

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Master of Arts in Leadership

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School of Postgraduate Studies

Title: STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN NEW CONVERTS IN THE SDA CHURCH, A
CASE OF LWALABA STATION IN THE EAST CONGO UNION
MISSION

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Statistical Reports of Lwalaba Station membership shows a deplorable loss of members in its districts. It is sad to notice church members entering the church and disappearing after a certain time.

Many churches which had a prosperous growth in membership have experienced a decrease of church members year after year. This has been a great concern for most church leaders because they cannot open new branches.

Basing on this fact, the study is meant to identify be the real causes of this critical decrease of membership in Lwalaba Station, and suggest strategies that pastors can use to stop this trend and effect church growth.

In the introduction of the study, a response to the issue was anticipated. Thus, the following hypotheses were formulated: First, the decrease of church membership

could be attributed to lack of personal spiritual growth caused by the following factors: lack of personal Bible study, family devotion, and fellowship among church members. Second, the decrease of new converts could be attributed to the following causes: lack of new members' training, non-involvement in church activities, lack of visitation, pastoral care and counseling.

Findings revealed that the main causes of new converts backsliding are: (1) Lack of private Bible studies, (2) Non-involvement of new converts in church activities, (3) Lack of pastoral care and counseling, and (4) Lack of daily family devotion and nurturing.

With the aim of providing a solution the following strategies were made in order to maintain new converts in the church:(1) Equipping church members for individual bible studies, (2) Involving new converts in church activities, (3) Increasing house to house visitations for pastoral care and counseling, (4) Teaching church members the importance of daily family devotion.

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A project

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

by

Kabwit Mbal Stanislas

June 2014

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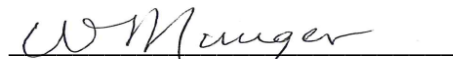
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Dedicated to my beloved wife Njing Tshikomb Charlotte, who in time of happiness and sorrows has always encouraged me without complaint. She has expressed love, and provided all kinds of support which have contributed to the achievement of this work.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Seventh-day Adventist church in Lwalaba Station is experiencing a decrease of its membership. Statistics have revealed a deplorable loss of believers in some Districts. It has been sad to notice that new converts enter the church and disappear after a while.

Many churches which had a prosperous growth in membership have experienced a decrease of church members year after year. Thus, considering this alarming situation for church growth, it seemed a good idea to conduct a study in order to find the real cause of this decrease, and suggest appropriate solutions for effective church growth.

Statement of the Problem

The mission entrusted to the church by God consists of spreading the gospel in the entire world and attract many people to Jesus Christ. The Scripture clearly states that Jesus Christ wants his church to grow. However, looking at the statistical report of Lwalaba Station membership, it is obvious that the church is not growing. A contributing factor is the continued loss of members in some Districts such Kasaji, Dilolo, Kisenge, Divuma, Sandoa and Musumba.

Church leaders need to address this situation in order to accomplish the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, church membership will continue to

decrease, thus resulting in church failure to achieve God's mission. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the cause of this situation, and suggest solutions.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives: First, to identify the causes of decrease of membership in Lwalaba Station. Second, suggest some strategies in order to arrest the situation.

Relevance of the Study

First, this study is important for Lwalaba Station church growth, because it will provide strategies which will prevent new converts from backsliding. Second, it is known that membership decrease is not limited to the area under study. Thus, principles suggested in this work will also be useful for other areas where God's church is experiencing the same challenges.

Delimitation of the Study

The issue of membership decrease has affected many Seventh-day Adventist churches, and even other denominations. But, this study will deal mainly with the causes of church membership decrease in Lwalaba Station; which comprises the following Districts: Kasaji, Dilolo, Kisenge, Divuma, Sandoa and Musumba. On the other hand, the concept of membership decrease is very wide and can be studied in many aspects. However, this study will be limited to identifying the causes of church membership decrease, and suggesting effective solutions.

Methodology

Every scientific work absolutely requires a methodology which comprises all techniques and means used by the researcher to reach a certain conclusion. For this specific work the following methods were employed:

- Survey technique using a written questionnaire submitted to individuals for data collection.
- Literature review which consisted of collecting data from several works written by different authors for more insights so as to reach to a certain conclusion.
- Interview of specific people for more information

Organization of the Work

This work is composed of five chapters. The first is an introduction dealing with the target problem, the purpose, the significance, the methodology of the study. The second chapter is a presentation of theoretical background of membership decrease among God's people. The third chapter is a description of local settings of Lwalaba Seventh-day Adventist Mission and project methodology. The fourth comprises presentation, analysis and interpretation of data collected. Chapter five suggests a program and strategies to maintain new converts in the church. Finally, chapter six provides a summary of findings, a conclusion, and recommendations.

Hypotheses

As an anticipated response to the question about causes of church membership decrease the researcher formulated the following hypotheses: First, the decrease of church membership might be caused by the lack of personal spiritual growth as a consequence of lack of personal bible studies, lack of family devotion, and lack of

fellowship among church members. Second, the decrease might be caused by a poor leadership as a consequence of the lack of training for new converts, non-involvement of new converts in church activities, and lack of visitation for pastoral care and counseling.

Presuppositions

In this study we recognize that the Bible is inspired by God in its entirety for our instruction. Along our study this book is used as a trustworthy source of reference. In addition, writings of Ellen G. White who so far is recognized by the Seventh-day Adventist church as inspired prophet of God are used in the study. Of course, other authors who have written on this subject are also quoted.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

God's plan for His church in the Old and New Testaments is to maintain his people and see them growing and prospering. Unfortunately Satan, the enemy of God has not remained quiet about God's plan for growth. On the contrary, he has worked with the purpose of destroying what God has gained.

God's desire for church growth is expressed in the great commission Jesus entrusted his church: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." (Matt 28:19-20). This mandate aims to increase the membership of God's church in the world.¹

As mentioned above Satan is against this plan. He creates all kinds of circumstances to provoke a decrease or loss among God's people. This second chapter presents some circumstances of membership decrease among God's people in the Old and the New Testament.

Membership Decrease in the Old Testament

The Bible reports situations where there has been a decrease among God's people. Contributing factors could be war situations, punishment of death because of sin, apostasy, etc. Whenever the Bible reports a decrease of people the evidence has

¹ Luisa Walker, *Évangélisation pour Aujourd'hui* (Miami, Florida: Edition Vida, 1988), 218.

been a lack of spiritual maturity. The section below presents some examples about this evidence.

Lack of Trust in the Lord

The book of Joshua talks of a sad situation that happened to God's people right at the conquest of the Promised Land. The children of Israel took for granted the victory over the small city of Ai. They neglected the city because it was so small. Therefore, they sent a small number of fighters against it. At that occasion 36 people of the camps of the Israelites were killed by the inhabitants of Ai. The Bible reports: "And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men for they chased them from before the gates... and struck them down on the descent, therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water." (Josh 7:5)

The defeat was bitter not only for Joshua the leader but also for all the people of Israel. They wanted to know what could be the cause of this failure. Finally, they understood that failure did not happen by accident. The cause is that Acan had sinned against the Lord. The people of Israel understood that the miracle of success was not automatic, but a result of obeying the Lord faithfully.²

As consequence of this disobedience, in addition to those 36 people killed in the battle, the family of Acan was also killed. It is obvious that the defeat was caused by the fact that the Israelites put confidence in themselves to a point of ignoring that evil that dwelt among them. The people lost courage not only because of losing the war, but also because they were almost convinced that the Lord had abandoned them.³

² André et Renée Neher. Histoire du Peuple D'Israël (Paris : Librairie d'Amérique et d'orient, 1982), 264.

³Nouveau commentaire Biblique, 201.

Referring to wars as a cause of decrease in number among Israelites, S.W Baron states that the people of God in the Old Testament experienced considerable losses at the Babylonian deportations (597-586 B.C). Baron reports, “by many wars and almost unwilling migrations, one third of the population which composed Judah before the war was taken by force by conquerors, but thousands fell under the sword and others fled in other provinces when Babylonians armies got close. Only a few numbers of refugees came back when peace was restored.”⁴

The first book of Samuel reports another case of number decrease among God’s people. By that time the children of Israel experienced a defeat in the war against philistines. The Bible explains that the Philistines put themselves in battle array against Israel. And, when they joined the battle Israel was defeated by the Philistines who killed about four thousand men of the army in the field (1 Sam 4:2). This defeat was caused by the carelessness of Eli’s sons. During the attack Israel lost the battle at Eben-Haezerou Eben- Ezer.⁵

Instead of searching for the real cause of their failure, Israelites took God’s ark as a magic tool to grant them an automatic victory. Contrary to their expectations the Israelite camp lost the battle and many of its fighters died there. The two sons of Eli died during the war and their father, ninety nine years old died suddenly when he heard the sad news of losing the battle and the death of his sons.⁶

Based on the insights above, it may be concluded that the decrease in number among God’s people does not occur by accident. These experiences of God’s people in the past make it clear that the exodus and wars among members are a cause of

⁴S.W Baron, *Histoire d’Israël* (France: Presse Universitaire, 1956), 142.

⁵*Histoire Biblique du Peuple d’Israël*, 265

⁶*Nouveau commentaire Biblique*, sous 1 Sam 4 : 2-4

decrease in number. The defeat by the enemies was the evidence that Israel had failed to trust in the Lord alone.

Decrease Due to Worldly Mixture

The book of Numbers gives certain cases of decrease in number among Israelite people as a consequence of sudden death; punishment because of their moral corruption. The first case is a sad incident that occurred during the exodus of Israelites. In spite of the fact that God provided manna as best food for his people, they claimed meat in opposition to God's plan. The Bible states that this behavior aroused the anger of God against these rebels:

Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense crying, so the children of Israel also wept again and said: Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt...but now our whole being is dried up, there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes. Now a wind went out from the Lord and it brought quail from the sea... But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague (Num 11: 4-6, 31; 33).

Many lost their life as consequence of rebellion against God's given diet. The Bible clarifies the fact that the root of this rebellion was the mixture with people from Egypt who joined God's people at the exodus. They are the ones who influenced the children of Israel to make a rebellion against their creator, and as result there was a considerable loss of members among His people.

Decrease Due to Worldly Covetousness

Another similar incident happened during the rebellion initiated by Cora, Dathan and Abiram; who complained against Moses and Aaron, leaders of God's people. It is obvious that some of these people had coveted leadership positions. As result all the three promoters were swallowed by the ground together with their families. In addition, another two hundred and fifty people were consumed by fire

(Num16: 32-35). The Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary explains the following:

These people agreed together to influence the whole people for a rebellion against Moses and Aaron his brother. Once these initiators died, the rest of people went back in their tents with fear, but this was not enough to bring a lesson for any attempt to rebellion. The following day people came to complain before Moses and Aaron saying: You are the ones who are killing God's people. God was not pleased with this rebellion so he sent a plague which killed on the spot fourteen thousand seven hundred people in addition to those who died previously by following Cora and his colleagues. This rebellion of Cora, Dathan and Abiram involved many people in rebellion because they were influential.⁷

Apostasy among God's People

Likewise, the book of Numbers 25 reports a case of apostasy in the plane of Moab where God's people forgot their faithfulness to God and participated in the feast of Moabites. They went into idolatry and adultery, seduced by the beauty of priestesses, excited by music and dance. As a result, twenty four thousand died of the plague.

To sum up, cases mentioned above are just a few examples among others in the Old Testament where God's people experienced a decrease in number by war or any kind of punishment after rebellion caused by their own worldly covetousness.

Membership Decrease in the New Testament

Following Jesus with Wrong Motives

Chapter six of the gospel of John highlights the situation of the church right at the beginning of the ministry of our savior. A big number of people joined the church. Unfortunately the Bible tells us that all who came to Jesus did not follow Him with

⁷ "Cora, Dathan and Abiram" (Num 16:32-35), In Francis D. Nichol (Editor) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976-80), 1 : 1114

good motivations. Many followed simply because Jesus could provide food for them, whereas others came looking for physical healings. However, there were also a minority which was hungry and thirsty for God's word.

Misunderstanding of God's Word

One day Christ presented the truth which created a great loss of members within the group of early believers. This was the time when He taught that He was the bread which came from heaven, and that whoever ate His body and drank His blood, would have life. These words constituted a great scandal for many because of misunderstanding. The situation got worse to the point that crowds of people decided to quit following the Master. In fact Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world... From that time many of his disciples went back and walked with him no more" (John 6: 51- 52, 66)

This group of Jews did not understand the teachings of Jesus. They found these words so hard that they decided to abandon following Christ. Even nowadays misunderstanding certain truths can cause the apostasy of many among God's people. Christ was referring to the Lord's Supper as a representation of eating his body and drinking his blood in order to have life. Taking part in this ceremony is a sign of accepting the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation.⁸

Coming to Jesus and believing in Him are both the "work of God."⁹ Nurturing and growing are needed to conserve the fruits of evangelism. A new believer is often very alert and eager to learn new spiritual truths and take fresh steps of obedience.

⁸ Ibid., 43

⁹"Acts," in F. D Nichol (Ed.), *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953), 6:967.

Ellen G. white clarified that when this work of nurturing is neglected, the new converts become discouraged and Satan wins them back to his camp.¹⁰ In order to make new converts become mature in Christ, a program must be put in place to help those souls that have decided to follow the light they have received.¹¹

In the early Seventh-day Adventist Church, Sabbath school was established as the training and equipping school. Ellen G. White indicated that Sabbath school should be the place where through a connection with God, men and women, youth and children, would be fitted up so that they become strengthened.¹² In the same vein, Ellen stated that the church should provide boundaries and encouragement, as well as love for the new converts. This should not be forsaken because it is known that the first need of each person is to be loved.¹³ As with witnessing and evangelizing, it is also true that incorporation of new converts cannot be left to certain individuals in the fellowship. It should be the responsibility of the entire church.

Maintaining New Converts: Insights from Ellen G.White

Ellen G. said that when new converts join the church they have a superficial knowledge of Christian life. Therefore, they need to be nourished.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 4:237.

¹¹ *Ibid. Evangelism* (Washington, D.C: Review and Herald, 1946), 351.

¹² *Ibid. Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1938), 11.

¹³ *Ibid. Spirit of Prophecy* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1996), 1:1992.

¹⁴ *Ibid. Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941), 46.

Maintaining New Converts: Insights from other Authors

Some authors have intensively written on how to prevent apostasy and maintain new converts in the church. This section provides some insights from their works in order to enrich and inspire us on keeping new converts in the church. Additionally, these authors have identified some causes of backsliding, and have also provided some solutions.

Insights from Rene Sand

Rene Sand states that the best procedure to treat a problem is to identify its causes. If the true causes of membership decrease could be identified, then church leaders and members could see how to apply preventive actions. In fact in medical area it is said that prevention is better than healing.¹⁵

In addition Rene observes that many may think that new converts backslide mainly because of lacking a clear understanding of the doctrines. On the contrary, researchers have reported that in most cases apostasy is not related to a misunderstanding of biblical doctrines. They contend that many people have left the church despite their great knowledge of the truth. Moreover, they provide evidences that in general apostasy is mainly due to a sociological issue rather than a theological one. For example, Rene Sand reports that only 2% quit the church as a consequence of lacking deep understanding of biblical teachings; while 98% quit the church because of problems related to human relationships.

¹⁵ Rene Sand, *How to Prevent Apostasy*(Department of Sabbath school and Personal Ministries Southern Asia-pacific Division, 1996), 7

In the same vein, Rene explains that usually people express complaints such as: 1) Lack of love in the church, 2) Nobody takes care of me, 3) I lost my friends since I became Adventist member; 4) Church members do not incorporate me in their circle.¹⁶

Insights from James Cress

On his part, James A. Cress has also researched on the issue of apostasy in the church. He enumerates some causes for the loss of new converts in the church. Causes include :1) Lack of friends; 2) Failure to involve the new converts in church activities; 3) Stress due to life challenges ; 4) Lack of trust in God ; 5) Criticism of church leaders 6) Boring church programs ; 7) Focusing on human beings rather than on Christ ; 8) Lack of competent administration; etc.¹⁷

James Cress asserts that the quality of worship is a capital factor to maintain church members. In addition, he states that boring programs discourage people to attend church meetings. For this reason, the leader of the program should take into consideration the time and the quality of the program. It is always better to make sure that worship program respond to the needs of the audience so that they may be interested to follow until the end.

Further, Cress talks about attractive worship. He emphasizes that the pastor should consider the quality of music, the sermon delivered, and the variety in the program. Usually people get tired of monotony. In the same vein, he states that the program should be adapted to the age of a given class and respond to their needs. Children and young people may have different interest from adults. James Cress

¹⁶Ibid., 8.

¹⁷ James A. Cress, *You Can Keep Them if You Care* (The mistrial Association, General Conference of Seventh- Day Adventists, Silver spring,MD:2000), 84-85,

contends that if these principles were put into practice the church could maintain many of its members.¹⁸

Insights from Michael Griffith

According to Michael, increasing the number of church members while ignoring their maintenance in the church is useless. As a consequence of such ignorance new converts end up backsliding. Michael Griffith illustrates this fact through a house building and a human body. He says that it is not enough to add bricks on others to construct the wall. Bricks should be put carefully on the foundation and remain attached to each other until the house is completed. The same is noticed with the body, it is an ensemble of many members tied and working in harmony.¹⁹

Michael refers to the mission of the church in the New Testament and indicates how it grew quantitatively. He also observes that God's plan did not stop there. God wished to see His church growing qualitatively too. Therefore, the great commission of the church has the purpose of making true disciples for Christ. Churches must be founded and helped to grow towards perfection. In conclusion, Michael affirms that this is the main goal of the mission: Planting and growing churches.²⁰

Further, in regard with maintaining new converts in the church, Michael observes that the motivation of someone to join the church should be identified and be maintained in order to keep him in the church. He explains that some people may have joined the church by mere appreciation of positive qualities noticed in the life of church members. Others may have been attracted by great evangelistic meetings or

¹⁸Ibid., 85.

¹⁹ Michael Griffith, *Eglise de Jésus-Christ, lève-toi pour ta Mission* (Paris, Edition. G. M. 1982), 30.

²⁰ Ibid., 40.

camp meetings held in the church. Hence, Michael mentions factors that motivate many who adhere the church: 1) the climate of friendship during personal evangelism; 2) Variety of programs and church activities; 3) Dynamism of new couples, 4) Quality and vitality of pastors, 5) Interesting program for youth and young adults, 6) Good sermons and spirituality; 7) Good reputation of our school; 8) Quality education in our schools, 9) quality of music.²¹ Michael recommends that these factors should be applied in order to maintain new converts members in the church.

In like manner, he asserts that a member who feels lonely and forsaken will not be motivated to remain in faith. He also observes that even though loneliness is generally more visible in urban churches, the same situation is felt also in rural areas. This feeling affects both singles and widows who need to be loved. This fact is supported by the Bible: “Then God said: it is not good for a man to be alone” (Gen2: 18). The church should be careful when new converts join its circles. As they are leaving their former friends with the hope to get new ones, new converts need to be strengthened in their faith. Otherwise, once they noticed that nobody is interested in them, they have no other choice but leaving the church to rejoin their former friends; and from that time they stop to attend the church.²²

In order to respond to this specific need, the pastor and church elders have to organize visits for all church members, especially new converts. Church members should learn to show a lovingly spirit in their relations with one another. Therefore, even a single telephone call is a sign of love to the neighbor. The church may initiate projects of humanitarian assistance.

²¹ Ibid .,8

²² Ibid., 9

In the previous section factors that contribute to membership decrease among Gods people were discussed. The Bible reported about causes such as wars, death penalty because of sin; lack of trust in the Lord, decrease due to worldly mixture, worldly covetousness and misunderstanding of God's word.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF LOCAL SETTINGS

This section is a brief presentation of Lwalaba Station. It introduces several settings of the area under study such as: geographical, socio-political, economical, religious, educational, etc. Additionally, the section provides insights on the methodology used in this study.

Geographical Setting

Lwalaba Station of Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the administrative unit of Lwalaba District. Basing on the political map of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lwalaba is one of the 5 Districts comprising the Katanga Province. The five Districts are: Lwalaba, Kolwezi, Upper Katanga, Upper Lomami, and Tanganyika. Lwalaba District is located at the West side of Katanga Province. The District shares borders with Angola on the West, and Zambia on the South-West. Lwalaba District is composed of 3 administrative territories: Dilolo, Sandoa and Kapanga. The Headquarters of the District are located in Kasaji, one of the cities in Dilolo territory. The distance from Kasaji city to various territories in the area varies between 138 to 366 kilometers.

According to the Seventh-day Adventist organization, Lwalaba District is one of the two stations comprising West Katanga Field of Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Headquarters of the Field is located in Kolwezi city. Lwalaba Station the area under study is situated at about 304 kilometers from the Headquarters. It comprises 6 districts: Kasaji, Kisenge, Divuma, Dilolo, Sandoa, and Musumba.

Accessibility to Lwalaba Station

Almost all roads in the Lwalaba District are tracks in deplorable condition. Therefore, many places are not easily accessible by vehicle, except motorcycles and bicycles. However, the work is being done to construct roads so to facilitate transportation.

Another means of transportation from Lubumbashi to Dilolo is the train, which has become very rare nowadays. The National Railway Society has failed to run its activities. As a consequence, the train may reach Lwalaba District once in a year.

Due to this inaccessibility of the territory, transportation is expensive. To travel a short distance of 139 kilometers one might pay 63 \$ to rent a motorcycle; or 28\$ to travel by Jeep. Most of pastors ride bicycles to work. For instance the pastor living in Musumba has to ride a bicycle for a distance of 366 kilometers to reach Kasaji city, the Headquarters of the Station. The fact is that travelling to and from Musumba is a total of 732 kilometers. The pastor has to cover this distance by bicycle. This situation has negative effects on their health. However, currently and fortunately two Tanzanian transportation agencies TAQWA and FALCON are operational in the Province. These have been linking Lubumbashi and Kasaji cities since 2011.

Another aspect is that Lwalaba District is crossed by many rivers. Lwao River passes through Dilolo and Sandoa territories. The other important river is Lulua. It runs straight into Kasai River; which in turn runs into the Congo River. Most of rivers have plenty of fish which constitute a blessing for the community.

Lastly, a great part of Lwalaba has sandy soil. This makes building houses a very difficult task. Actually, some houses are built with burned bricks, while others are not. Roofs are covered with iron sheets or grass. Forest trees are very useful in building activities.

Socio-political Setting

Since 1980, the war which lasted for many years in Angola brought a lot of refugees into the District of Lwalaba. Some among the refugees were Adventist members, while others became converted to the Adventist faith due to close contact with Seventh-day Adventist members in the camp. For about 25 years (1983-2008) the number of Adventist refugees in Lwalaba District was estimated at 4,790. During the repatriation process of the refugees which started from 2008 to 2012 more than 1,000 members went back to their country.

It is important to note that there is a considerable rural exodus. This is mainly due to the fact that young people move with the aim of seeking jobs in mining exploitation territories. However, it is also true that in the previous years, people moved to Angola and Zambia. But, nowadays they are coming back to dwell in their home land.

Economical Setting

In Lwalaba District people are involved in business activities. Some of these activities are: selling items such as kitchen utensils, food, motorcycle and bicycle spares, and pharmaceutical products. On the other hand, since Lwalaba is a rural area, the main activity of the population is agriculture. They grow cassava, corn, peanuts, rice etc. The main food of the area is cassava bread. It is eaten with fish, meat or cassava leaves. For economical reasons part of the harvest is sent to big cities for sale as the cost of living is high.

On employment, Lwalaba is one of the localities which are deprived of income investment by foreign investors and the government. For this reason many members are not employed, and have to go somewhere else seeking for jobs. They mostly go to

Kolwezi and Fungurume cities situated at about 400 to 500 kilometers from Lwalaba District.

Additionally, it is important to mention that there are many precious stones in Lwalaba District. Most of them are not yet exploited officially. In some areas mining companies such as Kafankumba and Tshikwashila have been mining on a small scale. Kisenge city hosts an industrial mining company. Some people are employed in these companies.

Socio-cultural Setting

There are 5 dominant tribes in Lwalaba District. These are: Tshokwe, Lunda, Ndembo, Luvale, and Kaminungu. Spoken languages are: Rund, Tshokwe, Ndembo, Kaminungu, and Luvale. Kaud language is spoken by a minority of people in Dilolo territory especially at Kansengula village; Pimin language is also spoken a very few people in Sandoa territory especially at Kayembemukulu.. Table 1 indicates the demography for various territories in the District.

Table 1. Demography of Lwalaba Station¹

N	Territories	Population	Area (km ²)	Density: people /km ²
01	Dilolo	283,582	24,963	11.36
02	Kapanga	320,538	24,700	12.97
03	Sandoa	261,120	25,337	10.30
04	District Total	865,240	75,000	11.53

Table 1 shows

¹Lwalaba District Annual Report, 2012; provided by the Secretariat of the Lwalaba District.

Educational Setting

Lwalaba District hosts a total of 520 elementary schools and 210 secondary schools. Among those schools, Lwalaba Station runs 8 Seventh-day Adventist elementary schools: Kamayala, Divuma, Sambembe, Ukweli, Tshipao, Lovi, Namwana, and Kanfankumba. Moreover, the Station runs two secondary schools: Ukweli and Tshipao secondary schools. In addition, there is one vocational school for Mechanics named Tshimbalanga.

Young people are trained according to different religious groups. Catholics train their youth through the Kiro movement, Seventh-day Adventist church through AY, and the Methodist church organizes what they call JPC (Jeunesse Pour Christ). Besides these denominational groups, most young people adhere to the Scout club.

About higher learning, Lwalaba District hosts some institutions. Lubumbashi University has run some extensions in the city of Kasaji since 2006. Two institutions of higher learning are also serve students. One is located in Kasaji and another in Musumba. Likewise, 3 technical training schools equip youth in the area of veterinary and agriculture; and 2 others are medical technical schools.

Educational Level of Pastors

In Lwalaba station we have six pastors. One of them holds a B.A in Theology and five others have secondary diplomas as indicated in Table 2 .Table 2 indicates that most pastors have got some theological training which could make them more effective in the ministry. It also shows that the level of their spouses' education is relatively low.

Table 2. Educational Level of Pastors in Lwalaba Station

S/N	Name of District	Pastors' Educational Level	Pastors' Spouses' Educational
1	Kasaji	B.A Theology	Form 3 (Secondary School)
2	Kisenge	Form 4 (secondaryschool)	Form 2 (Secondary School)
3	Divuma	Form 6 (Diploma in Literature)	Form 3th (Secondary School)
4	Dilolo	Form 6 (Diploma in Pedagogy)	Form 2 (Secondary School)
5	Sandoa	Form 6 (Diploma in Pedagogy)	Form 2 (Secondary School)
6	Musumba	Form 6 (Diploma in Pedagogy)	Form 1 (Secondary School)

Religious Setting

Lwalaba District is a place where people have developed different beliefs.

There are many religious groups in the area. The most dominating religious group is the Roman Catholic Church; followed by Garengaze, Methodist, Kimbanguist, and Seventh-day Adventist Churches. Muslims are also present in this District. Almost all religious sects are represented there. Some of them are simply ethnical religions.

Brief History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lwalaba

The Seventh-day Adventist message came from Angola and reached Divuma in 1961. When Seventh-day Adventist Congolese leaders heard that brethren from Angola had opened a new branch in the Democratic Republic of Congo, they came to join them, and organized a church first, in Malonga around 1962; and later in Sambembe in 1963. From that time, the Seventh-day Adventist church grew in Lwalaba.

The church faces a lot of challenges. One of the challenges is the exodus of church members towards Angola and Congolese mining cities such as Kolwezi and Likasi. In 1992, the mining companies which used to function in Kasaji closed their activities because of wars; and they do not plan to re-open them. For this reason as said previously many people became jobless. Pastors have no appropriate means of

transportation. Their poor salary does not allow them to meet the basic needs of their families.

Church Membership Decrease in Lwalaba Station

The interviews conducted with lay members, elders and retired pastors suggested that lack of followup activities in local churches was the major cause of backsliding of new converts. This issue has been a challenge during the past four years. Despite the fact that many evangelistic meetings are regularly organized and new members converted, churches in Lwalaba Station fail to retain them. This situation hinders church growth.

As mentioned above, the lack of visitation programs remains a dilemma which prevents new converts to stay in the church. Whenever church members are asked to advice on the strategy to stop new converts' backsliding, the answer is that visits should be intensified.

Another strategy that is suggested is about organization of small groups. Additionally, interviewed people said that responsibilities should be shared between the pastor and the church members.² Likewise, Elder Ihandjika from Sambembe church mentioned in an interview that the reason some members come to church late is because the programs are not attractive and they lose interest.³

²Miji Mukazo Juvenal, a retired pastor of west Katanga Mission, interview by the author, Kolwezi, Republic Democratic of Congo, 7 October 2012.

³Tagor Ihandjika, Church Elder of Sambembe Seventh-day Adventist Church; interviewed by the author on 27 October 2012.

Church Involvement in Evangelism

The church has been involved in evangelistic activities. Public and personal evangelism have been conducted regularly by local churches. Church members are involved in distributing tracts, inviting people to attend evangelistic gatherings. As a result, many people attend evangelistic meetings, and are carefully and kindly welcomed. In summary, evangelism is diligently practiced for soul winning.

Church Financial Report

As mentioned previously, the majority of church members in Lwalaba Station do small scale farming. Hence, their tithing and offerings are below average as reflected in the report for the past four years. Table 3 below presents the total annual tithe and local offerings for the Station.

Table 3. Tithes and Offerings in Lwalaba Station (2009-2012) (\$)

Year	Tithe	Mission funds	Local funds	Camp meeting	Total
2009	1,540.00	370.50	365.70	510.00	2,786.20
2010	1,830.00	423.00	432.40	530.00	3,215.40
2011	2,305.00	720.63	723.94	562.16	4,311.73
2012	2,581.57	838.11	839.00	1,063.72	5,322.40
Total	8,256.57	2,352.20	2,361.04	2,665.88	15,635.75

Table 3 shows that because of low income, the station is faces serious challenges in terms of an operating budget. However, a slight change in terms of tithe, mission fund and local funds has been observed, although more efforts are needed to increase the tithe and other funds.

Methodology

This part of the study deals with the study population, the sample of the survey and the data collection.

Study Population

Many definitions are suggested for the term study population. Martel and Nadeau define the population as a group of statistic units delimited in a specific way and which serves as reference for statistic studies.⁴ On his side Kyunyu explains that a survey population is an ensemble of human beings who are the objects of survey. It includes all the individuals of common characteristics with whom the study deals ».⁵

In this study, a population is a group of people having given characteristics that a researcher aims to study. Thus, the researcher faces two options: either he extends his survey upon the entire population or he may just select a limited sample as representative of that population. In this specific case we have opted to work with a sample due to our limited financial means and logistics which could not allow us to reach all the population as intended. Thus, our population study is composed of 3739 members living Lualaba Station.⁶ However even though our sample size was estimated to 81 members, the selection was balanced according to the Districts.

⁴ R. Martel et G. Nadeau. *Statistique en Gestion et en Economie* (Québec: Galton Boucher, 1988), 6.

⁵ M.K. Kyunyu “*La Représentation De La Discipline Scolaire Par Les Elèves De L’Institut Lukanga*” (T.F.C Uniluk, 2005), 565.

⁶ Registre des Eglises et Archives 2012. Suivi des Interviews des Anciens de Ces Eglises.

Table 4 indicates the number of new converts and that of backsliders. The table provides a clear picture that there is no efficient program to maintain new converts in the church. The membership presented in the table constitutes our study population, a total of 3739 members.

Table 4. Study Population

Districts	Baptism 2009	Baptism 2010	Loss/gain	Baptism 2011	Baptism 2012	Loss/gain	Statistics 2012
Dilolo	42	49	+7	45	98	+53	851
Divuma	55	29	-26	98	23	-75	1058
Kasaji	97	59	-38	30	38	+8	1090
Kisenge	19	13	-6	-	39	+39	161
Sandoa	23	26	+3	22	30	+8	290
Musumba	14	9	-5	24	22	-2	289
Total	250	185	-65	219	250	+31	3739

Sample Size

Paul Robert defines the sample as a stallion of measurement, the least quantity of merchandises that is exposed to give an idea of the whole.⁷ According to Mwangaza, a sample is defined as a group of individuals or objects relatively small, selected scientifically in a way that it represents faithfully the population. He adds that sampling is selecting a limited number of individuals, objects or elements which observation allows getting at conclusions applicable to the whole population from which the choice was made.⁸

⁷*Le petit Robert*, 1986.

⁸Delandsheere G. *Introduction à la recherche en éducation* (Paris, ed. Armand : Calvin, 1976), 301.

In this research we have used the random sample but we did not reach a big number as intended because of inaccessibility of the population. Therefore, respondents were selected from the Districts of Dilolo, Divuma, Kasaji and Kisenge to represent the whole Station as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Sample Size

S/N	District	Male	Female	Total
1	Dilolo	14	9	23
2	Divuma	11	8	19
3	Kasaji	13	7	20
4	Kisenge	11	8	19
	Total	49	32	81

Table 5 shows the sample size of the survey. The sampling was done as evenly and fairly as possible so that all districts would be well represented. A total of 49 men and 32 women were sampled.

Table 6 indicates that the higher percentage of members who supplied information were between 36 and 50 years old. They represent 39, 4 %. On the other side, the youngest subjects of our survey include those who were between 13 and 19 years old. They represent 7.4% of the sample.

Table 6. Respondents Age

Age	Male	Female	Total
Members: 13 -19 years old	6 7.4%	6 7.4%	12 14.8%
Members : 20-35 years old	11 13.5%	7 9%	18 2.5%
Members : 36-50 years old	20 24.6%	12 14.8%	32 39.4%
Members : 51-65 years old	8 9.8%	6 7.4%	14 17.2%
Members : 65+ years old	4 4.9%	1 1.2%	5 6.1%
Total	49 52.8%	32 32.4%	81 85.2%

Data Collection Instruments

In scientific process the researcher must have an instrument that will allow him to collect data related to his topic. In this study, the researcher opted for the questionnaire. According to Petit Robert Dictionary, a questionnaire is a series of questions written on a form and asked methodologically for a survey.⁹ On their side, Doron and F. Mwangaza say that a questionnaire is a whole set of questions formulated and presented in a specific order either orally or written, helping to collect subjects' opinions, feelings, beliefs and behaviors in standardized situation.¹⁰

Research questions are divided into two types: closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions present in advance several responses in order to collect data. In this work, we have used the closed-ended question type. The goal was to discover the probable causes of losing new converts in Lwalaba Station as noted in the Districts of Dilolo, Divuma, Kasaji and Kisenge. Our questionnaire focused on following 7 key items: 1) Statistics of members dropping out, 2) Personal daily Bible study, 3) Daily family worship, 4) Strengthening of relationship, 5) Nurturing program in the church, 6) Involvement of new converts in church activities, and 7) Visitation program.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The aim of this research was to identify the causes of new converts' dropout in Lwalaba Station. The study checked whether backsliding is mainly due to the individuals themselves, or church failure to nurture them. This section deals with the general observation of the findings. It also presents a global analysis and comments on

⁹*Le petit Robert.*

¹⁰ K. Mwangaza, 28.

various items of the questionnaire. As explained in the introduction, one of the limitations was the fact that most of subjects were not able to fill the questionnaire properly. Thus, all the needed information was not provided.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this part of the study, responses to some specific items of our questionnaire mentioned in the previous section are presented. Table 7 below presents responses in regard with probable causes of new converts' dropout in the Lwalaba Station.

Table 7. Summary of the Findings

N	ITEM	YES	NO	χ^2	χ^2_{Tab}	TV
1	We have a regular personal Bible study	35%	65%	9	3.84	TS
2	We organize a regular familial devotion	40%	60%	4	3.84	TS
3	There is a good relationship among church members	53%	47%	0.36	3.84	TNS
4	As members we are satisfied the nurturing and training by our pastor	40%	60%	4	3.84	TS
5	New members in our church are involved in church activities	38%	62%	5.8	3.84	TS
6	Church pastors and elders regularly visit us.	39%	61%	4.8	3.84	TS

Table 7 shows that the most frequent cause was lack of Bible study with only 35% saying they had it regularly. Next was involvement in church activities at 38%, followed by nurturing and family devotion at 40% and finally good relationships among church members with the highest frequency at 53%.

Causes of Backsliding in Lwalaba Station

The interpretation of findings provided above helps to identify the causes of new converts backsliding in Lwalaba Station. Causes include:

1. Lack of personal Bible study by the church members. Generally, growth in Christ requires personal Bible study; which if not practiced, leads to new converts' dropout after a few days.
2. Involvement of new converts in church activities is the best way the church can do to make them grow. (Eph 4:11-14) the apostle Paul stresses the fact that, putting our talents into practice can contribute a lot to church edification. This practice helps church members to grow holistically and to resist temptations. New converts have talents which need to be exploited and developed for the advancement of God's work. So, it is important to know that one of the strategies to maintain new converts in the church is to involve them in church life by giving them some responsibilities according to their capacities. These activities include singing and giving Bible studies.
3. The lack of pastoral care and counseling. One of the great challenges reported by church members as cause of new converts backsliding is the lack of pastoral cares and counseling. Actually new converts are in need of nurturing. This can be possible, pastors and church members' visitation; listening to their concern, and of course praying for them in their houses.
4. The lack of daily family devotion. In addition to the causes mentioned above, lack of family daily devotion has negative effects on spiritual growth. In fact nurturing of church members can occur in several ways, and family daily devotion is one of them. To sum up, the situation as depicted above requires strategies that the church can use to maintain new converts.

Strategies to Maintain New Converts

Interest to attend worship could be increased if all the active members were recuperated. Generally, those who have backslidden have done so because an

embarrassing event has occurred in the church or out of it. Sometimes a member can be discouraged simply because nobody responded to his call for assistance. The only way to recuperate members is to respond positively to the need which we did not meet if that need was in accordance with God's will. Of course, there is no guarantee that all those who left the church will come back. Nevertheless James Cress says that one out of four will be willing to rejoin the church if he is visited and if his problem is discovered.¹¹ Therefore there is need of revival and reformation in worship program to increase member's interest to attend church program.

¹¹ Conférence Générale des Adventistes du 7^e Jour, Association Pastoral, Memento du Pasteur, (Dammarie –les- lys cedex, France: Editions Vie et Santé, 2008), 159.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

As stated above, the concern of this chapter was to develop a program which would help the churches in Lwalaba Station to maintain new converts. This section presents an action plan suggested for maintaining new converts in the church. It also comprises program design, its implementation, and evaluation. The program was mainly focused on training Districts pastors so that they also could train their members.

Program Design

Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of the plan was to provide ways that would help churches in Lwalaba Station to maintain new converts and experience church growth; through the training of pastors and lay people. The training contributed much to improve quantitatively and qualitatively the church growth in the area. Actually true discipleship requires maintaining members within the church and helping them to get ready for the second coming of Christ.

At the end of the training participants were able to make a commitment of being active in maintaining new converts in the church. They would of course be able to identify the true causes of new converts backsliding, and apply strategies to prevent them from leaving the church.

Strategies to Maintain New Converts in the Church

Bringing members in the church is one thing, while maintaining them is another. The purpose of the great commission is to make disciples. Unfortunately many of the members move out through the back door. How do we close the back door so to maintain new converts in the church? This study suggested and implemented the following practical strategies discussed below.

Preparing New Converts before Baptism

Baptismal candidates should be taught before baptism. Every candidate individually or in a baptismal class should be instructed from the scriptures regarding the church's fundamental beliefs and practices and the responsibilities of membership.¹

In light of what had been said, Ellen G White suggested that before baptism there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing new converts to the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the Gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism."²

In addition, Ellen said that new converts should not join the church if they have a superficial knowledge of Christian life."³ So, it is obvious that the way baptismal candidates have been prepared spiritually plays a role in maintaining them.

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 23.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1948), 6:95-96.

³ Ellen G. white, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1941), 46.

Strengthening Nurturing Program for New Converts

The first thing at Lwalaba Station church leaders have to think about is nurturing of new converts. Nurturing and discipling are needed to conserve the fruits of evangelism. A new believer is often very alert and eager to learn new spiritual truths and take fresh steps of obedience. Ellen G. white clarified that when this work is neglected, new converts could become discouraged and Satan could win them back to his camp.⁴ A program must be put in place to attend to those souls that have followed the first rays of light they have received.⁵

One of the best ways to nurture new members is the Sabbath school program. This a tremendous means for training and equipping new converts. It is reported that in early Adventist Church, Sabbath school was established as the training and equipping school. Ellen G. White emphasized that Sabbath school should be the place where through a connection with God, men and women, youth and children, are fitted up so that they may become strength and blessing to the church.⁶

Additionally, new converts may deepen their Bible studies when they spend enough time in the doctrinal class. This is vital because many church members backslide simply because they are confused with doctrines taught by several religious sects which fight the biblical truth.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain view: California: Pacific Press, 1948), 4:237.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1946), 351.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1938), 11.

Sharing Challenges of Life with New Converts

Life is full of stresses and all kinds of hardship. Most of times, new converts struggle alone with problems of life and never see a brother sharing their sorrows. A good church provides boundaries and encouragement, as well as love for the new converts. Ellen G. declared that those who newly come to the faith should be patiently and tenderly dealt with; and it is the duty of the elder members of the church to devise ways and means to provide help, sympathy and instruction for those who have conscientiously withdrawn from other churches for the truth's sake, and thus cut themselves off from the pastoral labor to which they have been accustomed. The church has a special responsibility to attend to these souls who have followed the truth; and if the members of the church neglect this duty, they will be unfaithful to the trust that God has given them.⁷

Integrating New Converts in the Church Family

The major problem that new converts experience is loneliness. When new converts come, they have lost their former friends and sometimes families and they are isolated. As with witnessing and evangelizing, it is true that incorporation cannot be left to a few individuals in the fellowship. Incorporation is the responsibility of the entire church. Ellen G. White insists on the importance of integration and values those whom we may deem not up to our Christian standards. We are not supposed to categorize by calling people good or bad, residents or foreigners, saints or sinners. Whatever is our life of imperfection and sin, the Lord calls everyone to be His

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1996), 1:1992.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* (Mountain View CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 286.

associates and imitator. He invites each and everyone to receive this divine instruction and to be associated with him.⁸

Involving New Converts in Church Activities

Another strategy to maintain new converts is to involve them in church activities. Experience has demonstrated that new converts are still eager and motivated to witness to their friends. They are more effective than members who have spent a long time in the church. Spiritual growth comes only as we connect with Jesus and decide to serve him.

Members should be reminded that one of the factors in maintaining new converts and help them grow spiritually are to involve them in church ministry by fulfilling specific tasks such as witnessing and evangelizing. A church may not prevent or avoid any spiritual fall of its members. However, experience has shown that as believers respond to God's call to make other disciples their personal walk with the Lord deepens and strengthens. Thus, new converts should be involved in church ministry without delay."⁹

On participation of members, George E. Knowles says that if every church is to be a training school there must be a qualified staff to instruct members. Church members may have faculties to contribute to God's work, but if they are not given an opportunity and a necessary training they will not be involved. As a consequence, they will not be developed. On the contrary, once a member is trained and involved in

⁹“Acts,” F. D. Nichol, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1953-57), 6:967.

church service, there will be more chances to maintain him in the church.¹⁰

According to Elton True the pastor's task is compared to the one of the coach. The pastor tells people what and why; and then he must assist them to put the teaching into practice. In addition, he wrote that the glory of the coach is that of being the discoverer, the developer, and the trainer of the powers of his men. Hence, this is exactly what we mean when we use the biblical terminology about the equipping ministry.¹¹

In the same vein, Howard Hendricks states that the pastor should use the method of Jesus by telling the members what, and why; show them how, let them do it and deploy them.¹²

Visiting New Converts

The visitation Program might well begin with the officers of the church; elders first and then others who make up the church board. Talking about the work of a pastor, Oxley Berg suggests that a pastor must show a genuine interest in each member as individual.¹³ In addition, he contends that church members need visitation. While some require more time than others, none should be neglected. Unfortunately, it has been noticed that a new member can spend some months, or even years without being visited by any single person of the church. If for a certain time there is no indignation

¹⁰George E. Knowles, *How to Help your Church Growth* (Silver Spring, MD:General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 123.

¹¹ Elton True Blood, *The Best of Elton True Blood: an Anthology* (Nashville, TN: Impact books, 1979), 140.

¹²Howard Hendricks, *Seminar on Leadership Development, Speech at Disciple Making in the Eighties Conference*, (October,1983), 45

¹³Orley Berg, *The Work of the Pastor* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1966), 65.

that the new convert has missed the church worship, if no one calls or drops him a card or a note, it will not take long until the member feels that it does not really matter to the church whether he is there or not. This lack of personal contact accounts for much in the backsliding and many of the apostasies that shame our church records.¹⁴ As a remedy to such situation, a system parenting new converts starting on the day of their baptism will be helpful.

Attractive Church Program

The quality of worship is one of the major factors to maintain new converts in the church. It is fair to assume that boring programs discourage people from attending church meetings. The organizer must take into consideration the time and the quality of the program. It is always better to make sure that worship programs respond to the needs of the audience, so that they may be interested to follow it until the end.

In order to have attractive worship, the pastor must consider the quality of music, the sermon delivered and the variety in the program. Usually people get tired of monotony. James Cress asserts that if these principles were put into application, we could maintain many church members in the church.¹⁵

Implementation of the Strategies

a seminar was organized in Kasaji city, the Headquarters of the Station on the 5th and 6th May 2012. The gathering comprised all pastors, evangelists, church elders and church members. There were 65 participants who benefited from the training delivered to them by experienced pastors. It was amazing to discover that retired

¹⁴ Berg, 1966, 65.

¹⁵ Cress, 85.

pastors and current Field Officers constituted a tremendous asset in the achievement of the seminars.

During this meeting, creation of small groups was adopted in all churches. different programs such as Bible studies, prayers, visitation, evangelism and preparation of new converts before baptism were introduced. The afternoon Sabbath School programs were reinforced.

Different Sessions of Training

A two-day time table was prepared for the seminars with the aim of implementing the suggested strategies. The program included one Sabbath afternoon and one Sunday.

Participants came from the four selected churches: Dilolo, Divuma, Kasaji and Kisenge. Members faithfully attended all sessions.

As said above, subjects intended for learning were presented and discussed in a two days program. Table 8 presents the time table of activities for various sessions of the first day sessions. The topic was: “Understanding the Mission of the Church.”

Table 8. First Day Sessions – Understanding the Mission of the Church

Time	Topic	Methodology	Material
14:00 -14:30	Meditation	Sermon	Bible
14:30-15:30	Church mission in the Holy Scriptures	small groups for brainstorming	Bible
15:30-15:45	Ellen G. White on Church Mission	Lecture	Books of the Spirit of Prophecy
16:30-17:00	Lay activities reports on soul winning	Calling each church lay activity secretary	Tables, black-board
17:00-18:00	Supper	Supper	Supper

The second day sessions dealt with the question: “Brainstorming: Why do people backslide? Table 8 below presents the timetable for various sessions.

Table 9. Second Sessions–A Reflection on Statistics Report

Time	Topic	Methodology	Material
08:00-09:00	Meditation	Sermon	Bible
09:00-09:30	Report on Church Statistics (5 years)	Projection	Projector and DVD
09:30-10:00	Individual Bible studies and devotion	Lecture	Nurturing Books
10:00-10:30	Report on Church Statistics (5 years)	Projection	Projector and DVD
10:30-11:00	Involving New Converts in ministry	Lecture	Nurturing Books
11:00-11:30	Report on Church statistics (5 years)	Projection	Projector and DVD
11:30-12:00	The relevance of visitation	Projection	Projector and DVD
12:00-14:00	Break	Break	Break
14:00-15:00	Brainstorming: Why do people backslide?	Groups discussion	
15:00-15:30	Report Evaluation	Groups discussion	
15:30-16:00	Presentations from different groups		Note Books and pencils
16:00-16:45	Pertinent remarks	Moderator	
16:45-17:00	Closing song and Prayer	Moderator	

Evaluation of the Strategy

The impact of the program was evaluated on the basis of the number of people involved in it. Its effectiveness was evaluated based on people implied in its implementation after training. Also, it was evaluated on the basis of success or failure in regard of people's behavior, abilities, qualities, attitudes, etc.

The evaluation was conducted over a period of nine months, from June 2012 to March 2013. It dealt with finding out the level of implementation of strategies to maintain new converts by church pastors and members. Additionally, this evaluation checked the numbers of new converts who abandoned the church during the same period.

The outcome of this program was positive and members were actively and regularly attending different activities as outlined in the program. New converts were beginning to enjoy the church programs and there was a marked decline in the numbers of backslidings converts. Moreover, there was clear indication that among the candidates who were baptized some were products of the small group ministries.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, and a conclusion related to the issue under study. Additionally, it suggests some recommendations to church leaders and members.

Summary

The study was concerned with the unfortunate loss of new converts in some Districts of Lwalaba Station of the Seventh-day Adventist in East Katanga Field, Democratic Republic of Congo. Considering the fact that the great commission aims at making really disciples, no honest minister will remain indifferent to the situation of membership backsliding.

The study was intended to identify the real causes of this critical decrease of membership in Lwalaba station, which leads to a hindrance to effective church growth., and suggest strategies pastors can apply to stop it;

In regard with the concern above, some hypotheses were formulated: First, the decrease of church membership could be caused by the lack of personal Bible study, lack of family devotion, and lack of fellowship among church members. Second, the cause could be a lack of members training as a consequence of poor leadership. Third, the situation could have been caused by the non-involvement of new converts in church activities. Fourth, the cause could be the lack of visitation, pastoral care and counseling.

The study population was composed of 3,739 members living in the territory of Lualaba Station which comprises 6 Districts. In the process of the research simple random selection of respondents was used although the research could not reach as big a number as intended because of the inaccessibility of some Districts. Therefore only 4 churches were selected namely, Dilolo, Divuma, Kasaji and Kisenge, to represent the whole station. Data was collected through questionnaires which were submitted to 81 members.

The questionnaire was composed of closed questions type on the following items: 1) Statistics of members dropping out, 2) Personal daily Bible study, 3) Daily family devotion, 4) Maintaining Close relationship 5) Nurturing program in the church, 6) Involvement of new converts in church activities, and 7) Visitation program. Prior to the survey a literature on the theoretical background of membership decrease was made.

The study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter was an introduction which presented the problem, purpose, significance, and methodology of the study. The second was a theoretical background of membership decrease. The third chapter dealt with a description of local settings and the project methodology. The fourth was about data presentation, analysis and interpretation and suggested a program with strategies to maintain new converts in the church. Finally, Chapter five is composed of a summary, a conclusion and recommendations.

In summary, findings revealed that the main causes of new converts backsliding were: (1) Lack of personal Bible study, (2) Non-involvement of new converts in church activities, (3) Lack of pastoral cares and counseling, and (4) lack of daily family devotion and nurturing.

As a solution to the issue, the researcher has developed a program which include the following strategies: (1) Teach and encourage members the importance of personal Bible study ,(2) Involving new converts in church activities, (3) Improve house to house visitations for pastoral cares and counseling, and (4) Promote daily family devotion among church members.

Conclusion

Many congregations face the issue of maintaining new converts. Hopefully the research findings presented here will be of use to pastors, lay leaders and others who are interested in maintaining their new congregational members. The great commission urges church members to work for numerical and qualitative growth.

The main purpose of the church is to maintain new converts in the church. This could be accomplished by involving new converts in church activities, integrating them in the church family through fellowship. Incorporation is the responsibility of the entire church. Sharing challenges of life with new converts by providing boundaries and encouragement, as well as love for the new converts will keep them in the church. Most importantly, baptismal candidates should be taught before baptism, individually or in baptismal class.

Recommendations

In regard with the findings of the study, church leaders in Lwalaba Station should be aware of the great responsibility of keeping new converts in the church for an effective church growth. It is important to note that the pastor is the key person to effect growth in the church. The way he ministers to new converts determines whether or not they will stay in the church.

In order to make sure that new converts do not backslide, Church leaders should ensure that candidates for baptism are well prepared in the understanding of church fundamental beliefs. After baptism, pastors and elders should involve the new converts in church activities such as singing in a choir, participating in the Sabbath School program, giving Bible studies, involvement in public and personal evangelism programs.

They should apply the parenting system principle for new converts. This consists of finding a mature responsible member, who will take care of at least one new convert. Apart from this, Church pastors and elders should organize a visitation program for all church members. However priorities should be given to new converts.

Finally, it is important to note that human beings are limited in whatever they undertake. Thus, in an attempt to find a solution to the issue of new converts' backsliding, it is wise to recognize human limitations. The issue of backsliding may have various causes depending on the context. Therefore, it would be presumptuous to conclude that the study has provided the last solution. The insights presented will be profitable for churches in Lwalaba Station, and for any other community struggling with the loss of church members but more intensive study should be done to find lasting solution that will help all churches that experience the same problems.

APPENDICES
QUESTIONNAIRE

Strategies to Maintain New Converts in the Church (Case of Lwalaba Station)

Instruction:

Please respond to the questions honestly by writing your response in the spaces provided.

Answer all questions with “yes” or “no”

S/N	ITEM	YES	NO
1	We have a regular personal Bible study		
2	We organize a regular familial devotion		
3	There is a good relationship among church members		
4	As members we are satisfied with the way we are nurtured and trained		
5	New members in our church are involved in church activities		
6	We are always visited by our pastors and church elders		

APPENDIX B

BUDGET FOR TRAINING SESSIONS

A budget prevision is needed to fulfill the training program. This will consist of covering needs such as printing handouts, feeding the delegates, transportation expense, medical expenses, etc.

Items	Amount	Funding Source
Printed materials	150 \$	- Delegate contribution
Feeding the Delegates	800 \$	- Influential laymen
Transportation	640 \$	- Field expenses
Emergency for Medical Care	400 \$	- Church budget
Miscellaneous	100 \$	- Church budget
Total Amount	2090 \$	

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