the need to develop a deliberate post-evangelism plan that would be carried out with the same passion and commitment as the pre-evangelism and in- evangelism activities.

Visiting new converts who have join the church from other religions and denomination is paramount importance. This could be similar to befriending such people. By lack of immediate follow – up and constant visitation a new convert can drift away. Therefore, the evangelistic training, planning and execution of the church must consciously include the process of proper follow – up activities.

### **Poor Quality Programs, Prayer and Fasting, and Lack of Fellowship**

The data of table 8 shows that many of the churches of Begoro District of SDA Church do not have vibrant fellowship with new covenants after baptism. There are no vibrant prayer meetings organized neither by the church nor the district to address the needs of members. As a result this many members are easily influence by their friends to attend prayer meetings in other churches, and through this many leave the church. Through the interview of the researcher with Elder T.A Sakyi and Elder

Daniel Sono in the District, it was found that many of the church services are boring and many elders as well as old members attend churches late so when new converts join the church, he or she do not feel at home or happy .

But what it meant by fellowship in the context of usage in Acts 2:42 is understood as an expression of all the activities which heighten the oneness of the believers resulting from the common faith those who assembled shared in Christ.

Fellowship could be no more than intimate union among the believers;<sup>1</sup> again Nichol stated that it is “a kind of brotherhood that developed between the apostles and their converts.”<sup>2</sup> Fellowship among the early Christians had spiritual, theological, fraternal and economical dimensions and was effective in all the relationship of the believers with one another. This fellowship may probably have served also as a process of nurturing the faith of the recent believers and help to establish them in their new faith. The early Church did not lose sight of the fact that no evangelism is complete if it does not help to guide new members into enduring relationship with God and equip them for ministry of the word they have been called to share.

### **Lack of Integration**

Lack of integration of new converts affects retention. The period it takes new converts to be involved in church activities is long. The table 12 drawn from the responses to the questionnaire B shows that the period it takes a new convert to be involved in church activities is long. While most church members are careless about new converts, many who are baptized are ignorant of the truth, especially when they came into the church through public crusade.

---

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary, Acts 1 – 12, 84.

<sup>2</sup> Nichol, S.D.A Bible Commentary vol. 6, 148.

The concept of integrating new members seems to be neglected. The context of the Book of Acts 2: 42; 6: 1, and the role played by Banabas in integrating Paul (Acts 9: 26, 27) should be understood by all members. Membership Retention is basically membership integration. It is the greatest means by which the church can keep people together to boost membership growth at all levels of the church.

### **Lack of Nurturing Program**

Responses to question 13 of the questionnaire shows that 40% of the respondents complain about the nurturing period for new converts, the weekly programs, which do not last, not attractive and also offer less spiritual lessons. The success or failure of new converts to these group depended on how rich or poor the church's nurturing programs are. It is also observed that most of the services, especially those of the rural areas are just like routine rituals, without variety of programs. Based on the writers experience while in the field, in some of the churches in the rural areas, Sunday service, midweek, Friday and Vesper services have become a thing of the past. It has been forgotten.

### **Lifestyle of Old Members**

It is said that action speaks louder than words. According to responses on question 14 of the questionnaire, 75% made mention that, the lifestyle of old members' affects retaining new members. Even though the church has a clear and laudable doctrine, there is a difference between theory and practice in the church. A new convert confessed that some Adventist are hypocrite, they pretend to be good but when you join them it is then you will know and see their own colour. It is only 10% of the respondents who responded that the daily life of church members is not

significant. We can deduce therefore that when new members are disappointed by the people they initially trusted or admired, they lose confidence in them and they will leave the church.

### **Lack of Visitation and Motivation**

All humans are social beings, they need interaction and love. When new converts are deserted by members of their new church who could not meet their social needs, they tend to look for friends outside to keep them company. In attempt to do so, they could be prey to their former friends who could lure them into their former lifestyle. Responses to table 11 of the questionnaire shows that 46% of the respondents complain of lack of visitation in the churches which is one of the major causes of poor membership retention in the district. There is the need to find means of visiting both the new and the old members so that the church can meet their needs. They should be visited in hospitals, share their joy and sorrow and befriending and encouraging them so that they can build confidence with one another.

### **Family and Other Religious Bodies**

Some of the parents and family members who are members of other religions and denominations force many of the newly baptized converts to deny their faiths. Some of the parents treat especially the youth that they will lose their education, if they fail to stop. Even some grown up newly baptize members are many times threatened by their sons and daughters who care for them in their old age that they should stop their new faith if not they will stop caring for them.

Those people put pressure on these newly baptized members, teasing and mocking them so much that many of them cannot bear it anymore and they stop



attending church. Sixty-two percent of the respondents who answered question 17 are of the view that parents, family members and other religious bodies, negative influence are among the causes that lead some new converts to leave the church.

### **Post Baptismal Class**

From the responses to question 18, of questionnaire type B, 75% of respondents suggested that the Pastor's class which normally is for Bible studies should include newly baptized members. The content of Jesus commission in Mathew 28:19-20 indicates that baptism is not the end of the work for a newly convert person. After baptism teaching is required to be continued. There is the need to find means of visiting both new and the old members so that the church can meet their needs.

They should be visited in hospitals, share their joy and sorrow and befriending and encouraging them so that they can build confidence with one another. This may probably have served also as a process of nurturing the faith of recent believers and help to establish them in their new – found faith. The early church does not deny the fact that no evangelism is complete until it has help to guide new members into enduring relationship with God.

### **Positive Effects of Membership Retention to the Church**

The essentiality of membership retention in any religion in our world cannot be over emphasized. The merits of membership retention have been an issue of great concern even from General Conference of Seventh – Adventist Church down to the local level. Membership retention has become essential because it keeps the religion and faith going and surviving over the centuries.

The church depends on her membership for many things. It is the members who return tithes and offering to enable any project in the church to be carried on. Salaries of workers of the church all come from the pockets of the members. Other social amenities like schools and hospitals which the church offer to the communities all depends on the members' contributions. All things being equal, the more the members of the church, the better the church would be able to meet her numerous goals and objectives. When the church is not able to retain her members, no activity in the church can function properly and the entire church will collapse.

Finally, the Mission of the church is to preach the word to all people, baptizing and preparing them for the soon coming of Jesus Christ. If all the members leave the church or if the church is not able to maintain the members, it means the Mission of the church has not been fulfilled. Hence, there is the need to find ways and means of recalling them to the church.

The subsequent chapter will address program development, implementation, and evaluation of the project.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION

The main purpose of this chapter is to develop a strategy to train church leaders and laymen in addressing the problems of membership retention in the Begoro district. This chapter is designed in a form of leadership training workshop and implementation. After the training, an evaluation is done through head count of all the churches in the district to find out the impact of the workshop by comparing the attendance figures before and after the training, also the inadequate membership retention of new members after and before the workshop. The program is designed based on the response to the questions asked through the questionnaire.

#### **Program Development**

The main purpose of evangelism is to win souls and prepare them for Christ. Every year the church programs for the entire department with the sole purpose to evangelize and win souls and establish new churches. As a result of establishing new churches, companies, and branch Sabbath school, a pastor has to take care of many churches at the same time most especially in West Africa. This brings a lot of challenges to the ministry. Most of the work is left in the hands of the church leaders to take care of the churches. Unfortunately, majority of these church leaders are not properly trained. Considering the rapid growth of the church, Edger J. Elliston commented, "It appears that we are falling further behind in the preparation of the church leaders for the number of new churches which are now being established. Now

in Africa there are more than 500 ministry training institutions and yet the continued plea is for more leaders.”<sup>1</sup>

Each year we appoint new officers and give the churches to their care to nurture without appropriate training. Even though, some are doing their best, their activities are not properly coordinated. It is therefore very important that leaders be trained to lead when pastors are not sufficient to go round the churches.

According to Leroy Ludd, “Pastors are assigned by the District council’s as itinerant supervisors and preachers while untrained elders actually run the churches in the local churches”<sup>2</sup>. Many of these elders are not selected on their educational background but on the standard that they are older respected Christians in their community. Many of these elders have very little formal education.<sup>3</sup> Begoro district also shares this unpleasant scene with many churches and many untrained leaders. The “key is to help and encourage the trained pastors to equip the local church elders to cry on the work of shepherding the flock.”<sup>4</sup> The pastor must provide training for the elders. He needs to teach so that the members learn both content and method from him. According to Godfred Osei Mensah, “The church today needs leaders who are able to disciple younger leaders and prepared them, not just as leaders of tomorrow, but God’s servants to serve him today.”<sup>5</sup> It is upon this that the researcher have taken

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Edger, “Designing Education Missiology.” *An International Review* Vol. xii No 20 (April 1988), 205.

<sup>2</sup>Judd Le Roy L “Helping multi-churched pastor to train their Elders” *Doctoral Project* (Trinity Evangelical Divinity school, Deerfield, Illinois, June 1987), 31.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. 31.

<sup>4</sup>E. Philip Morrison, *The multi-church Pastor a Manual for Training Leadership in Multi-Church Setting* (Allention, PA 18106: Gratia Veritas Publishers, 2006), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Gottfried Osei Mensah, *Wanted Servant Leaders* ( Achimota, Ghana: African Christian Press 1990), 5.

upon to write something in order to help our leaders to lead churches, retain members and prepares them for the soon coming of Jesus Christ. In selection of leaders for our churches, pastors should always look for people who are spiritual, gifted, teachable, and reliable as Paul has described in 2 Tim 2:2 but not just merely by age or the number of years ones has been in the church.

### **Program Design**

Membership retention is of great importance since it keeps the church going. Through training our church leaders will help in nurturing, visiting and encouraging the new converts to stay on board. A program was designed to train leaders and church members on how to retain new converts. The program had one session lasting for four days, August 29, 2012 to September 2, 2012. The theme for the workshop was “Called to serve.”

The participants were drawn from all the nineteen churches in the district. Seven members were selected from the five organized churches which includes; two elders, secretary, personal ministries leaders, personal ministries secretary, women ministries leaders and Adventist men leaders. Four members from each company churches. These were: one elder, the church secretary, women ministries leader and the personal ministry leader. In addition to these people, five people were invited from the district to represent the interest of the District and Sabbath school branches in the District.

These people were the District elder, secretary, women ministries leader, personal ministries leader and Adventist men leader. In all, the total number of ninety six (96) church leaders attended the workshop. The workshop was held at the Begoro central SDA church.

The workshop was sponsored from the District annual budget and special donations from individual church members. The facilitators for the workshop were the East Ghana Conference Executives secretary, East Ghana Conference personal, ministries director, East Ghana Conference, stewardship Director, and the District Pastor.

The objectives of this workshop were

1. To train leaders on how to be effective in assisting the district pastor in his duties.
2. To educate leaders on strategies of retraining new converts.
3. To educate leaders of their roles and functions in the churches as leaders.
4. To assist participants to draw church programs.
5. To encourage the participants to work effectively so that members will derive maximum satisfaction from the service they receive from them.

The workshop was a residential type. The Begoro central Seventh-day Adventist church premise was the venue for the workshop. The Begoro central church has a decent Primary and Junior High School and with full residential facilities. These facilities include sleeping apartment and a big church house which can be used as meeting hall. The classrooms were used as accommodation while the church house was the meeting place. All these facilities were free of charge with exception of electricity and water which attracted a minimal charge.

Equipments and Facility needed for the training were

- i. Bible
- ii. Exercise books for notes by the participants
- iii. Folders with pens
- iv. A medium size hall equipped with writing board and dusters.

The activities of the workshop included the following:

a. INTRODUCTION

- Greetings
- Devotion
- Season of prayer

b. MAIN ACTIVITIES

- Lecture presentation by Resource persons
- Group discussion
- Discussion of group report

c. CONCLUSION

- End every day's program with season of prayers.

At the end of the workshop participants were expected to gain the following:

- Understand their role as leaders
- Be able to visit church members regularly
- Acquire effective communication skills
- Develop good inter personal skills
- Develop effective nurturing skills
- Acquire Skills of preparing sermon
- Learn Effective time management and better organized programs
- Appreciate and understand Effective follow up programs
- Develop interest in caring for new converts.

*Table 21. Cost Estimate of a Proposed Five-Day Training Workshop*

	Activities	COST GH¢	Number of Participants	Number of Days	Total Cost
Meal	Breakfast	2.00	96	5	-
	Dinner	3.00	96	5	-
	Pre-workshop Organizational Activities	120	-	-	120.00
	P.A Systems	150	-	-	150.00
	Allowance for Resource persons	-	4	-	160.00
	Utility Bills (Water & Electricity)	-	-	-	50.00
	Exercise	-	-	-	600.00
	Books Pens and Folder	-	-	-	-
	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>1,080.00</b>

### **Topics for the Workshop**

1. How to influence and invite others- Pr. S.B Arloo.
2. Effective visitation and its importance in membership retention- Pr. Addai Harrison Baffour
3. Follow-up activities and its importance in establishing new converts in the church. Pr. Alex Abugyimah Wiredu.
4. Integration of new converts in the Church Pr. P.M.K. Arthur
5. Maturing in the Adventist faith- Pr. S.B Arloo
6. How to plan and lead the worship service -Pr. P.M.K. Arthur



7. Effective communication and building effective community relationship Pr. P.M.K. Arthu
8. Causes of loss of membership in the church- Pr. Alex Abugyimah Wiredu.
9. How to develop interest in prayers and bible studies - Pr. Harrison Addai Baffour
10. How to organize effective nurturing programs in the church - Pr. Alex Abugyimah Wiredu
11. Preparation of sermon and time management- Pr. S.B. Arloo

### **Facilitators**

1. Pastor S.B Arloo, Executive Secretary, East Ghana Conference of SDA Church. Background: MA (religion) University of Ghana
2. Pastor Alex Abugyimah Wiredu, Personal Ministry Director, Sabbath School and Adventist Men. East Ghana Conference of SDA Church: District Pastor, Kibi District of SDA. Background: MA ( Leadership and Organization) AUA ( Babock Campus, Nigeria)
3. Pastor P.M.K. Arthur, Stewardship and trust Services Director. East Ghana Conference of SDA Church also Tafo District Pastor .Background: MA (Counseling), University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
4. Pastor Addai Harrison Baffour, Begoro District Pastor. Background: BA (Religion) Valley View University, Ghana.

### **Daily Programs**

#### **WENESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2012**

- 2:00 pm – Arrival
- 2:00 pm-5:00 pm- Registration
- 5:00 pm-6:00 pm – Supper
- 6:00 pm-7:00 pm- Welcome and Introduction
- 7:00 pm-7:30 pm- Grouping / Various Announcements
- 7:30 pm-8:30 pm – Season of prayers

## **THURSDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2012**

5:00 am – 6:00 am – Sabbath School  
6:00 am – 7:00 am – Wash down  
7:00 am – 8:00 am – Breakfast  
8:00 am – 9:00 am – Devotion  
9:00 am – 11:00 am- Lecture 1: How to influence and invite others to Christ  
11:00 am- 11:30 am – Break  
11:30 am- 1:30 pm – Lecture 2: Effective visitation and its importance in membership retention.  
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm- Break  
2:00 pm- 4:00 pm – Lecture 3: Effective follow-up Activities and its importance in establishing new converts.  
4:00 pm – 6:30 pm- Break and Supper  
6:30 pm -7:30 pm- devotion  
7:30 pm – 8:00 pm – Group Discussion  
8:30 pm- 9:00 pm – Submission of group report  
9:00 pm – 9:30 Season of prayers

## **FRIDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST, 2012**

5:00 am – 6:00 am – Sabbath School  
6:00 am – 7:00 am – Wash-down  
7:00 am – 8:00 am – Breakfast  
8:00 am – 9:00 am – Devotion  
9:00 am – 11:00 am – lecture 4: Integration of New Converts in the Church.  
11:00 am- 11:30 am – Break  
11:30 am – 1:30 pm – Lecture 5: Maturing in the Adventist faith.  
1:30 pm- 2:00 pm – Break  
2:00 pm- 4:00 pm – Lecture 6: How to plan and lead the worship service.  
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm – Sabbath preparation and supper  
6:30 pm – 7:30 pm - Vesper service  
7:30 pm – 8:00 pm – Group Discussion  
8:00 pm – 8:30 pm – Submission of group report  
8:30 pm – 9:00 pm – Season of prayers

## **SATURDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER, 2012**

5:00 am – 6:00 am – Devotion  
6:00 am – 7:30 am – Wash-down  
7:30 am – 8:30 am – Breakfast  
8:30 am – 1:00 pm – Worship  
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm – Break and lunch  
2:30 pm – 4:30 pm – Lecture 7: Effective communication in building community relationship.  
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm – Vesper Service  
5:30 pm – 6:30 pm – Supper  
6:30 pm- 8:00 pm - Lecture 8: Causes of loss of membership in the church.

8:00 pm – 8:30 pm – Group Discussion  
8:30 pm – 9:00 pm – Submission of group report/prayer

## **SUNDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2012**

5:00 am – 6:00 am – Sabbath School  
6:00 am – 7:30 am – Clean-up / Wash down  
7:30 am – 8:30 am – Breakfast  
8:30 am – 10:30 am – Lecture 9: How to develop members' interest in Bible studies and prayers.  
10:30 am – 11:00 am – Break  
11:00 am – 1:00 pm – Lecture 10: How to organize an effective nurturing program.  
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm – Lecture 11: Preparation of sermon and time management.  
2:30 pm – 3:00 pm – Group discussion  
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm – Consecration Service  
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm – Lunch  
4:30 pm- 6:00 pm – Departure

The participants who attended this workshop were very happy since they were able to sharpen their leadership skills. They developed team spirit and were ready to work together to build their churches. As Fritz Lobinger said,

“For the church to grow strong and be a vital force in the world today, the sleeping giants must be awakened. God’s people must be ready for work of service. This can be accomplished as the pastor trains team of elders and church leaders to minister in each local congregation.”<sup>6</sup>

Participants were made to see the need of committing their lives to God, using their different gifts and abilities to work together in harmony and unity to fulfill the purpose of the church. Commitment, deep spirituality and strong moral character are necessary attribute of Christian leadership. This must be a continual process whereby the elder makes time each day for bible study, meditation and prayer. As a Christian, you cannot hope to have the power to lead your people in God’s way unless you make a commitment to daily devotions.

---

<sup>6</sup> Fritz Lobinger, *Spiritual Formation for Community Leaders* (Lumko, Nigeria: Musicological Institute, 1980), 4.

## **Strategies to Retrain both New and Old Members in the Church After the Workshop**

The commission of Jesus Christ recorded in Matthew 28:19 implies that ultimate effectiveness of new congregation is determined by how well it grows. In finding strategies to retain members in the church, the pastor has to educate church members to be aware of loss of membership in the church and its causes and bringing all members on board on how best to prevent it.

### **Proper Follow-Up Program**

Commenting on proper follow-up, James A Cress said,

“Intensive follow-up is needed if new converts are to be retained. Follow-up is spiritual pediatrics; it has to do with the care and protection of spiritual infants. It deals with the development of new babies in Christ, from the time of their new birth until they grow and provide for themselves.”<sup>7</sup>

During this process it gives senses of security to the new converts; hear words of encouragement, counseling and teaching. Immediately after their baptism, Pastor, elders and evangelistic team should continue to visit to know their need, encourage, counseling and assisting them to be firmly established their faith in the church. “A Well-Coordinated Strategic Program using Volunteer Pioneer Workers, Pastor and dedicated lay members should be involved”<sup>8</sup>. The church should use small group bible study unit, increase visitation by ministers and members, afternoon bible studies on Sabbath, all is needed to make this successful.

---

<sup>7</sup> James A Cress, *You can keep them if you Care. Helping New Members Stay on Board* (Oshawa: Ontario, Miracle Press, 2000) ,28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,28

## **Social Fellowship**

Another way that helped to retain new members is social or community fellowship. The apostolic church used this method in their days.

“Fellowship at the time of the apostolic church is understood as an expression of all the activities which highlight the oneness of the believers resulting from the common faith of those who were assembled shared in Christ. It is intimate union among believers, a spiritual term of brotherly concord unity of believers. It had a spiritual fraternal and economical dimension and effective in all the relationships of the believers with one another.<sup>9</sup>

The only difference between one store and the other is the way one treats its customers. In the same way the only difference between the Seventh day Adventist and other churches is the way the church members treat each other. How the church treat its new members will determine whether one will stay or leave. In as much as the church wants to conserve its members, the church should be a friendly church. Make the first impression the best impression. Meet people, especially the new converts and visitors with smiles, shaking their hands and help them find a seat.

Make sure the new converts are recognized and appreciated. Invite everyone to reach out and shake few hands during worship saying something like: I am so happy you are here today. The new converts should be made to feel that they are wanted. Pray and sing praises to God together, fellowship with one another, sharing what God has done in their lives. The service should be full of adorations. New converts should not be left to feel isolated and alone to face their own problems. They should be visited after service and invite them to church, social events, helping them build effective relationship of the believers with one another.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 271.

## **Proper Integration of New Converts**

Immediately after baptism, the church should find every possible means of integrating new converts in the church. They should be help to identify their spiritual gifts. New converts should be invited to join the various ministries in the church. They should also be assigned to Sabbath school class or small groups. It is the responsibility of the unit and the small group where the newly converts will participate to develop friendship, pray with him or her and invite him or her if possible to social activities of the church. Visit him or her immediately if he or she misses church meetings; showing him or her that his or her absence was felt in the church. They should also be helped to solve some of their problems and also be involved in the missionary activities, preparing them to testify for Christ and to win souls for his kingdom.

Post-baptismal class should be organized for the new converts to help increase their knowledge in the doctrines of the church. Also involve them with someone more experienced in order to form a missionary couple. This companion will be his or her spiritual guardian who will take care, encourage and involve him or her in the church activities and in evangelism. According to EG White “the heavenly universe is waiting for the members to become channels through which the current of life shall flow to the world, that many may be converted.”<sup>10</sup>

## **Intensive Nurturing**

Nurture flows from the heart of a loving God who desires to see those who have just come to the faith grow in him. He is the dedicated physician who tenderly cares for his patient. He nurses each one to health. He applies the healing balm until

---

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, 21.

they are whole. (Jer. 8:22 NKJV) God is the loving parents who instruct guides, corrects and discipline his children. Even if they fail he never gives up (Isa 49:15 NKJV), He is the good shepherd who cares for his flock and battle against ravenous wolves who wants to destroy the sheep. His overriding concern is the safety and well-being of the flock. (Ps 23 NKJV)

After baptizing the new converts into church, there should be an intensive nurturing by both the pastor and the elders of the church. The rapid evangelistic growth in Acts 2 necessitated a carefully thought through process of nurture to enable new believers to become strong disciples. Luke states “they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrines and fellowship in breaking of bread and in prayer. (Acts 2:42 NKJV) This quotation shows that the new converts were not left alone after baptism but were nurtured by the church. The pastor and elders should spend much time after baptism to nurture these spiritual babies. “They must be thought how to labor for the master. They must be trained, disciplined, drilled in the best method of winning souls for Christ “<sup>11</sup>. “The truth must be presented as it is in Jesus. Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. “<sup>12</sup>

Bible studies should be paramount to the new converts. As they become conversant in the scriptures, they build a strong faith in Jesus and become active in the church. Active Sabbath afternoon bible studies and Sunday bibles studies should be intensified. The statement that “the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42 NKJV) clearly implies that more time and nurture were required in the church. In his book *Evangelism through Sabbath school*, Gerald R Nash states that Sabbath school workers have a heavy burden for the eternal welfare

---

<sup>11</sup>Ellen G White, *Gospel Workers*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.

of their members and that a soul holding program is just as important as a soul winning one. Evangelisms concern is not merely to teach the gospel but to teach it to every person continuously in such a manner that those who hear the truth may endure unto the end and be saved in the kingdom of God.”<sup>13</sup>

In concluding, the concept of Pastor-teacher to Christian minister is inseparable as seen in Eph. 4: 11. Pastors are not only to preach but they are also called to teach Christ. Active ministry consisted not merely in sermonizing but in educating the people. Thus the success of retaining new converts in the church must depend on intensive nurturing.

### **Intensive Visitation**

All humans are social beings who need interaction and love. When pastors, elders and members visit new converts it makes them feel loved and valued. Their social relationship becomes strong and their social needs are met. If new converts are deserted by members of their new church who could not meet their social needs, they turn to look for friends outside to keep them company. In attempt to do so, they at times become prey to their former friends who could lure them into their former life style. As far as the church wants to retain its new converts, intensive visitation of both new and old members should be instituted. This could be done through proper pastoral visitation, elder’s visitation and team members’ visitation.

---

<sup>13</sup> Gerald R Nash, *Evangelism through Sabbath School* (Washington D C, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1964), 60.



## **Pastoral Visitation**

The pastor should live a life of service and sacrifice. He should sacrifice part of his time in visiting both new and old members. Any study of Christian leadership is incomplete unless we study the servant sacrificial lifestyle of Christ “the son of man did not come to be serve but to save” (Mark 10:45 NKJV). Jesus said “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27 NKJV) so the pastor should seek for the new converts, visiting in their homes and workplaces, trying to find how they are doing. “The son of man comes to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke19:10 NKJV)

The Pastor should take initiative in visiting. Taking the initiative presumes that visiting is important and appropriate for the pastor, as a caring person to reach out, even without an invitation. If the pastor visits on regular basis, he is more likely to hear about crises, illness and know the believers needs and attend to it. A regular visitation allows the pastor to establish a caring relationship. Such relationships provide a climate where the expectation of receiving care during a crisis is the norm. It will also help the pastor win the heart of the new converts and help them have confidence and trust in the pastor and their lord. As Ellen G White said;

“Go to your neighbor one by one and come close to them till their heart are won by your unselfish interest and love, sympathize with them, pray for them, watch for opportunities to do them good, and as you can gather a few together and open the word of God to their darken minds, keep watching as he who must render an account for the soul of men and make the most of the privileges that God give you in laboring with him in his moral vineyard”<sup>14</sup>

The Pastor should collect the mobile numbers of the new converts so that he can called them to know their welfare and discuss their problems on the day he was unable to visit them. He is not to wait for new converts to come to him but rather he

---

<sup>14</sup> Ellen G White “Go To Your Neighbor” (Review and Herald, March 13, 1888) The Divine Blue Print (Home Missionary Department).

should go to them. “We are not to wait for souls to come to us we must seek them out where they are”<sup>15</sup>

In concluding, the pastor should devote much time in visiting, mingle with them as the one who desire their good, praying for them and seeking their welfare. This will help him to know the needs of the new converts and be addressed. It will also help the new converts develop strong commitment with their God and their pastor.

### **Elders Visitation**

New converts feels secured and important when they are visited by their elders especially in the rural areas. It helps the elders to know their social needs to be addressed. It also helps the elders to show kindness and sympathy to the converts and thereby strengthened their faith. Ellen G White gave this advice;

“Do not neglect speaking to your neighbors and doing all the kindness in your power, that you by all means may save some. We need to seek for the spirit that constrained the apostle Paul to go from house to house pleading with tears and teaching repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ”<sup>16</sup>

Church elders should make intensive visitation one of their priorities. This new converts if proper care and love is not show to them then they are easily attracted by their old friends. Elders should try to associate themselves with them, assisting them solving some of their personal problems. Through house to house visitation, the elders will know the problems of the new converts.

---

<sup>15</sup> General Conference of Seventh Day Adventist, “New Converts” *The Divine Blue Print Home Missionary Department*, Leadership Series Number, 29 (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen G White, *Review and Herald*, March 1888.

“House to house labors are needed. The Lord calls for decided effort to be put forth in places where the people knowing nothing of the bible truth. The elders should visit the new converts in a friendly way and also become acquainted with them.”<sup>17</sup>

According to E.G white,

“Personal, individual efforts and interests for your friends and neighbors will accomplish much more than can be estimated. It is for the want of this kind of labor that souls for whom Christ died for are perishing. Your work may accomplish more real good than the more extensive meetings if they lack any personal effort. When both are combined with the blessing of God a more perfect and thorough work may be wrought, but if we can have but one part done, let it be the individual labor for opening the scripture in households making personal appeal”<sup>18</sup>

In concluding, intensive elders visitation could do more good in retaining both old and new members in the church. Again individual members also have a role to play in the retention of members. Through visitation and good relationship with one another, both old and new members will make retention easy.

**Visitation Team** As much as the church wants to retain its members, individuals should be trained and encouraged to visit their neighbors. This could be done by forming visitation team of individuals who will devote much time visiting new converts regularly after baptism. Ellen G White admonished every church member to give him or herself to the Lords service. “My brethren and sisters, submit to the Lords service. Allow no opportunity to pass unimproved. Visit those who live near you and by sympathy and kindness try to reach their hearts”<sup>19</sup>. Team members

---

<sup>17</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, 144.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> E G White, *Review and Herald* .Nov 21, 1907.

should visit the sick and the suffering and show a kindly interest in them. If possible do something to make them more comfortable. Through this means, you can reach their hearts. At another occasion, Ellen G. White commented,

“Visit every family where ever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in missionary work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood, and know their spiritual conditions, if professed Christians had engaged in the work from the time when their names were first placed in the church book, there would not now be such widespread unbelief. If every church member had sought to enlighten others, thousands upon thousands would today stand with God commandment- keeping people.”<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, when this is neglected, “a spirit of criticism and bitterness will come into the church and the spiritual disconcertment of many would be dimmed, and because of this the cause of Christ will suffer great loss”<sup>21</sup>. Through the visitation, the church can enroll for correspondence school, give literature, give Bible studies, find interest in souls, find the needy and do health and welfare work, find new friends and organize branch Sabbath school and by so doing retain both old and new converts

**Special Prayer and Fasting Meetings** In these last days, many Christians face many challenges and problems. There is the need to be encouraged and comforted one another. Satan’s temptations are greater now than before because he knows that his time is short. We must have to put on the whole armor of God and be ready at any moment for a conflict with the power of darkness. These spiritual powers could be prevented through prayers and fasting.

Many Christians, especially new converts have some special needs which could only be solved through prayers and fasting. When these needs are not addressed

---

<sup>20</sup> Ellen G White, *Testimonies* Vol. 6. 271.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

through fasting and prayers by the church, these members turn to seek from other churches. The churches should set days aside for special prayers and fasting for addressing the needs of her members. The District should also organize prayer and fasting retreats or prayer conferences for addressing both physical and spiritual needs. Through this, members who leave to other churches prayer camps and meetings could be prevented and retained.

### **Program Evaluation**

A week before the leaders from the various churches of the district were invited to the workshop, a survey was conducted in all the churches of the district from August 18, 2012, - August 24, 2012 to know the total membership of each church. At the middle of the first quarter of 2013, February 10- February 16, 2013 another survey was conducted in all the churches and there was a great increase of membership. Many members who abandoned their faith had now come back as a result of intensive visitation, nurturing and other useful programs of the church. More also ninety seven percent (97%) of new converts who were baptized in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2012 were all active in the church. The table below indicates the number of attendees before and after the workshop.

Table 22 .Pre-Project and Post-Workshop Head Count

N O	CHURCH	PRE PROJECT SURVEY MEMBER SHIP	POST PROJECT SURVEY MEMBER SHIP	4TH QUAR TER BAPTI SM (	END OF 1 <sup>ST</sup> QUARTE R MEMBER SHIP RETAIND	PERCENT AGE RETAIN ED
1.	CENTRA L	255	283	8	8	11%
2.	NEW LIFE	33	41	2	2	24.2%
3.	AMAZIN G FACT	15	20			33.3%
4.	BOSUSO	46	51	4	4	10.9%
5.	ASUYIRI	50	53	5	5	6%
6.	ONUKU	29	33	2	2	13.8%
7.	PRINCE EMMAN UEL	29	35	2	2	20.7%
8.	PRINCE OF PEACE	8	10			25%
9.	AGYEIK R	8	12			50%
10.	OBOURH O	12	15			25%
11.	AKORAD ARKO	15	17	1	1	13.3%
12.	AHOMA M	14	17	2	2	21.4%
13.	MIASO	16	22	2	2	37.5%
14.	ASIREBU	20	24	3	3	20%
15.	OSUBINB	6	8			33.3%
16.	APAAH	10	13	2	2	30%
17.	AKWANS	20	27	4	4	35%
18.	HIAMAN	6	9			60%
19.	KWAHU AMANFR	23	30	4	3	30.4%
	TOTAL	615	720	41	40	17.07%

The strategy adopted made significant improvement in membership retention.

It increased from 615 members before the program to 720 members after the program

which in percentage terms is about 17%. The final chapter focuses on the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the project.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Summary**

The first chapter of the study dealt with the need for the church to maintain her members. There are many challenges which hold back members from holding to their faith. The main purpose of the researcher is to find out the causes of poor retention of membership and to develop a strategy for membership retention. The second chapter dealt with review of relevant literature on membership retention for church growth.

The third chapter investigated the reasons of poor membership retention and its impact on church growth. The reasons came about through questionnaires and interviews conducted in the Begoro district. From these, the researcher identified the need of training workshop for the church leaders.

The fourth chapter focused on the development of a training program for church leaders based on the data from the survey. A detailed training program was designed and three ministers were invited to train the church leaders. After the programme was developed and implemented, it was evaluated.

Membership retention was ordained by Jesus before the great Commission so that His disciples could be added to the fold (John 15:16 NKJV). However, this was not perfect during the early church and is how it has been down to this age. Though it was not so for the early Seventh-day Adventist yet membership retention is becoming a worldwide problem in the church. M.A. Bediako expressed concern over the high



rate of poor membership retention in the church. An average of 35 percent of those joining the church leaves every year.

This means that for every year three individuals who accept the three Angels message, one leaves the church. But through Bible studies and inspirational writings with different committees set at local and act at General Conference levels, the church is arriving at finding ways to reduce the loss of new converts. There is therefore the need for all Adventists at all level to contribute their quota and be co-laborers with the Lord, by winning and keeping souls for His soon coming. Ministers are called to preach, teach, visit and encourage members.

The need to educate old members in all districts and local churches on how to help new converts to be established in the faith cannot be overemphasized. New members should also be taught how to be involved in soul winning and keeping so that the work can be accomplished. The neglect of emphasis in nurturing in many churches has given rise to lack of growth in membership and it has resulted in many dropping immediately after baptism.

Because of this, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has called on leaders at all levels to train old members on nurturing new converts. Visitation of both old and new converts should be paramount in the churches. Pastors and elders should develop strategies of visiting every member at least twice a week in such places as Begoro district. Poor quality of weekly worship program, social interaction, lack of integration of new converts among others leads to the loss of new converts.

### **Conclusion**

In as much as there is an increase in the yearly membership as recorded at the East Ghana Conference headquarters, this is only on paper. This study has revealed

the following as the major causes of membership loss in the Begoro district: lack of follow-up, lack of fellowship, late integration of new converts, lack of effective nurturing, visitation, post-baptismal pastor's class, negative life style of old members and negative influence of both family and other religious groups. However, the district can retain her members by addressing this problem.

This can be done through training elders and church members to assist the pastor in the nurturing task. Thus, workshops organized by the district for elders and members in churches, addressing strategies for membership retention are a necessary move towards curbing the membership loss in certain districts like Begoro. The results of this study indicate that there is the need to replicate this program in other districts of the East Ghana Conference and in the Ghana Union in general to help solve the membership loss phenomenon.

### **Recommendations**

For further studies one could carry research on nurturing as it affects membership retention. The elders who take care of our churches have not been properly trained and the result is poor program planning, lack of integration and subsequent poor attendance of church programs. The consequences are manifested in poor retention of new converts. To change this situation, the following suggestions are recommended:

- a. The election of church leaders should be critically looked at—spiritual leaders who are spiritually gifted and are interested in the progress of the church should be elected at the appointed time.
- b. Every elder should develop the habit of visitation in order to assess the needs of his church members.

- c. Every district should place high premium on the training of elders in their territory.
- d. Personal evangelism should be encouraged in all the churches.
- e. Caretaker or lay preachers should be trained and given some allowances and sent to the rural areas to assist the pastor and elders.
- f. The district should budget enough funds for follow-up activities after every evangelism.
- g. The churches and the district should intensify prayer and fasting meetings to address the needs of members.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPATE IN A WORKSHOP

Dear.....

INVITATION TO A WORKSHOP

The district pastor and the entire district executives are inviting the following leaders to attend a five day-workshop at Begoro Central from August 29, 2012 to September 2, 2012.

For organized churches

- 2 Church elders
- 1 Church secretary
- 1 Personal ministry leader
- 1 Personal ministry secretary
- 1 Women ministry leader
- 1 Adventist men leader

For each company church

- 1 Church elder
- 1 Church secretary
- 1 Women ministry leader
- 1 Personal ministry leader

From the district pastor

First district elder

District secretary

Women ministry leader

Personal ministry leader

I hope to meet you at this important workshop.

Thank you

Yours in his service



Pastor Addai Harrison Baffour  
(Program organizer)

Appendix B

Adventist University of Africa

MA Leadership

RESEARCHER: ADDAI HARRISON BAFFOUR.

Dear Respondent, this questionnaire is to help the researcher design leadership training materials to be used in training church leaders in the local churches on how to retain new members. This questionnaire is for the Lay Leaders in Begoro District.

**SECTION A**

Please tick (x) your choice of option in the box.

1. Indicate whether you are a male or female. Male (  ). Female (  ).
2. How old are you.  
16-20 (  ), 21-25 (  ), 26-30 (  ), 31-35 (  ), 36-40 (  ) 41-45 (  ) 46-50 (  )  
Above 51 (  ).
3. What is your occupation?  
Student (  ) Teacher (  ) Famer (  ) Trader (  ) Other (  )
4. Are you a church officer?  
Church officer (  ) Not yet a church officer (  ).
5. Can you read and write      Yes (  ) No (  )
6. For how long have you been in the church?  
1-5yrs (  ) 6-10yrs (  ) 11-15yrs (  ) 16-20yrs (  ) 21 and above (  )

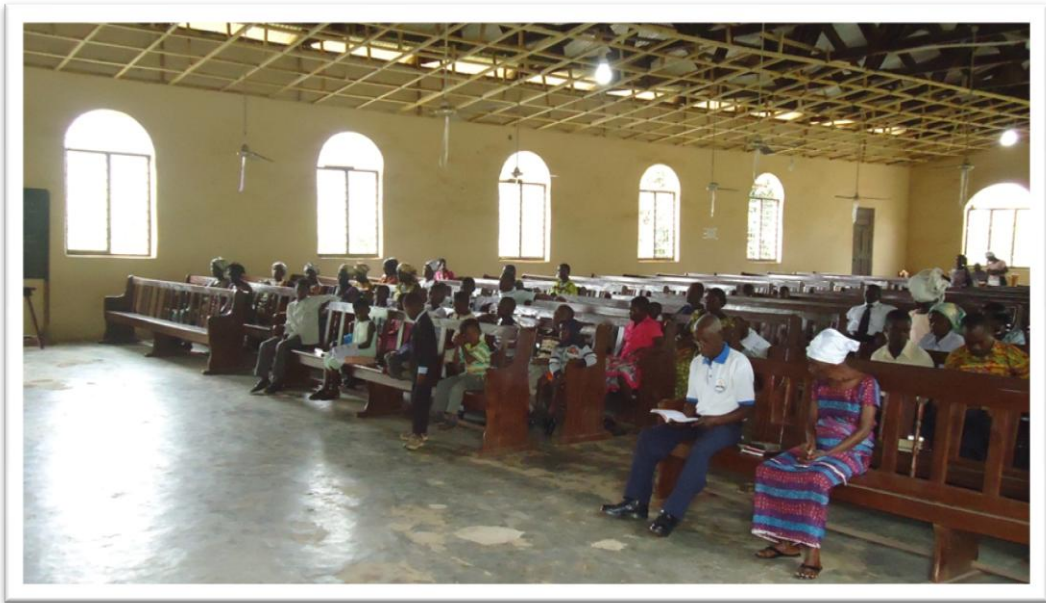
**SECTION B**

7. What is the frequency of baptism in your church?  
Monthly (  ) Quarterly (  ) as the need arise (  )
8. Does your church have a vibrant fellowship for new converts?  
Yes (  ) No (  ) Uncertain (  )

9. What is the duration of fellowship with new converts in your church?  
 Less than 1 month ( ) 1-2 months ( ) 3-4 months ( ) 5 months  
 and above ( )
10. How many months do your church use to do follow-up activities after  
 baptism? Less than 1 month ( ) 1 month and above ( ) No follow-up ( )
11. How often do your church pastor/elders visit your church members in their  
 houses or work place? Daily ( ) weekly ( ) monthly ( ) no visitation ( )
12. After baptism, how long does it take to involve new converts into church  
 activities?  
 Less than 1 month ( ) 1-2months ( ) 3-4 months ( ) 6 months and above ( )
13. Does your church offer effective nurturing for new converts after baptism?  
 Less than 1 month ( ) 1-2 months ( ) 3-4 months ( ) uncertain ( )
14. Do you think the lifestyle of old members affect retention of new converts?  
 Yes ( ) No ( ) Uncertain ( )
15. Are you aware of the number of new converts in your church from last  
 baptism? Yes ( ) No ( ) Uncertain ( )
16. What ratio of new converts do you think remains in your church after  
 baptism? 3:10 ( ) 4:10 ( ) 5:10 ( ) uncertain ( )
17. Do family and other religious bodies influence loss of membership in your  
 church? Yes ( ) No ( ) Uncertain ( )
18. Do you think after baptism new converts should be involved in pastor's class  
 for some time? Yes ( ) No ( ) Not certain ( )
19. Do you think poor membership retention affects the progress of your church?  
 Yes ( ) No ( ) Uncertain ( )
20. If yes which of the following do you think will help control this loss of  
 membership.  
 Effective visitation ( ) Effective nurturing ( ) Involving of new members in church  
 activities ( ) Post baptismal pastors class ( ) Proper follow-up activities ( )  
 Educating the old members of their lifestyle ( )

## APPENDIX C

The picture below shows members attendance of some churches in Begoro District Of Seventh-Day Adventist Church, before workshop and after workshop



**Begoro Central before Workshop**





**Begoro Central after Workshop**



**Obourho Church before Workshop**





**Obourho Church after Workshop**



**New Life Church before Workshop**



**New Life Church after Workshop**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson Keith R. *Friendship That Run Deep: 7 Ways to Build Lasting Relationships*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997.
- Babcock Gove Philip. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. Cologne, Germany: Konemann Vertagegesellschaft, 1993.
- Cress, J., *You can keep them if you care; Helping New Members stay on Boards*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association Resource Center General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2000.
- Daily, Steven G, *Adventist for a New Generation*. Okego, Nigeria: Better Living Publisher, 1994.
- Dudley Roger L. *Why our Teenagers Leave the Church*. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000.
- Dyhdahl, Jon L. *Adventist Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Joy and Challenges of Presenting Jesus to a Diverse World*. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1999.
- Finely, Mark. *Decision, Persuading People for Christ*. Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Evangelism's Big Picture: From Baptism to Discipleship. *Ministry*, September, 2009, 9.
- General Conference of Seventh- day Adventists, Ministerial Association. *Seventh-day Adventists Elder's Handbook*, Silver Spring, MD: 1994.
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Evangelism and Church Growth- From Baptism to Discipleship, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, <http://www.adventist.org/world church/meeting/2003annualcouncil/156G.htm>  
Accessed, March 23, 2012
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual 15<sup>th</sup> Ed*. Silver Spring, MD: 2005.
- General Conference of Seventh -day Adventists, "New Converts" *The Divine Blue Print Home missionary Department Leadership Series Number, 29* Silver spring, MD: Review and Herald, 1997.
- Guerrero, David. Growing Churches in a Multi Church District." *Ministry* , August 2008, 22.

- Hamel, Paul. *Ellen White and Music: Background and Principles*. Washington D C: Review and Herald, 1976.
- Hybells, Bill. *Courageous Leadership*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002.
- Judd Le Roy L. “*Helping Multi-churched Pastor to Train their Elders.*”, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Doctoral Project. Deerfield, Illinois, June 1987
- Kidder Joseph S. “The Power of Relationship in Evangelism.” *Ministry*, July 2008, 10.
- Kleser Loice C. *The Bible Instructor*. Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1994.
- Lawrence, Errol A. “Building Relationship through Pastoral Visitation.” *Ministry*, 2008, 26.
- Lobinge, Fritzr. “Spiritual Formation for Community Leaders” *Lumko Musicological Institute Magazine*, 1980.
- MacArthur. *MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary, Acts 1 – 12*, New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1956.
- McGinnis Alan Loy. *The Friendship Factor: How to Get Closer to the People You Care for*, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979
- Mills, Philip. “Church Growth”. *Adventist Affirm* Vol. 16, No. 3.
- Morrison Philip E. *The Multi-church Pastor a Manual for Training Leadership in Multi-Church Setting*. Allention, PA : Gratia Veritas Publishers, 2006.
- Nash Gerald R. *Evangelism through Sabbath School*, Washington D C: Review and Herald, 1964.
- Nichol Francis D. *The S.D. A Bible Commentary Vol. 1* Washington D C: Review and Herald, 1953.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol.6*, Washington D C: Review and Herald, 1953.
- Oluwasegun, Gabriel. *Church Leaders Resource Manual, for Pastoral Care and Spiritual Development*. Ibadan, Nigeria: International Publisher Limited, 2004.
- Osei, Mensah Gottfried. *Wanted Servant Leaders*. Achimota, Nigeria: African Christian Press, 1990.
- Owusu-Antwi, Brempong. “Achieving the Mission of the Church.” *Ministry*, February, 2008, 21.
- .Owusu-Gyamfi, Clifford. “Down from the Pulpit.” *Ministry*, June, 2008, 20

- Paula, M. Saunder. "Factors Underlying Church Members: Satisfaction and Retention". *Journal of Ministry Marketing & Management* [www.informaworld.com/index/90468003.pdf](http://www.informaworld.com/index/90468003.pdf) 19 May, 2010. accessed, May 4, 2012
- Philips, Tom and Bob Norsworthy. *The World at Your Door*. London, UK, Bethany House Publishers, 1997.
- Power, Sindney W. *Where are the coverts?* Nashville, Tennessee,: Bradman Press, 1958.
- Richardson, Colin T. "Forgiveness: An Essential in Christian Life." *Ministry*, June 2009, 12 – 13.
- Schaller, Lyle E. *Effective Church Planting*. Nashville, Tennessee: The Pantheon Press, 1979.
- Schran, Daniel. "The Art of Listening." *Ministry*, August, 2009, 24 – 25.
- Stewart, David. *Church Growth, Member Activity and Convert Retention: Review and Analysis* [www.cumorab.com/indixphp?target=church-growth-articles](http://www.cumorab.com/indixphp?target=church-growth-articles). May, 2010.
- Sweazey, George E. *Effective Evangelism: The Created Work in the World*. New York: Happer Printers, 1953.
- Thayer, Jane. "Pastors Perspective in Assimilating Members". *Ministry*, February 2010, 6.
- Thomas, R Screiner; *Proselyte "the Iternational Standard Bible, Encyclopedia. Geoffrey W Brownily. Ed. 10011 Vol.3*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1986.
- Tutsch, Cindy. *Ellen White on Leadership: Guidance for Those who Influence Others*. Boise,Idaho: Pacific Press, 2008.
- Wagner, C. Peter. *Church Planting for Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide*. Ventura, California: Regal Book, 1984.
- . *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church*. Ventura, California: Gospel Light Publication, 1977.
- Weeden Larry K., *The Leadership Library. The Magnetic Fellowship, Reading and keeping people* Glendale, California: World Book Publishing, 1976.
- White, Ellen G., Review and Herald, Nov 21, 1907.
- . *Testimonies for the Church, Vol.4*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1995.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Thoughts from the Mountain of Blessing*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Testimonies to Southern Africa*. Bloemfontein, South Africa: South Africa Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Desires of Ages*, Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1898.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Christian Service*. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Gospel workers*. Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Testimonies for the Church Vol.6*. Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Review and Herald* March 13, 1888
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Testimonies for the Church vol. 9* Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ministry of Healing*. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1905.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Evangelism*. Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Review and Herald* August 26, 1902.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1923.
- Wright, Walter C. *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service*. Cambria, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004.

## VITA

### **Personal Identification:**

Name:	Addai Harrison Baffour
Date of birth:	November 22, 1958
Home Town:	Agona, Ashanti Ghana
Marital Status:	Married
Wife	Esther Addai Baffour

### **Education**

Adventist University of Africa Babcock, Nigeria:	Master of Arts in Leadership Candidate
Valley View University, Accra: Wesley College, Kumasi	Bachelor of Arts Religion, 2003 A 3 year Post Secondary, 1989

### **Work Experience**

Ghana Education Service	Teaching, 1989 – 2003
Ghana Education Service	Headmaster, 2003 - 2007
East Ghana Conference:	District Pastor, 2003 - 2013

