

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

Title: DEVELOPING A PEER COUNSELING TEAM FOR THE ADVENTIST YOUTH IN ONGATA RONGAI DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES IN NAIROBI STATION

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The youth in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District are highly influenced by their peers to engage in negative activities which are self defeating and therefore a team of well trained youth peers counselors would change things round for the better.

After the study from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White and other writers and after the collection of data in the Pastoral District, the researcher developed a team of youth peer counselors who were trained to give and counsel to their fellow youth who constitute more than seventy five percent (75%) of the total church membership in the District.

The team was well chosen from among the best leaders in the youth ministry in the seven churches in the Pastoral District. The training sessions began in January

to June 2009. The team began with fourteen members but fifty percent (50%) succeeded in completing the entire course.

The programme was a success in that we now have seven well trained young people who will be used to give their services to the youth in the Pastoral District and who will train others. Other youth in other church Districts will require this training to encourage more youth to participate in this noble mission.

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DEVELOPING A PEER COUNSELING TEAM FOR THE ADVENTIST YOUTH
IN ONGATA RONGAI DISTRICT OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCHES IN NAIROBI STATION, KENYA

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Leadership

by

John Macharia Gichuiri

June 2014


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To all the youth whom I love to serve and whom I wish to mentor
and all the youth workers who are equally burdened with issues of the youth.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
Chapters	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of Study	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Statement of the Purpose	3
Significance of the Study	3
Delimitations	4
Methodology	4
Definition Of Terms	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	8
The One-Another Motif in the Bible	8
The Power of Peer Influence as Discussed by Ellen G. White	16
The Power of Influence as Discussed by Developmentalists	19
Insights from Group Peer Counseling Strategy	26
3. DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING	30
Historical Development of Ongata-Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.....	30
Situational Analysis of the Peer Influence in the District	33
The Peer Influence Among the Students of Laiser Hill Academy.....	38
The Youth Of the Presbyterian Church Of East Africa and the Glory Church	39
The Youth in East Africa Union Mission of Seventh-day Adventists.....	44
The Youth Of Central Kenya Conference of the Seventh-day Church	46
Others	47
IV. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION	
Design and Preparation.....	51
Implementation of Programme	54
Evaluation.....	62
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION.....	66

APPENDICES	70
A. QUESTIONNAIRES	70
B. SCHEME OF WORK	72
C. COPY OF CERTIFICATE	74
BIBLIOGRAPHY	75
CIRRICULUM VITAE	78

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It is my wish to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the following people and organizations who at some stage have assisted me to reach this far in this project. The Central Kenya Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Executive Committee for giving sponsorship to undertake graduate study. Adventist University of Africa for admitting me to pursue my graduate studies (this is a God-given institution of higher learning which has been established in Africa to develop leaders and theologians on the continent and therefore curtail the brain drain that has been happening to our African Theologians and leaders in the West in the past.) The East and Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for donating a laptop to me which is a real asset to me and my ministry.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

The impact of negative peer pressure among Adventist youth in Nairobi city and its environs is evident. Most youth are engaged in activities that are self defeating and which destroy their lives, such as premarital sex, abuse of drugs and alcohol, pornography, bad computer games and programmes, debasing television programmes, hard rock music, immodest dressing, poor study habits, dropping from schools, laziness, laxity in spiritual matters, rudeness to parents and others in authority and lack of self motivation. These activities lead to the destruction of the individual lives of the youth in the Church and the nation. They also affect the corporate life of the Church and nation posing a great threat to the quality of life in the individual youth and the continuation of the church and the nation as a whole.

Considering the power of influence peers always have on each other, a team of well trained youth to work with their peers would reverse the negative peer pressure trend to positive peer influence. This would help them turn from their destructive life styles to positive life styles which would guarantee quality holistic life of the youth and the well being of the Church and the nation.

What is true of the peer influence among the youth in general is also true in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District (Parish) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the environs of Nairobi city where the research will be carried out and a strategy to

harness and use the power of influence among the youth for positive gains will be developed and implemented.

A brief history and information of Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will help to inform the reader where we are and the reason to embark on the study underway. Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a relatively new District. It was organized in the year 1993. The District has seven fully organized churches namely Ongata Rongai, Ongata Rongai East, Olekasasi, Ronkai Central, Laiser Hill, Nkoroi and Rimpa. It has eight branches or what we call companies. These are Kirkau, Kandisi, Kefjoy, Gataka, I'll Merijo, Prince Immanuel Kitokota, Oloika Mwangaza, and Laiser Hill Academy. The District covers the whole of the Ongata Rongai town and its suburbs. The District has close to 1500 registered church members and about the same number of members whose names are not in our registers whom we refer to as Sabbath school members. The youth whom the research is aimed at make up to about 75% of the total membership and this justifies the research for it is evident that the bulk of the membership is youth. The age bracket that we consider as youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is between 16 and 35 years. This is a segment of the society and the church which is highly influenced by their peers negatively and which needs guidance and counseling to avert the negative peer influence to positive one.

Statement of the Problem

The youth in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District are highly influenced by their peers to engage in negative activities which are destroying their lives and threatening their spiritual, mental, physical, emotional, and social aspects and the very existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in this area in particular and the community in which the church exists in general.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to design and implement a youth peer counseling programme and train a team of youth peer counselors who will be used to influence their peers positively and change the negative peer influence which exists in such great measure among the youth of Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to a desired positive influence.

Significance of the Study

This study and the consequent Youth Peer Counseling Team developed will be significant in the individual lives of the youth, the church and the society within which the church exists in the following ways:

1. Young people will be given information on the activities that destroy them.
2. Young people will be made aware of the power of influence that peers exert on others.
3. Many young people will be saved from getting into activities that ruin their lives.
4. The church will enjoy having youth in active service.
5. Peer Educators and Counselors will be developed to work for and among the youth.
6. A forum to pass on the good values from the adults to the youth will be provided.
7. The youth peer counseling team developed will be a pilot team and will be used as a model after which other teams will be developed in Seventh-day Adventist churches in Central Kenya Conference and beyond.

Delimitations

This programme will be designed for the seven churches in Ongata Rongai Seventh-day Adventist Church Pastoral District in Nairobi Station namely: Ongata Rongai, Ongata Rongai East, Olekasasi, Nkoroi, Ronkai Central, Laiser Hill and Rimpa. Laiser Hill Academy will be used to provide a comparison to some extent.

Methodology

1. Undertake a study from the Bible, E.G. White and other Seventh-day Adventist writers to understand the information on one-anothering principle and peer influence among the youth.
2. Study what other writers have said on peer influence and peer counseling.
3. Access the internet and search for information on the influence the youth have on their peers and peer counseling.
4. Write to Central Kenya Conference informing the committee of the plans for research and seeking their approval.
5. Prepare questionnaires to be conducted in the seven churches to find out the peer influence sway found among the youths and its impact on them. (Youth in these churches will answer).
6. Interview the couple chosen as the sponsors of the youth team of peer counselors in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to get ideas and information on peer influence among the youth and how to deal with this force among the youth.
7. Interview senior pastors of two churches of other religious persuasions within Ongata Rongai: Presbyterian Church of East Africa and Glory Mission to get information on what is happening among the youth in their churches and what plans they have in place for peer counseling.

8. Interview students and teachers of Laiser Hill Academy in Ongata Rongai to understand the impact there is of peer pressure among the students. This is a private school, which has students up to higher school and which draws its population from the middle and high classes of Kenyans and outside Kenya.
9. Interview the youth directors of Central Kenya Conference and East African Union Mission to get their input on this challenge of peer influence and how this could be used for positive gains as opposed to the negative trend that exists today.
10. Select a team of 14 youth members, two from each of the seven churches for training as ToTs, i.e., Trainers of Trainers and Peer Counselors.
11. Train the Team and equip them and make them ready for service.
12. Evaluate the programme
13. Write the paper.

In summary the study proceeds as follows: Chapter 1 which is the introduction gives the background information of the Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church where the study took place, states the problem of the peer influence among the youth, the statement of purpose for the study, the significance of the study, the delimitations of the study and the methodology followed to achieve the study.

The study continues in chapter 2 to develop the theological foundations as informed by the Bible, and writings of Ellen G. White and the philosophy as supported by developmental writers on youth peer counseling.

Chapter 3 gets to the Pastoral District to analyze the situation on the ground by conducting interviews and carrying out questionnaires to establish the state of the peer influence among the youth.

Chapter 4 leads to designing, implementing and evaluation of the programme which is meant to address the youth peer influence and develop a team that will use the important asset the youth have for positive results.

The last chapter summarizes the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations which will go along way using the resource of youth peer influence that is always available among the youth.

Definitions of Terms

To have every reader of this paper appreciate fully some of the terms that are used exclusively and or with special meaning by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is necessary that such terms be defined as they are understood by the denomination.

The following are the definitions of these terms:

Company A group of Seventh-day Adventist Church members who congregate together for services but are yet to be organized as a full church.

Local Church A group of more than twenty-five members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church who have been organized into a church. This is the basic constituent level of the church.

Mother Church A Local Church that has developed a Company to the level of organizing it into a Local Church as well.

Pastoral District An area with more than one Local Church under one Pastor, what would be called Parish by other Christian denominations.

Station A territory made up of several Pastoral Districts with a Station Director as a coordinator.

Conference A territory made up of several stations with an Executive Director in the lead.

Union A territory comprised of several Conferences with a President as the leader. This could incorporate a whole country or more.

Division A region made up of several Unions with a president as the leader.

General Conference This is the umbrella body that coordinates the mission work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the entire world. A President is vested with authority to lead.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer counseling is informed by the Bible and especially the New Testament, Ellen G. White and numerous developmentalist educators. To begin the study we shall seek to understand what the Bible says on mutuality; then proceed to see what Ellen G. White has on the power of influence peers have on each other and lastly study what the developmental authorities have on this subject.

The “One-Anothering” Motif in the Bible

Although the term peer counseling is not directly used in the Bible, the principle is alluded to by the “One-Anothering”¹ motif which is discussed in the New Testament in a very significant way. Over fifty times in the New Testament the phrases “one another” or “each other” are used. For example we are commanded to have several attributes in Christian experience to show the importance of mutual dependency. Here below a number of these are discussed to demonstrate this fact: *Love Each Other*. Apostle John records the words of our Master and the epitome of love itself Jesus Christ in John 13:35 which says, “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Apostle Paul writes in Gal 5:13 to tell the brethren who have been called to liberty not to use their liberty as an opportunity for flesh but through love serve one another. In his letter, Apostle John

¹One-Anothering is a term coined with the help of my advisor to show the dependency of Christians on each other as they mutually coexist and which alludes to the counseling principles.

once again retaliates this command of our Lord and writes, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one who loves is born of God.”(1 John 4:7)

Love being what it is as defined by Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 13:4-8 long suffering (patient), kind, bears all, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things is crucial amongst people as they live together in the church community or the society in general.

Pray For One Another

The Apostle James admonishes Christians to pray for one another in his letter chapter five and verse 16. He says that for healing to occur amongst brethren they need to pray for each other. This is important in the church in general and among the youth also. For prayers to go through James counsels the believers to confess their sins to one another in the same verse.

Confession of Sins One to Another

Broken relationships can be mended through confession of sins and mistakes that occur all too frequently amongst people who stay together including Christians. In this text Apostle James admonishes Christians to confess their faults one to another and to pray for one another. This is going to be of great help to the youth peer counselors who are going to meet a lot of challenges while executing their responsibilities amongst their peers. The prime requirement for sincere faith in prayer is a clear conscience. Wrong deeds secretly done are to be confessed to God alone. Sins that involve others are to be confessed also to those who have suffered injury. A guilty conscience creates a barrier to unreserved reliance upon God and will defeat prayer.

James counsels Christians that they pray for one another. This is important for besides being a source of encouragement, fellowship in prayer enlarges our capacity for receiving blessings God would bestow upon us.

Life Application Study Bible commentary puts this comment on this verse of Jas 5:16 very well:

Christ has made it possible for us to go directly to God for forgiveness. But confessing our sins to each other still has an important place in the life of the church. (1) If we have sinned against an individual we must ask him or her to forgive us. (2) If our sin has affected the church, we must confess it publicly. (3) If we need loving support as we struggle with a sin, we should confess that sin to those who are able to provide support. (4) If after confessing a private sin to God, we still don't feel his forgiveness, we may wish to confess that sin to a fellow believer and hear him or her assure us of God's pardon. In Christ's kingdom, every believer is a priest to other believers (1 Pet 2:9)."¹

Comfort and Encourage One Another

This world is full of challenges which confront believers as they live. There are many things that discourage people death, sickness, lack of necessities of life, broken relationships, poverty, political instability and others. The Bible says that Christians are to comfort and encourage each other in such times of need. (1 Thess 4:18)

Admonish or Warn One Another

Christians are to admonish or warn each other as they journey on if they are to make it to the end. There are times they need to warn one another with love. Apostle Paul has put it very clearly in Rom 15:14 that Christians are to admonish one another and that they can do that if they are filled with goodness and knowledge. He echoes the same sentiments in the book of Col 3:16 when he says: "Let the word of Christ

¹Kenneth Kantezer et al., *Life Application Study Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 2252.

dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms...”

Teaching One Another. Teaching one another is also encouraged by Paul in the same verse among Christians. Christians are to impart instruction and guide each other as they remain in faith and as they develop in their spiritual lives.

Greeting One Another. There is power in greetings. Paul in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Romans repeats the word greet fifteen times in only fifteen verses as he says that so many people be greeted. In verse 16 of the same chapter he says: “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” He repeats the same words in 1 Cor 16:20. There is beauty in greetings amongst people. Relationships are maintained and mended as people greet each other.

Bearing One Another's Burden. Apostle Paul discusses the issue of bearing one another's burdens in his epistle to the Galatians, Gal 6:1-2 and says: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ.” This text recognizes the fact that Christians can be overtaken in trespasses even when they are in the fellowship of believers. When such happens Paul counsels that the brethren who are spiritual should bear one another's burdens in a bid to restore such to the fellowship. This should be done in a very gentle manner by the brethren cognizant of the fact that they all have the capacity to error. The brethren are commanded by Christ to bear one another's burdens if they are to be in harmony with Him.

Speaking the Truth One With the Other. Paul writes in Eph 4: 25, an admonition to the Christians to speak the truth one with the other because they are members of one another. He brings up the idea that truth is vital in keeping the members of the church together. He reminds the members that they belong to each other and that they should strive to keep that bond.

In 1 Cor 12, Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of the “one-anothering” concept amongst the members of the Christian church. He uses the body as an illustration to show just how closely Christians should be working together in harmony and being there for one another. He shows clearly the importance each part of the body has in the general well-being of the whole body and that each part is so closely linked to each other that it is not possible to dismember any part without hurting the whole body. Paul compares the body of Christ to a human body. Each part has a specific function that is necessary to the body as a whole. The parts are different for a purpose and in their differences they must work together. Christians must avoid the two common errors (1) being too proud of their abilities or (2) thinking they have nothing to give to the body of believers. Instead of comparing each other’s gifts, the different gifts should be used to spread the Good News of Salvation.

Kindness One to Another. Paul admonishes Christians to be kind one to another in Eph 4: 32, when he says: “And be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Kindness which is the quality of being kind i.e. being friendly and thoughtful to others is an important ingredient in the lives of the Christians.

Tenderheartedness and forgiveness are two other qualities necessary for the one another principle as discussed in the same verse by Paul. Tenderheartedness

implies a tender regard for the weakness and needs of others. Christians cannot afford to be indifferent to the suffering of others for that is wholly incompatible with the Christian spirit. What can be understood from this statement is that Christians have to be tenderhearted towards one another if they are to live to their name and calling, they cannot afford to be indifferent to the suffering which is all around.

Forgiving One Another. Forgiving one another is a virtue which is of such high value in the one another set up and one that the youth peer counseling team will have to practice for them to succeed in this unique ministry. This statement summarizes it so well: “The forgiving spirit is more than ideal or even virtue; it is a certain attitude of heart and soul. The Lord Himself is the only model we should attempt to follow. Forgiveness for men was purchased at infinite cost, whereas it costs men nothing except the sacrifice of some personal pride, to forgive others.”¹

Forgiveness creates an accepting atmosphere which is so important in the lives of people living together in a community. This becomes even more pronounced amongst the youth who are so sensitive to criticism.

Submission One to Another. Paul discusses yet another virtue that helps build the one another principle in Eph 5:22. This is submission to one another in the fear of God. Submission, humility and subjection are essential characteristics of the believer. Before God and one’s fellow men, self is to be brought low. Francis Nicol makes the following statement to put us into picture of just how important submission is, “Often

¹Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 6 (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 1029.

the demands we make of one another, even of our rights, are contrary to the spirit of loving ministry which is the spirit of the gospel.”¹

The idea of submission is often misunderstood and carries with itself inferiority complex on one and superiority complex on the other. This comment on Eph 5:21, 22 from The Life Application Bible helps us to appreciate what submission is: “Submitting to another person is an often misunderstood concept. It does not mean becoming a doormat. Christ- at whose name every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:10) submitted His will to the Father and we honour Christ by following his example. When we submit to God we become more willing to obey His command to submit to others, that is, to subordinate our rights to theirs.”² John C. Maxwell commenting on this verse puts this idea of submission beautifully when he writes: “Contrary to what many teach, leadership in the home is not about power or control. Paul asks for mutual submission (Eph 5:21) and calls husbands to be Christ-figures (Eph 5:22-25) And how did Christ lead the church? He provided, taught, wept, healed and died on a cross. Spiritual leadership means giving up yourself for someone else (Eph 5:25). It means assuming responsibility for the health and development of your relationships.”³ These leadership principles will be useful when developing the peer counseling team in the District.

Do Not Grumble Against One Another. While addressing this idea of one another Apostle James wrote: “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be

¹Ibid.

²Kenneth Kanterzer and Others, 2139

³John C. Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* (Nashville, TN: Maxwell Motivation, Inc., 2002), 1442.

condemned. Behold the judge is standing at the door! (Jas 5:9) James is calling for patience amongst brethren. This is important if the people are to be in unity and if they are to build one another. The apostle exhorts the leaders to be long suffering towards one another and to watch out for “Christians who bear courageously the more severe injustices sometimes become impatient with less problems within the church, Christians need the encouragement of their brethren as they endure affliction.”¹ This is important to be put in mind while developing the youth peer counseling for the youth to practice extra patience with the young people who seem to lose their patience all too quickly. This commentary on this verse Jas 5:9 is very important when dealing with the youth who will be developed as peer counselors. “When things go wrong, we tend to grumble against and blame others for our miseries.... Blaming others is easier you judge others for their shortcomings remember that Christ, the judge will come to evaluate each of us.... He will not let us get away with shifting the blame to others.”²

Fellowship One with Another. In Heb10: 24, 25 the author records the need to consider one another so as to stir love and good works among Christians. He admonishes Christians to assemble together and exhort one another and to do that the more as they see the Day approaching. The Day referred here is the Day when Christ will come a second time. It is important to have this one-another principle working amongst Christians until Christ returns. It is only in Christianity that this can find its most fulfillment.

¹Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 7 (Hagerstown, md: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 539.

²Kenneth Kantezer and Others, 2252.

After the study of the Bible on this important principle of “ One-Anothering” which really informs us on the importance of being available for each other for mutual edification, it becomes evident that the principles discussed in the Bible can be applied to the development of the peer counseling team to work with and for the youth of Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The mutual tasks discussed there above of love, prayer, encouragement, admonition, greetings, service, teaching, acceptance, honour, bearing, forgiveness, submission, fellowship and devotion are going to play a significant role when developing the youth peer counseling team. The youth of the District are devoid of these good values and hence the need to inculcate them in their lives for the better of their lives, their peers, the church and the community in general.

The Power of Peer Influence as Discussed by Ellen G. White

Ellen G. White who is considered as a modern prophet and an authority to reckon with within the Seventh-day Adventist Church fraternity and whose influence has gone far even to affect other religious persuasions and the world at large has written a lot on this subject of peer influence. She has shown how this force plays itself in many areas where the youth spend their lives in both ways- negatively and positively. She has written a lot on the importance of choosing friends whom she mostly refers to as associates and whom she says have a lasting effect on the youth.

Ellen G. White writes in her book *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* :

It is inevitable that the youth will have associates, and they will necessarily feel their influence. There are mysterious links that bind souls together so that the heart of one answers to the heart of another. One catches the ideas, the sentiments, and the spirit of another. This association may be a blessing or a curse. The youth may help and strengthen one another, improving in deportment, in disposition, in knowledge; or, by permitting themselves to become careless and unfaithful; they may exert an influence that is

demoralizing. The matter of choosing associates is one which students should learn to consider seriously.¹

Ellen G. White places a lot of emphasis on the question of the company the youth keep while in learning institutions like schools and colleges. She appreciates the fact the youth spend a good amount of their time in such institutions and therefore she warns that parents be careful in making choices of the schools and colleges where their children attend. She gives counsel that parents take their children to church maintained institutions. She observes that the power of influence of association exists in all people but is much greater in children and the youth who are in their formative stages of their lives. Ellen White writes this statement to make her point on this issue:

It is a terrible fact, and one that should make the hearts of parents, tremble, that in so many schools and colleges to which the youth are sent for mental discipline and culture, influences prevail which misshape the character, divert the mind from life's true aims and debase the morals. Through contact with the irreligious, the pleasure loving and the corrupt, many youth lose the simplicity and print the faith in God, and the spirit of self sacrifice that Christian fathers and mothers have cherished and guarded by careful instruction and earnest prayer.²

Ellen G. White had a real burden for the youth and their harmonious development and teachers and guardians. She stresses the importance of the parents being involved in helping their youth find the proper associates in their lives. She says that the youth should be taught to choose as their companions those who give evidence of uprightness of character and who practice Bible truth. She observes that the associations the youth make here in this life have an effect in this temporal world and even in the eternal world to come. She warns the youth to be extra careful in the choice of companions for such have a very great influence in their lives either for

¹Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1943), 220.

²Ibid.

good or for evil. She gives this counsel to the church and to the youth particularly for they are more in danger of being influenced by their peers: “The tendencies of the natural heart are downward. He who associates with the skeptic will soon become skeptical; he who chooses the companionship of the vile will most assuredly become vile. To walk in the counsel of the ungodly is the first step toward standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of the scornful.”¹

Even after Ellen G. White counsels the parents to take their children and youth to church maintained institutions where they can get better influence and where they can find better associates to mold them in their lives, she warns the leadership in such institutions to be on the look out for those students who would be out to cause trouble. This is to show that the peer influence is present in such church institutions as well and that the parents and teachers should be careful. This statement which Ellen G. White made sounds the warning sharply:

The youth whose influence is demoralizing should have no connection with our college. Those who are possessed of a lovesick sentimentalism and make their attendance at school an opportunity for courting and exchanging improper attention should be brought under the closest restrictions. Authority must be maintained. Justice and mercy are twin sisters, standing side by side.²

While the Bible talks about “One-Anothering” as an important principle for dealing with people and their issues in life, Ellen G. White also informs us of the need to use the youth in peer counseling. She notes the power of influence the youth have on each other and admonishes that the same be employed for the good. She also indicates her confidence in the youth and their usefulness in counseling their own peers.

¹Ellen G. White, *Testimonies For the Church, vol.4* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 587.

²Ibid., 209.

She refers to the youth as an army and says: “With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world!”¹

While in school Ellen G. White says that the students can do so much to make the school a success by working with their teachers to help other students and by zealously endeavoring to lift themselves above cheap, low standards. She also makes this important observation about the youth showing just how useful they can be in influencing their own peers either way. “Young persons who are thrown into one another’s society may make their associations a blessing or a curse. They edify, strengthen and bless one another, improving in deportment, in disposition, in knowledge.” She brings in the concept of confidentiality among those that are peer counselors and encourages free expression within the youth fraternity.

What Ellen G. White has observed is going to be of great benefit in the development of the peer counseling team that is envisioned in the Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Power of Peer Influence as Discussed by Developmentalists

Having been informed on the issue of peer counseling by the two authorities i.e the Bible and Ellen G. White, it is important to get to know what the Developmentalists have to say on the same. These are the professionals who have taken their time to study the young human mind as it develops and who have spent their lives working with and for the young people. To stay on course a deliberate move was made to narrow these professionals to those who have a bias towards Christianity. The first move was to learn from these authorities what they have

¹Ellen G. White, *Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1952), 271.

discovered in their studies with the youth and to learn from them the way to use the power of peer influence which exists amongst the youth for positive gains.

Peers as Authority Figures. Lee Cronbach who is an educational psychologist terms the peers as powerful sources of reward and that they act as authority figures. He says: “Unlike other authority figures--- parents, teachers, older brothers and sister, bosses--- the peer group is not delegated its authority by the adult culture. The peer group represents its own interests and values, even working in opposition to the official socializers.”¹ Someone by the name Emerald has written an article in the internet entitled *Underage Drinking, Peer Influence* in which he shows just how peer influence is so powerful. The article says in part, “Peer influence has a greater impact on individual behaviour than do other social control mechanisms.”² This being the case it warrants that parents be extra careful in the associations their children make while in schools or anywhere else as well as an opportunity to use this power which the youth have to influence their peers positively.

Reading from another article in the internet which was addressing the issue of the power of peer influence amongst the teenagers shows how they are influenced by their peers to make choices that they would reject if it was not for peer pressure. The Article-- *Focus Adolescent Services: Your Teens Friends* says: “A powerful negative peer influence can motivate a teen to make choices and engage in behaviour that his or her values might otherwise reject.”³

Young people in schools are introduced into addictive habits such as smoking,

¹Lee Cronbach, *Educational Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Geneva, IL: Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), 172.

²Emerald [www.emeraldinsight.com/insight/viewContentItem] June, 2007

alcohol, abuse of drugs, illicit sexual behaviours and other malpractices by their peers. “Peer influence is the most consistent predictor of adolescent drinking patterns when controlling for other background characteristics.”¹ The researcher can identify himself very well with this hard fact for he was a victim of this peer influence in his teenage years. He was introduced into smoking, something he did not like by his peers in his second year of secondary school.

The youth living in urban areas are more challenged by peer influence than their counterparts in the rural settings and require peer counseling the more. The kind of life they find themselves in is so hectic that it has left them with no time to interact with their parents for proper counseling. Cronbach has made this observation in his book to show what is happening in our towns and cities: “Peers are increasingly influential in child and adolescent development when the society becomes urbanized, family ties weaken, and neighbours interact less.”²

The Potential of Positive Peer Influence Among the Youth

The second part of the study involves searching for information on how to use the great potential of the peer influence that exists among the youth in general as the developmental professionals have suggested so as to prepare for the development of a peer counseling team within the youth in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As we embark on this a working definition of peer counseling is in order so as to guide our study and our thoughts.

¹[www.ingentaconnect.com/content/asoca/jhsb/2006]

¹⁹Lee Cronbach, *Educational Psychology*, 3rd ed. (Geneva, IL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), 172.

The following definition by Michael Gazda is quite appropriate: “Group Counseling is a dynamic interpersonal process focusing on conscious thought and behavior and involving the therapy functions of permissiveness, orientation to reality, catharsis, and mutual trust, caring, understanding, acceptance, and support.”¹

History of the Peer Counseling Among the Youth The idea of working in small groups to deal with issues in life or counsel with each other is not a concept that only has become recently trendy. God has worked through small groups for millennia. The Bible shows from the very beginning God dealing with a small group of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. All through the Bible are instances of God achieving so much with only so few people. In developmental history of the Counseling and Guidance it is said that it began in 1908 by one Frank Parsons when he founded the Vocational Bureau in Boston. Small group or peer counseling team among the youth is absolutely necessary to work for and with the youth today. In this age of urbanization, fragmentation of traditional communities, technology, democratization, and individualism. “Small groups can be, and are for many young people, the catalyst that brings healing.”²

Lee Cronbach has written a lot on this concept of working with small groups as away of finding solutions to challenges facing people. The principles he has advanced can be employed in developing the youth peer counseling team that is in the mind of the researcher. He has said this which is important: “Small groups can, by facilitating genuine communication, counter the tendency in our society toward

¹George Michael Gazda, *Group Counseling: A Development Approach 4th ed.* (Needham Height :Allyn and Bacon, 1989), 10.

²Barry Gane, *Buiding Youth Ministry- A Foundational Guide* (Riverside, California: Hancock Center, La Sierra University, 2005), 130.

depersonalization. Essentially small groups provide an environment in which people can practice communicating accurately with each other.”¹

This is the kind of environment desired in churches where small groups of peers in the youth are trained and empowered as peer counselors to help their own and therefore avert the danger that now is of having youth influenced negatively to their ruin. Dan Montgomery talking on the importance of peer or group counseling or what he calls peer mentoring believes that the Body of Christ the Church provides practically unlimited potential for linking up growing up people (youth) with others who have walked a similar pathway. He says: “When successful, peer mentoring significantly augments individual counseling and can reduce the time that solitary counseling alone would require.”²

The idea to form a team of peer counselors among the youth goes in the same vein

with what Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager have hitherto documented in their book

entitled *Competent Christian Counseling*. In this book they give the reason why they think

that peer counselors are recognized by their peers and therefore are able to reach and help

them. They have said the following, which is an idea shared by the researcher:

Lay or peer counselors are recognized for their inherent empathy, listening ability, non judgmental ways, compassionate caring and friendly helpfulness.... We could all learn from their natural friendliness and ease with which they relate to people and we should seek to imitate their interpersonal model, which evinces the best kinds of helping and human relations.”³

¹ Cronbach, 322.

²Dan Montgomery, *Christian Counseling That Really Works* (Vista Casitas: Compass Works, 2006), 86.

³Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling, vol.1* (Colorado Springs: Water Book Press, 2002), 87.

Donald Blocher another developmentalist shares this concept of peer counseling and he says that it is important. He calls the same, positive peer acceptance which is a network of peer relationships with healthy, pro-social friends and says that it is one of the protective factors in children which is a branch of counseling. This is the special preventive and intervention program we are looking forward to seeing in our churches where peers are empowered to help their own and therefore avert the danger there is of having our youth influenced negatively to their ruin. Another Counselor Jones Nelson Richard who also advocates for peer counseling whom he calls Peer Helpers says that these are: “People who use counseling skills as part of peer helping or support networks of ranging degrees of formality. Such peer support networks frequently cover areas of diversity such as culture, race, sexual orientation, a support for women, men and youth.”¹

Psychologists have tried this concept of peer counseling to provide support for their struggling peers and the results are encouraging. This is why it would be important

to bring this concept in the church and help the youth who are challenged with the negative

peer influence as cited earlier. Donald Blocher has made this valid observation in this regard:

Another important source of support and structure in the counselor education environment are peer relationships among students. As students develop a strong and caring network of relationships these not only provide immediate support and structure but they are also the beginning of what is optimally a career-long process of forming and utilizing collegial relationships to nurture life-long learning and development.²

¹Jones Nelson Richard, *Introduction to Counseling Skills 2nd ed.* (California: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2005), 4.

² Donald, H. Blocher, *Counseling: A Developmental Approach 4th ed.*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2000), 314.

While pursuing the same idea of peer counseling this observation by Robert D. Strom an Educational Psychologist who had in turn observed other psychologists Hamburg and Varenhorst in this concept of peer counseling made the following submission which resonates very much with what is intended in this research: “That one way to involve youth in the resolution of their dilemmas is to give them a voice in decisions affecting them. Peer guidance and counseling and the assumption of responsibility are key factors.”¹ These peer counselors are viewed as assistants in solving personal problems and could act as models and bridges to the adult world for alienated youth. Such youth are quite many in the society and the church.

Benefits of Peer Counseling Among the Youth The reading done has revealed the fact that there are benefits in peer counseling and this informs us on the importance of establishing peer counseling team to guide and counsel the peers among the youth in the church. Gerald Covey informs us that such counseling groups can provide therapy for challenges the youth would have such as inferiority feelings, mistaken concepts and values. Gerald says: “The group provides the social context in which members can develop a sense of belonging and a sense of community.”² Paul Meier says that small group counseling is quite effective in dealing with psychological problems as well as interpersonal problems among people and that individuals are apt to display in small- group situations the very problems that occur within themselves. These individuals he says progress towards becoming whole persons while they are developing healthy interpersonal dynamics. David Myers observes the following while he shows the importance of peer counseling:” Peers are more important for learning cooperation, finding the road to popularity, for inventing styles of interaction

¹Robert D. Strom, *Educational Psychology* (Geneva, IL Wardsworth, Inc., 1982), 528.

among people of the same age.”¹ Wagner cites the importance of peer counseling and writes to say that peer relations among the youth are necessary in preparing them for love and friendship in adulthood. Peer counseling provides adolescents and young adults an important opportunity when they can develop emotionally and gain independence and self-confidence. George Gazda looks at the group counseling strategy as one which facilitates treatment among the youth who could be maladapted in certain ways. He says: “In using groups as the modality for prevention and treatment of adolescent substance abuse and for the treatment of adult alcoholics, several criteria have been considered. First, especially with adolescents, there is a strong influence of peer modeling of both appropriate behaviour and attitudes.”²

Insights from Group Peer Counseling Strategy

After establishing the importance of Peer Counseling or Group Counseling among the youth a research on how this important ministry could be started and what could be the modalities of establishing it, it becomes an important need to save our youth. The following information proved important and it is going to help a great deal in this project. George Gazda has this to say about the strategy to form these peer counseling groups whose members are also going to take the leadership roles in the youth ministry:

1- Peer facilitators would be the older youth who have demonstrated successful leadership roles.

2- Leadership training is provided to the faculty and peer facilitators.

¹David G. Myers, *Psychology, Seventh Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Worth Publishers, 2004), 121.

²George M. Gazda, *Group Counseling- A Developmental Approach 4th ed* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1989), 216-217.

3-Leadership training is conducted by professionals.

4- Leadership training emphasizes human relations training skills such as recognizing and reflecting feelings, listening, role playing and group involvement.¹

For these youth peer counseling groups to operate well the participants should join them voluntarily and as Gazda says: “These are usually formed by peers who have come together for mutual assistance in satisfying a common need, overcoming a common handicap or life disrupting problem and bringing about desired social and/or personal change. The initiators and members of such groups perceive that their needs are not, or cannot be met by or through existing social institutions.”

Gazda recognizes the importance of proper leadership for these peer counseling groups to thrive and meet their desired obligation. Paul Meier echoes the same sentiments of leadership in group counseling and says that a leader should demonstrate certain characteristics, foremost being mental healthiness. He further gives important rules which he considers very necessary in governing the youth peer counseling team successfully and therefore provide the therapeutic purposes intended and needed within the youth in the church. These are listed here below for our consideration:

1. Avoid labeling behavior and people. Labeling changes people’s perceptions of others and themselves and may actually make genuine self-expression less likely.
2. Make verbal participation voluntary for group members. Never coerce others into talking about a topic.
3. Make sure the group has a good leader who is able to take charge if things get out of control.

¹Ibid., 217.

4. What is discussed should not go outside the group. This requires mature members.
5. Avoid embarrassment and putting people on the spot. Be kind in your honesty.
6. Only include people who are emotionally balanced. Those who have severe emotional problems require professional counseling and perhaps group counseling with other emotionally disturbed people.
7. Keep the group spiritually based. Make regular use of Bible study and prayer.

Having established the Biblical foundation for the “One-Anothering” motif which clearly shows how important it is for people to do things for each other, a basis for the youth peer counseling is firmly grounded. The idea to have a team of youth well trained to offer peer counseling services to their peers is going to exploit the potential that exists in the youth for positive gains. The rich counsels gotten from Ellen G. White on this issue of the influence associates have on each other will go along way informing this idea of youth peer counseling. Gratitude is due to the Developmental authorities who have gone ahead in this field and recorded very essential information on how the peer influence plays itself among the youth and how to establish peer counseling teams to work with and for their fellow youth.

Youth peer counseling is much needed in the contemporary African setting at this time when the traditional values are eroded greatly by the rapid social change affecting Africa. The breakdown in family relationships where family fabrics are weakened by changes in the society warrants a creative programme like the one envisioned here if the youth are to continue the life of the church and that of the society.

Now that the rationale for this project has been founded and the importance of it well laid, progress can now be made to proceed to the next level in this project where the reality on the ground in Ongata Rongai Seventh-day Adventist Pastoral District need to be found concerning the power of peer influence among the youth and then develop a team from among the youth that will be trained and used for peer counseling within the seven churches in the District and in the community around, as well as be used as a Trainers of Trainers team to train others in this timely ministry.

CHAPTER 3
DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

Historical Development of Ongata Rongai Pastoral District.

Seventh-day Adventist missionary work started in Ongata Rongai in 1988 when Kibera Church in Nairobi sent one of its elders by name Obwatho to this place. When this elder came he teamed with a missionary by the name Witzel who was working at Maxwell Adventist Academy and a few local members like Elder Munene and Gichuki Muchiri of University of Nairobi and his wife. Work started at a place called Kware where a company was established. This grew to become Ongata Rongai Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1992. Pastor James Mwangi was the pastor then and was the first one to minister the new congregation. This was the beginning of what turned out to be an explosion of Adventism in this area. This new church extended its influence to Kiserian in 1993 where it opened its first company. In 1994 another company Kandisi was opened. Then in 1997 another church was opened at Nkoroi. This has grown into a big church with almost 250 members with its own plot and permanent church building. Next was Ongata Rongai East which was organized into a church in the year 2000. Since its organization this church has extended its boundaries and opened a church at Olekasasi in 2004 and a company at Kirkau where a member donated 1 acre of land on which a temporary church building structure stands and a Primary School has started.

The *Mother Church* still continued to grow and expand and in 2000 it organized Ronkai Central and later started a Primary School by the name Ongata Rongai Adventist Academy. This school presented its first candidates for Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE) in 2007 and they performed well.

Later in the year 2004 another church was organised by the name Laiser Hill. This is now a big church with about 250 members with its own plot on which a permanent church building is in progress. While the *Mother Church* was still organising new churches and companies the churches organized earlier were also organizing others. Nkoroi Church organized Rimpa Church in the year 2005. This is a church with about 60 members and has a plot of ½ an acre with a temporary structure where they worship. Laiser Hill Church has seen the organization of a company called II' Merijo with about 40 members and which is in the process of becoming a full organized church very soon. Ronkai Central has started the newest company recently by the name Kefjoy which is meeting in a rented hall.

The youngest company the *Mother Church* has started is called Gataka which also has got a plot and plans are underway to construct a structure for worship. The potential to grow is still large and all efforts to exploit it are being made.

Ongata Rongai was organized as a District in 1993 with Pastor Daniel Gathare as the first pastor. He laboured in this District from 1993 to 1995. Then followed Pastor Silas Kioko 1995 to 2000. Pastor Ibrahim Muraya followed from 2001 to 2003. Pastor Julius Mbirithu followed shortly and served for a very brief time in 2004. Pastor Lucas Otvera took over from him in 2005 and served for less than one year. Pastor John Macharia took over from Otvera at the end of 2005 and is still serving the District to date. These Pastors who laboured before in this District did a commendable job. They put a good foundation on which others are building on. This

District is blessed in that it enjoys very cordial relationships amongst the seven churches. All the churches meet together once in a quarter for fellowship and baptism. There are also set dates when District activities for various departments are scheduled periodically. These have become nice traditions which members are looking forward to.

This District has made history as the first one to go through strategic thinking and planning in the East African Union Mission. Such sentiments were expressed by the leaders in the levels of the Local Conference, the Union Mission when they were presented with copies of the Strategic Planning Document after its completion and the East and Central Africa Division President when he officiated in the official launching of the document on June 7th, 2008 during a District fellowship high Sabbath which happens once in a quarter. It is humbling that this District could be the first one to witness this event happening. It is hoped that together with the members and the community the noble tasks identified shall be accomplished for the glory of the Lord and blessing of mankind.

In summary, Ongata Rongai District has seven churches namely: Ongata Rongai (Mother Church) ,Nkoroi, Ongata Rongai East, Ronkai Central, Laiser Hill, Olekasasi and Rimpa. It has eight companies namely: Kandisi, Gataka, Il'Merijo, Prince Emmanuel Kitokota, Kirkau, Kefjoy, Oloika Mwangaza, and Laiser Hill Academy. The District has a Primary School Ongata Rongai Adventist Academy and a Pre- school Kirkau Adventist Community School. The District has 1500 members in our registers and about the same number of Sabbath School members. The District hosts the East Central Africa Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Adventist University of Africa, Maxwell Adventist Academy and Advent Hill Primary School.

This District is blessed to have so many young people making up to seventy five percent (75%) of the total membership. These youth are living in this very fast growing town which is in the suburbs of the city of Nairobi. This poses a great challenge to the youth as they relate with this strong power of peer influence which exists in them. The many voices which are calling their attention are so appealing that there is need for extra vigilance to lead these youth to activities that are for building them up.

Situational Analysis of The Peer Influence in the District

To find out the situation on the ground in the District on the issue of peer influence, questionnaires were given to 100 youth in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which comprises of seven (7) churches listed here Ongata Rongai, Ongata Rongai East, Ronkai Central, Olekasasi, Laiser Hill, Nkoroi and Rimpa. This happened on the 23rd March 2008 when we had a Youth Family Life Seminar at one of the churches Nkoroi which was facilitated by Pastor Festus Njagi the Ministerial Secretary and Family Ministries Director in East African Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The questionnaire had 25 questions which the youth were to respond by checking the numbers 1-5 for each question. This was adopted and adapted from the reading done and was used to assess the influence the youth have on their peers (See appendix A). The questionnaires were given out and the instructions as well to 100 youth and supervised as they answered the questions. When the questionnaires were collected and sorted out the following was found out: of the 100 youth who were the respondents 67 returned the questionnaires well checked and these are the ones that were used to do the evaluation and assessment on the effect of peer influence among

the youth in the District under study. The results of the questionnaire which dealt with 25 questions are here analysed: Each question had five options numbered 1-5 from which each of the youth respondents were to check one of them. The questions were to assess the sway friendship has on the lives of the youth. The results were overwhelming and show very clearly that youth peers in the District have the capacity to influence each other very much. The 25 questions given were simple and straight forward.

Results of the Questionnaire administered to the youth of the Seventh-day Adventist in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Peer sway results in Ongata Rongai District

						QUESTIONS
GRID	1	2	3	4	5	1
NO. OF RESPONDENTS	22	10	19	5	0	
%	39.2	22.7	33.9	8.9	0	
NO. OF RESPONDENTS	19	10	16	7	6	2
%	32.7	17.2	27.5	12.1	10.3	
	17	19	9	5	6	3
	30.3	33.9	16.1	8.9	10.7	
	4	5	6	7	34	4
	7.1	9	10.7	12.5	60.7	
	4	4	5	6	35	5
	7.4	7.4	9.2	11	62.5	
NO. OF RESPONDENTS	18	14	16	4	9	6
%	29.5	22.9	26.2	6.5	14	
	18	10	20	3	5	7
	32	17.8	35.7	5	8.9	
	26	11	15	3	0	8
	47.2	20	27.2	5.4	0	
	19	9	18	4	5	9
	34.5	16.3	32.7	7.2	9	
	8	13	13	12	17	10
	14.5	23.6	23.6	21.8	30.9	
	6	3	6	12	35	11
	10.1	5	10.1	20.2	59.3	
	24	18	15	3	6	12
	36.3	27.2	22.7	4.5	9	
	24	20	13	5	2	13
	36.3	30	19.6	7.5	3	
	23	15	14	6	3	14
	37.7	24.5	22.9	9.8	4.9	

	19	17	21	4	1	15
	30.6	27.4	33.8	6.4	1.6	
	18	14	20	7	5	16
	28.1	21.8	31.2	10.9	7.8	
NO. OF RESPONDENTS	13	20	14	7	6	17
%	21.6	33.3	23.3	11.6	10	
	2	4	9	15	33	18
	3.1	6.3	14.2	23.8	52	
	13	12	13	10	12	19
	21.6	20	21.6	16.6	20	
	15	18	18	9	3	20
	23.8	28.5	28.5	14.2	4.7	
	18	23	16	4	7	21
	28.1	35.9	25	6.2	4.6	
	7	7	25	14	10	22
	11.1	11.1	39.6	22.2	15.8	
	6	6	8	11	32	23
	9.5	9.5	12.6	17.4	50.7	
	13	10	24	13	6	24
	19.6	15.1	36.3	19.6	6.9	
	11	16	23	5	3	25
	18.9	27.5	39.6	8.6	5.1	

The following is the explanation to the table: Grid is marked 1-5. 1- for almost or always true, 2- often true, 3- sometimes true, 4- seldom true and 5- almost never or never true. Number of Respondents is the figure of those youth who checked each of the questions given and per every level of the grid. The percentage is the number of the youth who responded for every level in the grid divided by the total number of the youth involved expressed as a percentage. For question 1 the table shows Grid, No. of Respondents and Percentage but from question 2 onwards grid is left out as it is the same for all the other numbers and so we have No. of Respondents and Percentage recurring for all the other questions up to question 25.

The data above clearly indicates the power friends or peers exert on each other. For example question number 1 which was seeking to know whether the youth like to get their friends' point of view on things that concern them, 95% chose between grid one and three. This shows how dependent the youth are on each other

as they make important decisions in their lives. Again when answering question 16 which was seeking to understand whether friends or peers help them to understand themselves better, over 70% answered to show that they appreciate their friends so much.

While responding to question 18 which was seeking to know whether they feel angry with their friends over 75% indicated that they seldom feel angry with their friends or never felt angry with their friends. This response then shows how the youth would wish to be with their peers most of the times for they make them feel good and happy. The three questions chosen at random help to show the way the youth feel about each other and to indicate the power of influence the friends or peers exert on each other.

To get further information on the matter at hand another questionnaire was prepared and applied to the fourteen youth that were chosen for the peer counseling team that would be trained. This questionnaire had seven (7) oral questions listed here below:

- 1- Is peer pressure present among the youth?
- 2- If the answer to no. 1 is yes, what is the intensity of the peer pressure? Is it mild, average or too much?
- 3- Towards which direction do the peers influence themselves? Positive or Negative?
- 4- How do you feel when you see your peers influenced to doing bad things?
- 5- Do you feel you would wish to do something about the negative influence you see among your peers?
- 6- What prevented you from doing that which you felt about the negative peer influence?

7- Would you be willing to be part of a team that would be developed in a view to influence the peers in positive way?

The response to the seven questions asked was as follows: 100% said Yes to the first question which sort to know whether peer pressure exists among the youth. 20% said that the intensity of the peer pressure amongst the youth is average, 50% said that it is much and the rest 30% said that the pressure is too much in response to the second question. While responding to the third question which sort to know towards which direction the peers influence themselves, 100 % of the respondents said that is towards negative direction. When asked the fourth question which was assessing their feelings about what they see when their peers are influenced negatively and are led to self- deafting activities, 100% of the team members used such words like these to respond to the question: hurt, bad, pitiful, sorry, depressed, challenged, frustrated. For question number five which was asking these youth team members if they felt they could do anything about the situation they see of the negative peer influence amongst the youth, 100% of them said Yes. This led to the sixth question which was asking the members what prevented them or prevents them from doing something about the situation discussed above, they all expressed themselves in many ways like they lacked skills, knowledge, resources, exposure, proper approach, confidence, time, others said they felt inadequate, others feared rejection by their friends, others felt that they were not close enough to their friends, others cited cultural barriers as inhibiting, others felt that the problem was not their business, others expressed total ignorance of what they would do. Still others cited distance as a factor that prevented them.

After the interview 100% of the respondents expressed their desire to be part of a team of peer counselors to be developed and promised to do all it requires to

bring a change amongst themselves. This was very encouraging and created the motivation required to continue with the project. The team was led to elect their leadership from amongst themselves and a couple from one of the churches to be their sponsors. This leadership is going to work very closely with the project coordinator to develop the youth peer counseling team to labour among the youth in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.(see appendix) It was agreed that the team meets every week on Saturday at 3pm for two hours from January to the end of April 2009 to cover ten (10) sessions.

The Peer Influence Among Students of Laiser Hill Academy

For comparison another team from a private institution by the name Laiser Hill Academy was chosen and interviewed to establish the impact of peer influence in the school with a view of developing a peer counseling club to work among the students in the school. This is an institution owned by Asians and which runs programmes from primary school to higher school. It offers both Kenyan and British systems of education. This institution is in Ongata Rongai and in our neighborhood. It draws its enrollment from different cultures, social, economic and religious backgrounds. Sixteen (16) students taken two from each of the 8 classes were selected. The classes are Form IA, IB, IIA, IIB, IIIA, IIIB, IVA and Form V. The need to do this arose in December 2008 while the coordinator was involved in counseling some students from the said institution and after sharing the concept with the management it was accepted and they gave a go ahead and promised their support in this venture.

The team was subjected to the same interview given to the youth in the church which had seven questions. The results were similar to the one of the youth in the

church in all aspects. This team met on Wednesdays every week for one hour from 4pm to 5pm in the school. The same procedures like the ones applied with the church based team were followed with the team in the school. They also proposed to the school administration the one teacher who would serve as their patron and whom the administration endorsed. To make the team even more recognized a request was made to have the team registered as one of the clubs in the school. The request was granted and the peer counseling team became officially recognized making history in the life of the institution.

This team has shown a lot of interest in this training and they are willing to spare time from their schedules to attend the sessions. There has been positive change in the lives of the team members a thing that has been noticed by the school administration with appreciation. The Principal of the school has expressed his appreciation for the positive response he has noted in this team. The response from this team in this school has really encouraged the researcher to continue with kind of training to assist our youth both in the church and even out in the community.

Interviews with Pastors of Glory Mission Church and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Ongata Rongai Town

For further understanding of the issues of youth peer influence, interviews were conducted to establish whether the same challenges facing the youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District do exist in other Christian persuasions. Two ministers of other religious persuasions from the area were interviewed orally. These were from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and Glory Mission Church in Ongata Rongai. The following seven (7) questions were

asked orally to the two Senior Pastors of the two churches beginning with the one of the Glory Mission Church and then the one of the Presbyterian Church.

1- Do you have youth in your church and if you have them what is their percentage as compared to the whole church membership?

2- What are the challenges your youth are faced with in the church, in their homes and in the society in general?

3- In your own estimation do you think that the youth in your church have a power to influence their own peers?

4- What are some of the ways you have observed in which your youth influence their peers?

5- What are you and your church doing to address this challenge of youth peer influence?

6- Do you think there is hope in our youth in the future?

7- What do you think about this idea of developing a team of youth who would be used to influence their peers to doing the right things in the church and even in the community?

The Senior Pastor of the Glory Mission Church Ongata Rongai who was interviewed on 28th May 2008 in his office responded as recorded below:

1- They have youth in their church and that they make up to 40% of their membership.

2- The youth are faced with the following challenges in the church:

(i) Lack of commitment in spiritual matters

(ii) Lack of common bond and fellowship.

(iii) Lack of respect for the leadership.

(iv) Lack of role models in the church

In the homes the youth are neglected and even abused. They are lacking role models also. They are also lacking basic things which are necessary in life.

In the society the youth are lacking employment and also focus in life.

3- For question number three the pastor said that it is very true that the youth are influencing each other very much and that, that power of peer influence is very strong.

4- While answering question number four the pastor mentioned the way of dressing inappropriately, failing to attend church, rudeness, less interest in spiritual matters, want of cheap and quickly acquired things as some of the ways the youth are influencing their peers very strongly.

5- To address this felt need the pastor said that his church has put some measures to try and contain this challenge. They have started Local Missionaries Project where they send youth out to preach, evangelize and influence those of their peers who have left church to come back. They are also using music teams to reach their own. Sports and community services are also other avenues they are using to involve their youth.

6- The pastor expressed a lot of hope in the youth and said that the future is with our youth.

7- The pastor thought that the idea to develop a team among the youth to be peer counselors is a great one and gave encouragement to go ahead and develop such a team which he felt would go along way assisting our youth and using them to influence their peers positively.

The next pastor to be interviewed was the Senior Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Ongata Rongai who was interviewed from his office in June 2008. He responded by saying the following:

1- They have youth in their church and they consider youth to be from ages fifteen (15) to thirty five (35). The percentage of the youth in their church is about 40% to 45%.

2- The youth in this church are faced with many challenges. Peer influence towards negative things is very evident. There is general laxity in spiritual matters such as attendance to church services and participating in youth programmes, there is influence to substance abuse, pre-marital sex, In the homes the youth are lacking quality time with their parents who are so committed to other things. They are missing attention and this is making them engage in behaviours that are not worthy. In the society the youth lack jobs to do and also lack proper guidance from those in leadership.

3- For this question the pastor responded by saying that the power of peer influence is enormous in his church.

4- The youth in this church are influencing their peers in many ways as indicated earlier in substance abuse, avoiding church, inappropriate dressing, gang behavior, and other ills.

5- The pastor and his church have put measures in place to deal with this issue of peer influence. They are involving more youth in running the affairs of the church and also improving their youth programmes. They are using the adult professionals they have in their church to mentor the youth.

6- The pastor expressed a lot of optimism in the youth and said that the hope of the church is in its youth.

7- While responding to the last question as to what he thought of the project of developing a youth peer counseling team to work among the fellow youth, he said

that this was a very good idea and one of its time and that he would wish to share the benefits of this programme with us.

Interview with the Youth Ministries Departmental Directors of Central Kenya Conference and the East African Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Since the project is about the youth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, an interview with the Youth Ministries Directors of the Central Kenya Conference and East African Union was conducted. The following questions were asked orally to the two directors in a bid to understand what is happening amongst the youth in other areas of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya.

- 1- What is the percentage of the youth in the church in the Conference/ Union?
- 2- Does peer influence exist among the youth in the Conference/Union?
- 3- If yes, how intensive? Mild, Average, A lot or Too much
- 4- In your own assessment which direction does the peer influence among the youth tend to take?
- 5- Do you think that this resource of peer influence that is in the youth could be utilized for positive results in the youth in the Conference/Union?
- 6- Do you think that this project of developing a youth peer counseling team would a viable endeavour in the church?
- 7- What counsel would you give in regard to this project that I am undertaking?

Interview with the East African Union Mission Youth Ministries

Departmental Director.

East African Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the territory covering the republics of Kenya and Somalia.

The interview with the Youth Ministries Departmental Director was conducted on May 21, 2009 and the following report was filed:

For question one, the Director said that the percentage of the youth in the East African Union of the Seventh-day Adventist is 75% of the total membership. This is a very significant portion of the membership which he said requires a lot of care.

Peer influence exists among the youth in the Union and it is evident in many aspects of the lives of the youth. The Director said this while responding to the second question and added to say this peer influence is in Primary and Secondary Schools, Colleges and Universities, in churches and in the society. This peer influence has permeated everywhere.

For question three the Director said that the peer influence in his assessment is mild and that those youth who were well grounded in the faith are able to stand the peer influence.

Peer influence among the youth for most of the times leads to a negative direction and engage the youth with activities which are debasing like alcoholism, smoking, pornography, illicit sexual behaviours and other social odds. This was the answer the Director gave while responding to the fourth question.

In response to the fifth question the Director said that the resource of the power of influence among the youth could be utilized for positive gains in the Union. He gave examples how the youth programmes developed and run by the church have

made a lot of influence among the youth. Some youth who were not church members before have been won to the church as a result of the peer influence and such youth have in turn influenced others including their siblings and parents. He gave several examples of such youth he knew who have been influenced positively for their own good.

The project that is being developed of youth peer counseling in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District he said is a wonderful one and one which is going to impact greatly the lives of our youth in this Union. He commended the coordinator for such an endeavor and for his interest in youth affairs. He said that such an initiative will go along way in helping the youth who are challenged in life.

The Union Youth Director had this counsel to give to add value to this project: To take our youth as important people and to know that there is hope in them. “All is not lost in our youth,” he said. He suggested that we involve the youth in church life and trust them. He also suggested that there be integration of faith in all the activities of the youth in all places. He ended by saying that more innovative programmes be designed for the youth and he expressed his appreciation for this particular project and wished that it be duplicated all over the Union. This was a very fruitful interview and one which inspired the writer the more to move on with this project.

Interview with the Central Kenya Conference Youth Ministries Departmental Director

Central Kenya Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the territory covering the middle third of the republic of Kenya i.e the area covering three administrative provinces of Kenya; Central, Eastern and Nairobi plus three administrative districts of the Rift Valley province namely Nakuru, Kajiado and Laikipia.

By the time the researcher was ready to interview the officer above, he happened to be away and out of the country for his vacation. We appreciate the computer era we are living for the researcher was able to reach the officer via internet and he responded in the following way to the questions posed to him:

1. The percentage of the youth in the Conference is 70% of the total membership which stands at 91,000 to date.
2. Yes, peer influence exists and that every young person is under the influence of peer pressure either positively or negatively. There is peer pressure in Academic, social, spiritual, world.
3. For this question he said that the peer influence is too much and added to say that the society we are living today lacks elderly people whom the youth can trust and look up to as models because some of the elderly people are the very ones who are leading these youth away from the right track.
4. The peer influence is affecting the core values and eroding the morality of our youth. This also is leading our youth to ignore the youth programmes provided for in the church and also develop mistrust between the youth and the elderly.

5. The Director acknowledges that the Conference leadership cannot address all the cases of the peer influence the youth are undergoing alone and therefore appreciates efforts like this one to assist our youth.
6. For this question the Director said that this is a very significant endeavour but expressed his misgivings that most findings made by researchers remained in the Universities domain and did not get back to the ground where the researches were conducted.
7. The director wished to see as many youth as possible from different backgrounds, from both English speaking and Kiswahili speaking churches, youth with different levels of education, those born in the church and those who have converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church from other religious persuasions engaged and involved in this kind of programme. This is a very valid counsel which will be considered in the subsequent trainings.

This was a great input from these Youth Directors and which encouraged the coordinator to continue with this project.

Interview With the Couple Sponsoring the Youth Peer Counseling Team in the District

The last interview conducted was with the couple the youth peer counseling team chose as their sponsors and which was voted by the District Board of the church in the District. This couple is well placed in matters relating to the youth because the husband is a senior lecturer at the University of Nairobi and the wife is an administrator within the Provincial Administration of the Government of Kenya. The following questions were asked to the couple:

- 1- Do you have a burden for the youth in the church and even the society?

- 2- As you observe the youth in your places of work, do you see the power of peer influence exhibited in them?
- 3- In which direction do you see this power taking the youth?
- 4- Do you think that this trend of the youth influencing each other towards negative ways could be changed?
- 5- What is your take on this idea of developing a youth peer counseling team to work for and with the youth in using this power of influence for positive results?
- 6- What word of counsel would you want to give to add value to this project?

It was not easy getting time with these busy people but we at last were able to have an appointment in their home on May17, 2009 and this was their input in this project:

For the first question which was asking whether they have a burden for the youth, they said that they did have a big burden and that they have been associating with the youth in this Pastoral District for the past five years ever since they came here. They have been interested in the academic pursuit among the youth and in their other matters that concern them. The couple also said that due to their availability to the youth and their show of interest in their matters the youth were finding it easy to approach them whenever they were in need. This couple is endowed with a very rare gift of humility which makes the youth to access them very easily and to open up to them.

In response to the second question which sort to know whether the power of influence among the youth is real, the couple said that this power is so evident and that it cannot be wished away at all. They said the power of influence is exhibited in all spheres of the youth life. The University Don singled out the issue of cohabitating

among the youth who are students in the university as one very sure proof of peer influence. He said that this trend of cohabitating has become like the norm and not the exception in the University of Nairobi. This is a very dangerous trend that needs to be discouraged by all means.

While answering the third question which was asking the direction the peer influence tends to take the youth, the couple in agreement said that by and large the influence takes the youth towards negative direction. They said that only in rare cases are the youth able to influence each other for good.

For question four the couple said that it was possible to change the negative peer influence to positive influence but gave some clues on what they thought could be done to make this happen. They said that there is need to understand the youth psychology. There is need to identify with the youth, listen to them more and talk less. Those working with the youth and for the youth need to be well trained in youth matters and should allow the desired change to originate with the youth other than try to impose such change on them. They also said the youth require powerful communicators who can capture their attention.

In answer to question five the couple said very categorically that yes, the youth are the right people to reach their peers and that the idea to develop a youth peer counseling is a noble one. The counsel they gave was such youth need to be thoroughly trained, they must live such lives that are above reproach, such people must be reliable and must themselves be burdened by the issues of their peers. They also said that for such youth to be useful they must be accepted by their peers.

In conclusion and in response to the last question this couple gave this counsel to the coordinator: First they appreciated the idea and termed it as noble, important and one that is worthy pursuing. They however said that wide consultations need to

be done to get the many faces of youth life addressed. Ideas from the academicians, psychologists, counselors, and others were very necessary. They also counseled that we think of ways of looking for donors who would finance the implementation of this project. This was a very fruitful interview and one from which a lot was learnt and the coordinator was very encouraged and motivated to carry on with the project.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAMME PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH PEER COUNSELING TEAM

Selection of the Youth Peer Counseling Team

The youth peer counseling is to comprise of fourteen (14) youth drawn from the seven churches that constitute the Ongata Rongai Pastoral District where the research is being carried out and where the training and implementation is to occur. As far as is possible each church will select two youth preferably from either gender male and female. To select the fourteen youth who would be trained as peer counselors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ongata Rongai Pastoral District (Parish) and who would serve also as Trainers of Trainers (TOTs), the coordinator shared the concept with the executive leaders of the seven churches i.e. 1st elders, church clerks and treasurers. These leaders appreciated the concept and gave their consent.

The matter was then taken to the next level called District Board and was voted and agreed that each of the seven churches was to select two youth preferably from both genders. Youth in good standing in the church and those with a burden for their fellow youth and the church. The selection of the two youth from each church was delegated to the leadership of the youth ministries in the churches. Following this a meeting of the executive leaders of the youth ministries in the seven churches was called in which the concept was shared and the selection done. This happened and the names of these youth were raised.

Training of the Youth Peer Counseling Team

After the youth were chosen for the training, the coordinator explained the methodology to follow to implement the project with the selected team. This was to have ten (10) training sessions of at least between two and two and a half hours every Saturday afternoon from 3 p.m. starting on January 24, 2009 and ending on April 30, 2009. All the team members are expected to attend all the sessions without failure and to participate fully in the discussions that were to ensue in the course of training. The venues for the training were to be in as many of the seven churches in the Pastoral District as possible so as to give the team members an opportunity to know where the churches are situated within the District so as to prepare them for service after their training. The team was to elect its leadership which would work very closely with the coordinator to make sure that things move on well. The team members were to display a high level of discipline and come out as role models among their peers.

The following report was filed to show what happened in each of the ten sessions which the peer counseling team met with the coordinator:

Session 1. Introduction to Counseling

The first meeting was on January 24, 2009 at Laiser Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church and lasted for two hours. In this meeting the concept of peer counseling was introduced to the youth who were selected by their churches to be trained for this unique ministry. The goals and objectives of the project were discussed with the team and interest was created amongst the team members and they were introduced to one another. A plan was agreed upon when and where the

meetings were going to take place. The meetings were to take place on Saturday afternoons from 3pm to 5pm. It was also agreed that the meetings be alternating from church to church among the seven churches so as to give the participants a chance to familiarize themselves with all the churches where they will be labouring after their training.

The type of counseling to be offered to and by the youth peer counseling team is Biblical or Christian. This kind of counseling as observed by Selwyn Hughe in her little book *The Christian Counsellor's Pocket Guide* is largely directive because it is telling people with deep compassion and genuine love what God requires of them unlike the non-directive approach of secular counselors.

Session 2. Dynamics of Counseling

The second session happened on February 7, 2009 at Ronkai Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. This took two and a quarter hours and an interview was conducted among the ten members who attended the session that day to assess the knowledge the team had on this subject of peer counseling. The seven questions discussed earlier were asked orally to the team members and the results were as was given earlier. (see pages 32 and 33 of this document) In this meeting the coordinator introduced the materials he was going to use during the training. These includes the Bible, The Adventist Aids International Ministries (AAIM) manual which is going to be the main training manual, DVDs from the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the AAIM, power point presentations prepared in the lap top, other reference books as shall be found necessary and any others that shall be available. The methodology of the training was also discussed in this meeting where discussions amongst the team members was encouraged, question and answer, viewing of DVDs,

power point presentations, field trips, taking notes of the lectures given etc. The leadership for the team was elected in this same meeting comprising of the chair, vice chair, secretary/ treasurer and one committee member. This leadership will be working very closely with the coordinator in this project. It was in this meeting that the coordinator sought to know the commitment on the part of the youth chosen for this project and as it were seek their full participation and support of the same. The youth pledged their full support and expressed how happy they were that they could get such a rare opportunity to take part in this unique ministry. The coordinator was fully encouraged to continue with this project. ¹

Session 3. Peer Counseling Concept

The third session took place on 14th February at another church called Rimpa Seventh-day Adventist Church at 3pm. In this session we got into the training proper. We defined terms like counseling as a way to help a person find himself and to make satisfying life adjustments. It is also helping people face their lives to find answers to their lives and to grow and develop maturity. It is to help people discover meaning and purpose in their lives. It is also a process to help a person make good choices and thus improve relationships with God, his fellow men and with himself. These definitions by Peter Van Lierop in his book *Pastoral Counseling* were discussed with the team. Peer counseling as defined earlier in this paper was discussed. The terms counselor, counselee, and other terms employed in the counseling arena were extensively discussed. The importance of peer counseling was outlined very clearly. The youth expressed how they thought that such a team of trained youth would go along way helping their peers whom they said are really in dire need of help. They

¹The Adventist Aids International Ministries will hereafter be referred to as AAIM

also shared with the coordinator the view that the youth would be freer to share their burdens with their fellow youth than they would with adults. This fact made the coordinator to appreciate the more the sense of having such a team of youth peer counselors within the Pastoral District. The AAIM Hand book was used a lot in this session as the training manual. A total of two and a half hours (2 1/2) were spent in this session.

Session 4. Peer Counseling Concept continued

The fourth session was held at yet another church Ongata Rongai East Seventh-day Adventist Church on 28th February at the same time 3 p.m to 5 p.m. In this session the qualities of a counselor were discussed and how a counselor does the job. AAIM Manual pages 43 to 52 formed the bulk of the training material. The counselor's attitude was discussed that it should be appropriate to all people in general and towards those seeking help in particular. The team members were encouraged to know that even if they were young they could be used of God to listen to the many young people who are hurting and using the godly wisdom help such youth. It was noted that as Mains Karen Burton has written in her book by the title *Comforting One Another* that there is no doubt that there dark moments that are so desperate that people need others to come alongside them and hold them tightly to rock them gently, to protect them and cover them so that they feel safe and secure enough to let their grief and anguish arise. Issues of confidentiality when dealing with counselees and referral of those cases that the youth counselors were not trained enough to handle to other more seasoned counselors and others were discussed in this session. It was noted that a counselor should be a little ahead of the peers in the all round knowledge related to the issues that are important to the youth if confidence

and respect were to be experienced among them. The areas of interest to be considered for discussion were to include the spiritual, physical, mental, social and emotional aspects of the youth. It was agreed that these areas be dealt with in the sessions that were to follow tackling one after another and making them have more insights in the related areas as well as unravel any misgivings or confusions that may be existing. Once that is done the youth peer counselors would be well placed to help their peers.

Session 5. Mission of the SDA Church

The fifth session took place on 7th March 23, 2009 at Ronkai Central Seventh-day Adventist Church at 3 p.m. In this session we watched a video from the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on Mission. We took time to discuss the important issues in the Mission Statement of the Church which reads:

The Mission Statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to communicate to all peoples the Everlasting Gospel of God's love in the context of the three angels messages of Revelation 14:6-12. As revealed in the life, death, resurrection and high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ leading them to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord and to unite with His Remnant Church and to nurture believers as disciples in preparation of a soon return.

As would be leaders and counselors it is vital that they have a clear focus on the reason of our being as a church and consequently lead their peers who mostly do not clearly understand the reason of their being in the church. Since these youth peer counselors will be serving in the auspices of the Church, it is prudent that they be well informed about this one most important reason of the being of the church. These youth will be expected to give their services more meaningfully and enthusiastically if

they fully understand the mission of the Church and owned it. The excitement among the team members was clear and they expressed appreciation of the information they were exposed to and confessed that until then they did not know exactly why the Church existed. They were all assigned to commit into their memory this mission statement and be always ready to share it with all their peers and the younger members of their families at home and in the church. This was seen as an important truth that the youth need to be exposed to for they are the leaders today and in the future.

Session 6. Jesus Righteousness

The sixth session was held at Nkoroi Seventh-day Adventist Church on 14th March 23, 2009 at 2.30 pm. This was another enjoyable and educative session where another spiritual dimension in Christianity was pursued which is of vital importance to the youth. In this time the all important issue of Jesus Righteousness was dealt with. A power point presentation from the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference on this topic was used. This presentation put this issue so clearly to us that the peer counseling team will be in a position to share with their peers this crucial message which is grossly misunderstood in the whole Christ Dom. The youth once again expressed their joy for understanding this dimension of Christianity which they acknowledged was not very clear to them until then. They expressed dismay when they heard a very astounding statement made by Ellen G. White in that presentation which said; “that not one in a hundred understands righteousness by faith.” They also confessed that they have had serious challenges with their peers from the Pentecostal backgrounds on the understanding of this subject. They have been apprehensive and not very confident in this subject. They have been shying away from discussions

having to do with subject but not anymore, they said. The youth counselors were given ample time to really discuss this subject and make sure they fully comprehended and were in a position to share the same with their peers.

Session 7. The Supreme Sacrifice of Christ

The seventh session took place for a second time in Ronkai Central Seventh-day Adventist Church on May 2, 2009 at 3.30 p.m after a break of about one month which saw the youth team away for the Ester holiday. In this session a recap on the topics covered so far was done and the team members were put back in the mood of learning. Due to the importance of the spirituality of the members this session was also dedicated to yet another crucial topic- The Supreme Sacrifice of Christ. This is important for the youth counselors because there are some who due to poor understanding of the centrality of the cross in Christianity have down played its true meaning and therefore putting the members at a great risk of loosing their eternal life in the long run and the joy of salvation here and now. This is again of importance considering the challenge that was sometimes of some members criticizing the inclusion of the cross in the church logo and saying that by that the church had departed from the truth and its traditions. The researcher used power point presentation by one of the retired pastors of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by the name Jack Sequera who has written quite a bit on this subject. The impact of this message could not be hidden from these youth and showed all too vividly even on their faces. They understood that by Jesus dying on the cross God did really curse His Son right there for the sins of the world and that on the cross Jesus tasted the second death or eternal death which is the wages of sin for all mankind. The youth peer

counselors expressed their joy in understanding this subject and said they were ready to share the same with their peers.

Session 8. HIV/ AIDS Awareness

The eighth session saw the team and the researcher once again at Ongata Rongai East Seventh-day Adventist Church on May 9, 2009 at 3.30 p.m. This time round the researcher tackled a topic on the social and physical aspect of life. The team watched a video produced by the Adventist Aids International Ministries (AAIM) on the effects of HIV/AIDS in the world. The youth counselors were informed on the statistics of this deadly disease and how the toll is high in this part of the world for over 70% of all HIV/AIDS cases are in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The modes of transmission of the HIV were discussed as well as the preventive measures to be taken. The youth particularly was observed are at greater risk and thus the importance of this information. The values of abstaining from sex before marriage and faithfulness in marriage were discussed in great detail. This topic aroused a lot of participation on the part of the team members who asked so many questions for their understanding. The youth counselors conceded that this is one area of their lives that is really challenging. They promised though that by the grace of God they were willing to abstain from pre-marital sex and that they were going to use all their influence to bring a positive change on this area among their fellow youth. They gave testimonies of some youth they knew who have contracted this deadly virus and who are going through very difficult times in their lives and others who have died due to related diseases. The counselors also promised that they would consider forming a support group in the Pastoral District to address the felt needs of HIV/AIDS. These include people living with the virus and those who may have reached the full blown level of AIDS, the needs of the orphaned children due to the pandemic, the challenge

of poverty which is contributing a lot to the infection and spread of this disease by starting income generating activities, the intervention strategies to especially reach out to the children and youth, the advocacy for the infected and or the affected so that such are not discriminated against in the society and in the churches. When this attitude was formed in the minds of these counselors it was evident that the discussion was worthy and that there was hope in these youth to bring the desired change not only among the youth themselves but also the whole community.

Session 9. Study Habits / Health Issues

The ninth session took place in Laiser Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church on May 16, 2009 at 3p.m. In this session the team discussed on two important issues concerning the youth, education and health. Concerning education it was realized that it is important that this team be ambitious and pursue further education to improve themselves as well as inspire their peers on the same. The team members were happy that they were thus challenged and pledged to do something about this matter. Most of these team members have attained diploma levels in their studies and are willing to pursue their degrees later. Health being an important issue in our lives, the team chose to discuss something about it for many young people are challenged in their health by making wrong choices. Good health is a big asset which can influence others very significantly. In this study the team watched and listened to Professor Walter Veith in his DVD on *Your Health Your Choice*. Issues of diet, lifestyle, alcohol, smoking, drugs of addiction among others were discussed in a very candid manner by this Professor who according to us was well versed in this field. What came out very clearly was that the choices we make are very important in our lives and that to have good health is by and large the result of the choices we make on a

daily basis. The youth peers counselors were grateful that they could get this information and vowed to put it to use in their lives as well as share the same with their peers.

Session 10. Food Gardening/ Starting Over

The tenth and final session for this project happened on May 23, 2009 at Nkoroi SDA Church. This was well attended and we covered a lot of ground. We discussed in more details how this team was going to pursue their further education and be agents of change in the church as well as the society as they encouraged their peers to pursue further education and not be contented with the Academic levels so far achieved.

As a wedge to get to the community around these youth, we watched a video on food gardening produced by Adventist Aids International Ministries in South Africa. This is a very simple, practical and proven way of growing vegetables on very small land and one which can be applied both in the urban and rural settings. We discussed quite a lot on this and these youth leaders were very happy and said that this was a very practical way they would use to penetrate their peers and influence them to work as well as the communities around them. They all pledged to start their own food gardens immediately.

After that we watched another Video for one hour entitled *Starting Over* another resource from the Adventist Aids International Ministries. In our discussion on the video many issues came up which are very pertinent to the youth. The issue of peer influence came out strongly when we saw how an innocent young man was lured into drinking and into pre- marital sex by his peers, a thing he did once and which he lived to regret all his life. The issues of HIV/AIDS were further discussed in this

video. Issues of transmission of the virus, stigma and discrimination, prevention, intervention, advocacy, management of those people living with the HIV/AIDS and others were discussed. The video ended with a call to start all over in life and not to give up hope no matter what the circumstances may be. These young people were fully absorbed in the discussion and the video watching a thing that made quite an impression in their lives.

To wide up the training the youth expressed their appreciation to the facilitator for affording them such an opportunity and pledged to put into practice what they had learnt. They also pledged to continue binding together far into the future as they labour for their peers in particular and the community in general. They came up with an idea to fit some uniform that would identify them whenever they were going out for service as a team an idea that was very well thought and very good. They chose to fit a brown pair of trousers and a white shirt for the young men and a brown skirt and a white blouse for the young women to begin with. We also agreed that they be honoured on June 6, 2009 in a ceremony where the whole district membership would be together in one congregation. Certificates of attendance were to be awarded to the seven who satisfied the requirements.

Evaluation

To evaluate the project several people were involved. These included the youth peers counselors themselves, the youth ministries leaders in the seven churches, the Pastoral District leadership and the general church membership in the District. The coordinator himself was also involved.

Evaluation by The Youth Peer Counseling Team Members:

The youth peer counseling team in their evaluation of the programme said that this was a very worthy course which should have been pursued earlier than now. They expressed their appreciation that they could get the opportunity to be trained in this programme. They also were happy for the many things they were exposed to during the training which have made them gain confidence in their own Christian walk as well as equipped them for service among the youth in the Pastoral District and the community they live in. They were motivated to serve and they expressed their appreciation to the coordinator for having chosen to do this project for and with the youth. They promised to continue this service far beyond this project time and to make sure that they impact the lives of their fellow youth for the better. They also promised to form a support group to deal with issues related to HIV/AIDS in the Pastoral District. They also wished that more youth could be trained in this field so as to empower them and that this kind of training could be taken to all the other Pastoral Districts in the country. They thought that more time could have been allowed for this project to give them more exposure. They felt sorry for those of the team members who fell off and did not complete the course.

Evaluation by The Youth Ministries Leaders:

The youth leaders that made their evaluation of the programme said that this was a very noble idea and one which would change the way the youth were going to use their talents in influencing their peers. They were proud to see their own go through that training and witness them getting certificates of completion.

Evaluation by the Pastoral District leadership:

The initial evaluation was done on May10, 2009 when the leadership received the report of the progress that far. The leadership expressed their appreciation to the coordinator for choosing such a course of study which they said would go a long way helping our youth who are really challenged by peer influence. Some of the leaders who learnt that the youth from their churches had dropped from the training were disappointed and requested that those who would finish the training be used in all the churches in the Pastoral District to give the peer counseling. They promised to give these youth peer counselors maximum support as they carry on this new ministry in the District.

Evaluation by the General Membership in the District:

Time did not allow to have a very serious evaluation from the members but the few who made their comments indicated that the programme was a very noble idea and one that would go a long way helping the youth in the District. They had very kind words to say to the team that went through this programme and to the facilitator. The joy they had was evident on that day of awarding certificates of completion when the whole District was gathered together for fellowship.

Evaluation by the researcher:

The project as far as I am concerned was successful in that we have seven well trained youth peer counselors within the Pastoral District who can be charged with the responsibility of counseling their peers in many issues of their lives. This being their first time for these youth to be involved in such a project there were challenges in

their understanding. This was demonstrated by some skipping some sessions and others missing almost entirely.

The number of youth peers counselors initially recruited and who attended enough sessions to qualify fell by 50%. I had quite a bit of challenges that at one time I was really disappointed but got encouragement from some of the youth peer counselors who had fully owned the project something I fully thank them for. I am grateful in that we were able to cover a whole range of topics which are of interest to the youth and which I believe will inspire these youth peers counselors to service. Time was well managed and we learnt quite a lot.

The confidence level among these youth was raised and we hope that they will be of service to their fellow youth and the society at large. I got support from the leadership and membership of the seven churches while conducting this study. We now have seven well trained young people who can influence their peers positively in many ways. The seven were awarded certificates of completion signed by the District Elder who serves as an aide to the pastor, the sponsor of the team and the facilitator himself. (see appendix)

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The whole idea of developing a youth peer counseling team was inspired by the burden the researcher has for the youth whom he believes have tremendous power of influence on to each other. This power however, has been largely used for negative things and activities that have been destructive to our youth. The research has shown this fact very vividly and therefore proved just how important this programme would be of use to the youth in the Ongata Rongai Pastoral District to begin with and to other Pastoral Districts within the Central Kenya Conference and the East African Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as the community in general later on.

The interest generated by the youth who participated fully to the completion of this programme has been enormous indicating their support of the same. The promise given to these youth peer counselors by the District leadership of their full support is a great motivation for these young counselors and the trust they have in them. The whole process was really involving but rewarding and has seen the training of seven (7) pioneers youth peer counselors to an initial level which allows them to serve as models after which many others will be developed.

This was a worthy endeavour and has brought satisfaction to the youth peer counseling team, the District leadership, the youth in the District who stand to benefit from this programme in particular and the whole membership in general and the

coordinator who came up with the idea of developing the team. The syllabus developed of ten sessions through which to take the youth peer counselors in training will be a tool in the hands of those involved in youth matters. Those interested in youth affairs need to be extra patient with the youth and to make all efforts to understand the dynamics involved in youth ministry.

Conclusion

The project was a success and will serve as a pilot in the Seventh-day Adventist church in this region. Youth exert a lot of influence on their peers and therefore the need to train such a team like the one that has been trained is of paramount importance if we are to avert the dire consequences that our youth are likely to suffer as a result of negative peer influence. The church needs to be aware of the fact that youth have such a tremendous influence on their peers and come up with such programmes like the one discussed in this project to utilize the power of peer influence that exists all the time among the youth to work for the youth and the church. Many youth will be assisted through this endeavour and the power of peer influence will be well utilized in the church as well as out of the church.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that this programme be given a chance in all the churches in the Central Kenya Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as in the East African Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a way of helping our youth cope with this big challenge of peer influence and that way manage well this great resource the youth have at their disposal.

The second recommendation is that all the Pastoral Districts in the Central Kenya Conference do an analysis to establish the number of youth there are in their areas of jurisdiction and to establish the sway the power of influence has among the youth and develop such teams of youth peer as a branch of the youth ministries department. The coordinator will be willing to give his counsel in this area as shall be required.

The third recommendation is that we encourage our clergy and laity to read books written by developmental educationists and psychologists in addition to the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White so as to gather insights and principles which they could incorporate in the youth ministries as they develop the youth in the church. This has become very evident in the study which was done during this project. There is so much to learn from these writers that could be of great help in the youth ministries than we thought in the past.

The fourth recommendation goes to the youth themselves and this is, that they be aware of the power of influence they have amongst themselves and that they be careful how they use it and that they be role models for their younger siblings whom they are privileged to take part in their physical, mental, spiritual, social and emotional development.

The fifth recommendation is to the Church in Central Kenya Conference that the executive committee takes an action to adopt this endeavour of youth peer counselors as an initiative in the youth ministries and use it to impact other churches in the territory.

The sixth recommendation is to the District leadership for it to enable the trained team of youth peer counselors in the Pastoral District to function, the District leadership is to provide the team with modern equipment such as lap tops, desk tops

and projectors, books, magazines, etc., and that they be allocated an office at the District level from where they can operate.

The seventh recommendation is to the team that they submit a report every month to the pastor and another to the District Board every quarter detailing their activities and their findings and recommendations. A reporting tool to be developed by the coordinator with the help of the District Board.

The eighth recommendation is that the team be used as a wedge to the Gospel Ministry in the community around Ongata Rongai to reach other youth outside of the church.

The ninth recommendation is that this project serves as an eye opener and motivates other peer counseling teams to be started in other departments of the church to meet their unique needs.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. I like to get my friend's point of view on things I'm concerned about. 1 2 3 4 5
2. My friends sense when I'm upset about something 1 2 3 4 5
3. When we discuss things, my friends consider my point of view. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Talking over my friends make me feel ashamed or foolish 1 2 3 4 5
5. I wish I had different friends. 1 2 3 4 5
6. My friends understand me 1 2 3 4 5
7. My friends encourage me to talk about my difficulties 1 2 3 4 5
8. My friends accept me as I am 1 2 3 4 5
9. I feel the need to be in touch with my friends more often 1 2 3 4 5
10. My friends don't understand what I'm going through these days. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I feel alone or apart when I am with my friends. 1 2 3 4 5
12. My friends listen to what I have to say. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I feel my friend are good friends 1 2 3 4 5
14. My friends are fairly easy to talk to. 1 2 3 4 5
15. When I am angry about something, my friends try to be understanding 1 2 3 4 5
16. My friends help me to understand myself better. 1 2 3 4 5
17. My friends are concerned about my well-being 1 2 3 4 5
18. I feel angry with my friends 1 2 3 4 5
19. I can count on my friend when I need to get something off my chest. 1 2 3 4 5
20. I trust my friends 1 2 3 4 5

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 21. My friends respect my feelings | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. My friends are irritated with me for no reason | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. I tell me friends about my problems and troubles. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. If my friends know something is bothering me, they ask me about it. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. I get upset a lot more than my friends know about | 1 2 3 4 5 |

APPENDIX B


YOUTH PEER COUNSELING SCHEME OF WORK

SESSION	DATE	TIME	TOPIC	METHODOLOGY	RESOURCES	VENUE	REMARKS
1.	24/1/09	2.00-4.00pm	Introduction to Counseling	Lecture/ Discussion	Bible/AAIM Handbook	Laiser Hill church	Objectives were achieved
2.	7/2/09	2.00-4.00pm	Dynamics of Counseling	Interview/Lecture/Discussion	Bible/AAIM Handbook	Ronkai Central Church	Session was successful
3.	14/2/09	3.00-5.00pm	Peer Counseling Concept	Lecture/Discussion	Bible/ AAIM Handbook	Rimpa Church	Mission achieved
4.	28/2/09	3.00-5.00pm	Peer Counseling Concept continued	Lecture/ Discussions	Bible/ AAIM Handbook pp.43-52.	Ongata Rongai East Church	Fairly covered
5.	7/3/09	3.00-5.00pm	Mission of SDA Church	Video show/ Discussions	Bible/Laptop/LCD Projector/GC DVD on Mission	Ronkai Central	Well received
6.	14/3/09	3.00-5.00pm	Jesus Righteousness	Lecture/Power point Presentation/ Discussions	Bible/Laptop/ LCD Projector	Nkoroi Church	Well taken


SESSION	DATE	TIME	TOPIC	METHODOLOGY	RESOURCES	VENUE	REMARKS
7.	2/5/09	3.00-5.00pm	The Supreme Sacrifice of Christ	Lecture/Power point presentation/Discussions	Bible/Laptop/LCD Projector	Ronkai Central Church	Covered successfully
8.	9/5/09	3.00-5.00pm	HIV/AIDS	Video show/Discussions	Bible/Laptop/LCD Projector/AAI M DVD	Ongata Rongai East Church	Session very successful youth fully participated
9.	16/5/09	3.00-5.00pm	Study Habits/Health Issues	Lecture/ Video show/ Discussions	Bible/Laptop/LCD Projector DVD by Prof. Veith	Laiser Hill Church	Well covered
10.	23/5/09	3.00-5.00pm	Food Gardening/ Starting Over	Video shows/Lecture/ Discussions	Bible/TV monitor/DVD on Food Gardening and Starting Over	Nkoroi Church	Well appreciated

APPENDIX C

Appendix C is an exact copy of the certificate awarded to the best youth peer counselor who was trained



ONGATA RONGAI DISTRICT SDA YOUTH



PEER COUNSELING TEAM

Certificate Of Completion

DORGLAS NYANDORO

This is to certify that.....

has successfully completed a peer counseling course in theory and practical

Training in the following units:

1. <i>Introduction to Counseling</i>	6. <i>HIV/AIDS/STIS</i>
2. <i>The Dynamics of Counseling</i>	7. <i>Drugs of Addiction</i>
3. <i>Peer Counseling Concept</i>	8. <i>Study Habits/Your Health your Choice</i>
4. <i>Mission statement of SDA church</i>	9. <i>Supreme Sacrifice of Jesus Christ</i>
5. <i>Jesus our Righteousness</i>	10. <i>Food gardening/ starting over</i>

_____ *[Signature]* _____ *[Signature]* _____ *[Signature]* _____ *6/6/2009*

ONGATA RONGAI DISTRICT 1ST ELDER SPONSOR TRAINING FACILITATOR DATE OF ISSUE

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_____ *Food gardening* DVD

_____ *Starting Over* 60 min. Gospel Communications, DVD.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: John Macharia Gichuiri

Marital Status: Married

Education

2006- 2009 MA Leadership Candidate Adventist University of Africa Nairobi

1990- 1994 BA Theology University of Eastern Africa, Baraton

1977- 1979 Primary One (PI) Certificate Meru Teachers Training College

1972- 1975 East African Certificate of Secondary Education (EACSE) Njiris
High School

1965-1971 Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) Kibutha Primary School

1994- 2009 Several Certificates of Attendance in professional growth seminars organized by Central Kenya Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, East African Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, East Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Adventist Aids International Ministries

Professional Performance

1979- 1993 Primary School Teacher in various schools in the Kenya

1994- 1997 District Pastor in three Pastoral Districts

1997- 1999 District Pastor/ Nairobi Station Director

1999- 2000 Central Kenya Conference Executive Secretary

2000- 2005 Central Kenya Conference Executive Director

2005- to date District Pastor Ongata Rongai

Hobbies

Jogging, Table tennis, site seeing, counseling young people, organizing people with similar experiences and challenges into groups to assist each other, making friends, adventure, initiating and experimenting new ideas, Bible study