

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Title: A LAITY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN THE CENTRAL ZULULAND PASTORAL DISTRICT, KWAZULU-NATAL CONFERENCE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Since its establishment in 1912, when Pastor James Moya was assigned to look after a few Voice of Prophecy students who had decided to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Central Zululand district has been gradually growing and yet losing a great number of its members due to lack of pastoral care. The very limited involvement of members in ministry has been a constant concern of the church leadership.

The Central Zululand district exists to further the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel (Revelation 14:6, 7):

1. To prepare God's people for the Kingdom.
2. To equip the laity to witness, to share the three angels' messages with their neighbors, friends, relatives, colleagues, bosses, etc.

The main focus and mission of the district has been, and still is, to enlarge God's Kingdom in the hearts of people in the territory through a balanced and integrated role of pastoral and lay ministry, proclaiming the three Angels' messages.

This paper is a strategic plan for empowering the laity for ministry. It is an integral part of the mission of the Central Zululand district, which aims at assimilating, nurturing, and assigning new members to ministries according to their spiritual gifts. Both the Old and the New Testaments provide us with models of how the laity can be involved. And the equipping and empowering of the laity to serve each is known to reduce apostasies while facilitating natural church growth.

Adventist University of Africa

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

by
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DEDICATION

First and foremost, this work is dedicated to my LORD and SAVIOUR, the giver and source of my life and strength. Secondly, it is dedicated to my wife, Thembisile, and to our three children: Lindokuhle, Sinethemba and Nomqhele.

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ALMIGHTY GOD for being the source of my strength and life and who enabled me to finish this work. Glory be to His name.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In order to introduce the paper, it is necessary to first give the background, a description of the district in which the intervention has been applied. The other parts of the formal introduction will follow.

Background to the Study

This study has been confined to the Central Zululand District. It is limited to the search for factors that had direct or indirect impact on pastoral work and church growth in the last five years, and to the formulation of a strategy, its implementation and evaluation.

In terms of its geographical setting, the Central Zululand pastoral district covers a large section of the rural region of uSuthu conjoined Mandlakazi. This is the largest district under one pastor in the Kwazulu Natal Free State Conference, South Africa.

The Central Zululand district has both faithful elderly members and enthusiastic young people, who are inadequately prepared when it comes to the “know how” of church duties. It is impossible for the pastor to be present in each church regularly, not to mention personal visitation of all church members. Consequently, the spiritual needs of church members are barely cared for. For instance, newly baptized members are neither nurtured on how to pray and study the Bible by themselves, nor trained to win and nurture others. Church duties are performed by a few dedicated members.

A large number of church members have been reluctant to participate in church activities because they felt inadequately prepared to carry out the assigned duties. This is illustrated by the haphazard keeping of church records. This has resulted in unfaithful

stewardship, shortage of church buildings for worship, a large number of dropouts, and a stagnant church growth.

Statement of the Problem

The Central Zululand District is made up of six organized churches and eleven companies, all under one pastor. A number of challenges have been associated with large pastoral districts. They have included the following:

1. Virtual impossibility to provide adequate pastoral care
2. High percentage of membership loss
3. Difficulty in involving a significant percentage of members in the different facets of the mission of the church
4. Shortage of church buildings
5. Lack of members' commitment to financial stewardship.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to study ways to prepare and empower lay leaders to assist in local church ministries and to retain the new members.

Methodology

The first task was to read literature on lay empowerment and training in order to have a view of the Old and New Testaments model as well as the view on the lay persons' role and training in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A description of the district is given, to help in the assessment of the life of the Central Zululand District for the last five years. This has meant to interview individuals, peruse church records, send questionnaires and gather information about the pastors who

were in charge of the district before, to find out how evangelism and nurturing new members were done and which areas needed most attention.

Following that, a program was designed to train and encourage lay people to serve. This training was specifically intended to teach lay persons how to preach, how to visit people, in addition to the ongoing educational programs on stewardship, church ministries, etc. After implementing the programme, the results were analysed and evaluated, and the project was written.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF THE LAYPERSON'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH

Biblical Models

To begin with, the aim of this chapter is to explore the biblical background for laity empowerment.

Abraham: A Builder of a Community of Faith

Numerous examples of laity involvement in ministry are cited in the Scriptures. For instance, God called Abram and made a covenant with him and his descendants. The covenant promised: "I . . . will multiply you exceedingly . . . and you shall be a father of many nations" (Gen 12:1; 17:2, 4). To be a father of nations also meant that in him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Accordingly, Abraham was capable of teaching his children after God's ways.

Moses, Jethro, and the Seventy Elders

According to Exodus 3, God called Moses to deliver his people from Egyptian oppression and to take it to a land flowing with milk and honey. But the work to deliver them was not to be done by Moses alone. Aaron was involved almost from the very beginning. As the Exodus started, Hur, Joshua and many others assisted him (see Exod 3:8; 4:14; 17:11-13).

Very soon, in the wilderness, the work for Moses became burdensome as he "sat to judge people and people stood before him from morning until evening" (Ex. 18:13-15).

This resulted in the plan strongly recommended by Jethro to Moses, known as Jethro's method.

Jethro advised Moses to find and train other leaders to assist in sharing the responsibilities (Exod 18:14-26). Moses followed the advice and was relieved, as other leaders helped him to carry the load. Thus Moses himself was strengthened and the people's needs were met.

According to Num 11: 16, 17, God also commanded Moses to elect seventy elders:

Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders. . . . I will come down. . . . I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.

Other Old Testament Leaders

God also called Amos, who was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but just a shepherd from Tekoa, to prophesy concerning Israel (Amos 1:1).

Furthermore, as an apt tool for equipping for the mission, wisdom had a pivotal role. It instructed the young and gave counsel to kings and local leaders. King Solomon, for instance, was famous of the wisdom God gave him. He ruled in relative peace (1 Kgs 4:29-34). His wisdom drew people from all walks of life. Queen of Sheba was the typical example of people who searched after wisdom (1 Kgs 10:1-13).

Generally, wisdom was associated with an elder who was regarded as a "father" to pupils whom he taught and counseled. Thus, Joseph was a "father" to Pharaoh (Gen 45:8). The difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom is that the latter is empowered by God for the purpose of fulfilling his mission. By observing, reflecting and being

instructed about the situation, the learner finds the appropriate approach to the local situation.¹

The above stories reveal how empowering leadership can shape the circumstances to their advantage and create and capture positive momentum in effecting change.²

John the Baptist's Model

John the Baptist was, in a way, an intertestamental prophet. He closes the Old Testament and opens the New Testament as the forerunner of Christ. He had to reach the masses. His responsibility was clearly known to him. He was neither the Messiah nor a prophet, but a voice in the wilderness to prepare the way for the coming King. But how was he going to fulfill such a tremendous task? His preaching focused on repentance, empowering, teaching, and multiplying disciples for Christ, while he himself disappeared from the scene. Seemingly, John realized that Christ was the head of the emerging Church, not himself (Luke 3:1-6; John 1:29).

Christ's Model

Christ's model, built on laity empowerment, has been the model for healthy church growth from the inception of the Christian Church. Christ laid the foundation for every believer to become a "priest," by calling fishermen, who had no formal training for ministerial work, and assigning to them the responsibility of being fishers of men. Thus, lay involvement in the ministry began from the very infancy of the Christian Church. Christ is

¹ Norman Shields, *Into all the World: What the Bible Teaches about Mission*. (Wales, UK: Bryntirion Press, 1998), 31-39.

² John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around you: How to Help Others Reach Their Full Potential*. (Mumbai, India: Magna Publishing, 1995), 13-15.

the model of this approach. Such model encouraged healing, preaching, teaching, learning and discipleship as integral parts of the movement.³

Later on, when Jesus fed the five thousand, he worked through his disciples (Matt 14:17-21). To these same apostles he committed the assignment of taking the Bread of Life to all nations (John 6:48, 51; cf. 1 Cor 11:26). Christ firmly established the timeless principles of turning the masses of population into responsible and serviceable members of the community of believers.⁴

Christ did not only call out twelve disciples to be his companions and trainees to turn the world upside down.⁵ He also sent the seventy and gave them power over demons (Luke 9:1; 10:17). When they came back and gave him the report of how demons obeyed them; Christ quickly reminded them how important would be to keep their names in the book of life (Luke 10: 19-20).

Jesus Christ, who was thinking of more workers for his field (Matt 9:37), shared with his disciples the work of caring for the multitude. Thus he encouraged them to pray to God to send willing people to harvest souls for Christ.

Before the Lord left his disciples, he commanded them to stay in Jerusalem until they were empowered with the Holy Spirit, so that they would be his witnesses in

³ David Handy, *The Idea of the Laity Movement from the very Beginning*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 65.

⁴ A. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve: Timeless Principles for Leadership Development*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1988), 97-112.

⁵ This phrase has been borrowed from Carlos Martin (see Carlos G. Martin, *Turning the World Upside Down*. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 116.

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the whole world. This empowerment was for the accomplishment of the great commission of making disciples among all ethnic groups.⁶

From the Pentecost experience, the Christian Church was born strong in fellowship, and enthusiastic regarding telling others about salvation in Christ (Acts 2:42, 47; 4:32, 33). Normally, there was no trained pastor to look after each early Christian congregation. But every small group of believers that developed had a lay leader to look after it. And, as Peter would write a few decades later, every Christian was to be considered as a member of the “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5, 9).

In harmony with the Great Commission, if truly and properly done, evangelism produces committed disciples and responsible members of Christ’s church. Every member has a part to play. By using all that has been given to us, all members can explore and find ways of meeting the needs of hurting and lost humanity. Such is the conviction that distinguishes the growing from the non-growing churches. The “lost must be found, there are hurting, lonely, dying people around us. Jesus is the answer.”⁷ And this was also the life and blood of the early church. The early church always kept before her members the importance of accomplishing the Great Commission as Christ had bid them: “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt 4:19; cf. Luke 5:10). He had also predicted that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the entire world for a witness unto all nations” (Matt 24:14). He expected the empowered disciples to witness in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and even in the remotest parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

⁶Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church: Unleashing the Awesome Power of Lay Ministry*. (Fallbrook, California: Hart Research Center, 1993), 15.

⁷C. Wayne Zunkel, *The Church Growth under Fire: Help!* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Pr, 1987).

The New Testament church began as a lay movement. Except for the apostles, almost all of its leaders were lay people without any ministerial training. So, as Christ who was sent (Luke 4:43; Matt.10:40; 15:24; John 3:17; 5:36), he in turn called disciples, trained and sent them to the world. Basically, this is our pattern in doing ministry. It was due to this model and concept of every believer a minister that we find ordinary members gossiping the gospel as they scattered to escape persecution (Acts 8:4).

Paul's Model

Before the end of his life the apostle Paul testified of the fact that the gospel had been “preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Col 1:23). What was the secret? Paul arranged for elders to lead the flock in every church that he raised. He was normally assisted by a team of associates, often young people whom he trained and sent to work. He instructed Timothy to teach men who, in turn, would be able to teach others (2 Tim 2:2). Thus, the Christian army would greatly and rapidly multiply. Similarly, the number of the lay ministers who “have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints” increased (1Cor 16:15, 16; Phil 4:22). It was such a group that Paul expected that they “comfort each other and edify one another” (1 Thes 5:11). Truly, the overriding truth in Paul's model regarding the church is the fact that she is the body, a living organism. All members exist in a state of interdependence. Knowing that the Holy Spirit gave spiritual gifts to believers for the welfare and the ministry of the church (1 Cor.12 & 14; Eph 4:8-12; Rom 12), Paul prepared local people to teach, preach, minister to the poor, deal with problems and govern the affairs of the church. This enabled Paul and his companions to establish and hand over many churches to local Christian leadership to minister Holy Communion without waiting

for him to come again.⁸ While Paul uses various metaphors to describe his parental relationship with the church in Corinth, he treated them, and continued urging them to act, as grown up children, independently of him. He was greatly concerned that members were properly cared and nurtured for.⁹ And the church services were conducted in an orderly way even in his absence. Such model continues to be key to the successful doing of ministry.¹⁰

Other Biblical Models

The very idea of laity serving the church is as old as the Christian Church. Before there was a pastor there was the *laos*, the people of God. Biblically, the laity, the *laos* of God, are the ministers of Christ. The apostle's responsibility was essentially to preach the gospel, and then equip the (lay) ministers (Eph 4:11, 12).

Similarly, the idea of the small group is as old as the Christian Church. The book of Acts records that after Jesus' death, his apostles gathered in an "upper room." Since then, house groups have virtually always existed. They will still prosper where resources are scarce and Christianity is prohibited. Even where Christianity is not discouraged, house groups have proven to be effective in producing well nurtured and devoted members of the church. Clearly, small groups and cottage meetings have been part of the church. Recently, they are growing in numbers.

⁸ Roger S Greenway, *Go and Make Disciples: An Introduction to Christian Mission* (Phillipsburg: New Jersey: P&P Publishing, 1999), 64.

⁹ Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academy, 2004), 36.

¹⁰ Sahlin Monte, *Adventist Congregations Today: New Evidence for Equipping Healthy Churches*. (Lincoln: Creative Ministry, 2003), 80, 81.

Small groups are reflective of God’s original intent for his church. For instance, God is a relational God. In the beginning, the sacred pages tell us that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit harmoniously created the heavens and the earth. Then, the family unit was the first and most important small group ordained by God. Even today, the family is still the backbone of society, world wide.

The House Church

Many times the Scriptures refer to a group of believers meeting in a certain house, sharing bread and the word of the Lord (Acts 1:12-15; 2: 46; 4:31; 5:42; 12:10-17; Rom 16:19; Phil 1:2; Col 4:15). It was a necessity for the fledgling church to love and support each other in a world which was hostile to Christianity.¹¹

“The church needed the ‘house church’ for its survival. There were periods of intense persecution for the first few centuries after Christ, so the early church was often not able to meet openly, nor were they allowed to purchase large buildings for gathering. . . . Somehow (to our surprise) the church was able to multiply without large buildings, mass meetings, and a plethora of ‘how to’ books!”¹²

According to Burrill, the Old Testament model was centered around the gathering of a people in one place, while the New Testament model was centered around dispersion to all [people]. Therefore, the New Testament role of clergy is centered around training

¹¹Steve Daily, *Adventism for a New Generation*. (Portland, UK: Better Living, 1994), 115.

¹²Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups: A Practical Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 18-19.

God's people to minister so they can go everywhere and evangelize. It freed the resources of the church for its mission function.¹³

Historical Foundations of the Role of the Laity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

As we look at the historical background of the Adventist laity involvement in ministry, we come across two fundamental facts which prompted those pioneers who “had no money, no higher education, yet strode in faith to pitch tents and win souls.”¹⁴ First, the Advent movement, in its beliefs and practices, had embraced the concept of every believer a minister. Second, for several decades, Adventist pastors were normally pastor–evangelists.

In this section we will briefly look at the role of lay people in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the need to restore the pastor-evangelist role of the Adventist minister.¹⁵

The answer Starr gave to the question of what kept Adventists growing illustrates this point. He said “we have no settled pastors. Our churches are taught largely to take care of themselves, while nearly all our ministers work as evangelists in new fields.” The same answer was given by then General Conference president, in March 1912, as he said: “we have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors, but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelistic work, and our brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination; for when we cease our forward movement work and begin to settle over churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our

¹³Russell Burrill, Class notes, CHMN 639 Church Growth and the Equipping Pastor, Solusi University, February, 2008.

¹⁴Arthur W Spalding, *Footprints of the Pioneers* (Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1947), 11, 12.

¹⁵Rex D. Edwards, *Every Believer a Minister* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1995), 70-71, 74, 80.

churches will begin to weaken, and lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized and our work will be on a retreat.”¹⁶

Indeed, equipping regular church members to be ministers by teaching them to work for God immediately as they joined the church is the greatest help a pastor could give.

The failure to firmly grasp the concept of *every believer a minister* has been aptly pointed out by Lawrence O. Richards and Gilbert R. Martin as the major cause of the modern church losing its salty flavor, thus failing to reach the world with the gospel.¹⁷

The finishing of the work does not solely depend on the pastor preaching from the pulpit but also on the church members disseminating the life-changing message to the world. This is described by some as lifestyle evangelism.¹⁸ Its core value is equipping the saints to be effective witnesses for the Lord Jesus in the normal context of their everyday lives, through the formal and casual relationship in which they are involved.

As the charge to invite people to come is given to the entire church, thus the advancement of the work will be the result of efforts of all members. Ellen White underlines this fact as she writes: “Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfill this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Kurt W. Johnson, *Small Groups for the End-Time* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 25.

¹⁷ Lawrence O. Richards and Gilbert R. Martin, *Lay Ministry: Empowering the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 13.

¹⁸ Jim Petersen, *Evangelism as a Lifestyle: Reaching into Your World with the Gospel* (Singapore: NavPress, 1980), 22.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1911), 110.

From its infancy, the Advent Movement has been mission driven.²⁰ Our movement started with scattered members who rarely heard a minister speak, but they survived. Their survival can be entirely traced to their aggressive engagement in missionary work as they searched for truth and shared what they knew. Even our organizational structure was set up only to facilitate the accomplishment of the mission.²¹ It was designed for the support of the church planting pastors while “local churches were entrusted to local, unpaid lay elders.”²² Church planting helped keep churches alive. And the spirit of church planting will keep Adventist churches spiritually alive today.

Early Adventist pioneers adopted the Methodist’s plan of a “circuit pastor.” This required the minister to be a trainer and an equipper of his church members.²³

Ellen White also emphasized the point that the most important work of the pastor is to educate members: “In laboring where there are already some in the faith, the minister should at first seek not so much to convert unbelievers, as to train the church- members for acceptable co-operation.”²⁴

The importance of instructing new members by word and deed is also depicted in the following words:

Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and encouraged. Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible

²⁰William A. Spicer, *Pioneer Days of the Advent Movement: With Notes on Pioneer Workers and Early Experiences* (Takoma Park, Washington, DC: Review and Herald, n.d.), 121.

²¹ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 17th ed. (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 101.

²² Russell Burrill, *Rekindling a Lost Passion: Recreating a Church Planting Movement*. (Fallbrook, California: Hart Research Center, 1999), 50.

²³ Roger S. Green, *The Pastor–Evangelist: Preacher, Model and Mobilizer for Church Growth* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian Reformed, 1987), 17.

²⁴ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1945), 196.

readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath-school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts.

The responsibility lies also in the church to teach and equip its members for the service to God and humankind. “God expects His church to discipline and fit its members for the work of enlightening the world. An education should be given that would result in furnishing hundreds who would put out to the exchangers valuable talents.”²⁵

The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world.²⁶

Time is short, and our forces must be organized to do a larger work. . . Let there be in every church, well-organized companies of workers to labor in the vicinity of that church. . . . In every city there should be a corps of organized, well-disciplined workers; not merely one or two, but scores should be set to work. . . . The church of Christ on earth was organized for missionary purposes, and the Lord desires to see the entire church devising ways and means whereby high and low, rich and poor, may hear the message of truth. . . . If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. . . . Well-organized work must be done in the church, that its members may understand how to impart the light to others and thus strengthen their own faith and increase their knowledge. As they impart that which they have received from God, they will be confirmed in the faith. A working church is a living church.²⁷

The reason why the church did not languish when Paul left, after all the hard work, was the thorough and careful training of new converts. This is also illustrated in the work

²⁵Ibid., 58.

²⁶Ibid., 9.

²⁷Ibid., 72, 73.

of John Wesley. He systematically formed small groups of believers after he preached. The number of his followers increased as new converts were carefully nurtured in these small groups.

“Until the men and women comprising our church membership rally to the work and unite their efforts with those of ministers and church officers, the work of God on this earth can never be finished.”²⁸

Many of our churches are fruitless and dead, the right way to keep them alive is through letting them work. Ellen G. White emphasizes this point: Let him seek to keep the church alive by teaching its members how to labor with him for the conversion of sinners. This is good generalship; and the result will be found far better than if he should seek to perform the work alone.²⁹

The apostolic pattern of evangelism has been further described, by Roy Allan Anderson, as the active mutual involvement of the pastor and the church in evangelism. In this instance, the entire church becomes the center of evangelism. Anderson has rightly observed that such an ideal would yield much of the desired fruit, “mighty evangelistic results will be seen when the preacher and the church get on fire. Every church, a real center of soul-winning evangelism and every pastor a real pastor-evangelist.”³⁰ The idea agrees with the twofold role of the pastor.

²⁸ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:117.

²⁹ Ellen White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 357.

³⁰ Anderson, Roy Allan. *The Shepherd – Evangelist* (Washington, D C: Review and Herald, 1950), 27; see also Roger S. Greenway, ed., *The Pastor-Evangelist: Preacher, Model and Mobilizer for Church Growth*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian, 1987); Melvin J. Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do it Alone?: A Model for Preparing Lay People for Lay Pastoring* (Ventura, California: Regal, 1987), 68.

Likewise, while members view the major function of the pastor as to plan and conduct worship, teaching people faith and visiting, counseling and helping people; they also indicate that praying and being role model is the one of the pastors role.³¹

In a similar vein, James Garlow notes: “It matters to the pastor as a person how spiritual life is developing and being modeled for the church and how members experience it. If it goes well, the pastor feels well. If the members suffer, the pastor suffers.”³² The implication is that the fire must be kindled first in the heart of the pastor. Then the whole church that comes into contact with him in nurturing ministry will be in flames. And this is a call for a pastor to wisely and responsibly provide the experiences that will involve the whole church in an effective Christian witness.³³

This “pastor-congregation relationship” ideal is undoubtedly placing the responsibility of transforming the church by lifestyle on the pastor as the leader of the church. It also realigns the coordinated efforts of the entire church towards reaching out to the world as the focal point of its mission.³⁴

Such an idea is also expressed by some who see not the church but the world as “the object of the church’s mission.” All the people of God are agents of the ministry of the church. The ordained members are called not to do the work of the church for the people, but to train and direct the people’s efforts in implementation. Similarly, Rex Edwards

³¹ Monte Sahlin, *Adventist Congregations Today* (Lincoln, NE: Creative Ministry, 2003), 93-94.

³² James L. Garlow. *Partners in Ministry: Laity and Pastors Working Together* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1981), 75-80.

³³ Alvin J. Lindgren, *Foundations for Purposeful Church Administration* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1965), 181.

³⁴ Monte Sahlin, *Adventist Congregations Today: New Evidence for Equipping Healthy Churches* (Lincoln, NE: Creative Ministry, 2003), 24.

asserts that the unbelief in the calling of every believer into the ministry has been the sole cause of retarding the progress of God's cause.

Seeing the problem of membership outgrowing the pastors, Harold Peter proposes the training of lay pastors and lay evangelists to work closely with the district ministerial directors.³⁵ This implies the training of the pastor and the lay pastor-evangelist to be prepared to carry on such enormous task with understanding.

Although Oosterwal agrees, and further implores the church "to prepare pastors mentally, theologically, and practically to see their role as equippers of laity for its work of ministry and building of the church (Eph 4:11, 12)," he also emphasizes the spontaneous evangelism, as it has been and still is a most instrumental factor that prepares people to join the Adventist Church. He is not for the idea that the church members should be trained in order to assist the pastor. So, rather than an organized program of evangelism, Oosterwal emphasizes the spontaneous contact with friends and fellow workers that can lead some of them to join the church, and that the spiritual gifts of the church member should be greatly utilized in order for the church to grow.³⁶ It is true that most people come into the church through discipling by responsible members of Christ's church.³⁷

The ministry of reconciliation, as undertaken by the laity [the people of God (*laos*)], reaches into homes, offices, classrooms, playgrounds, factories, business, schools and wherever people are working, struggling, deciding, hurting and hoping.³⁸ While the church

³⁵Harold E. Peters, "Development of a Lay Pastorate in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Eastern Africa," *Solusi Journal of Theology*, 1990,, 8-12.

³⁶Gottfried Oosterwal, *Patterns of SDA Church Growth in America* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1976), 70-73, 97-104.

³⁷ Wayne C. Zunkel, *The Church Growth Under Fire!* (Scottsdale, UK: Herald Press, 1987),62-63.

³⁸N. Patrick Murrance, *The Calling of Laity* (Christ Church, KN:. 199,1, 85.

is attempting to provide practical answers and solutions to people's problems, the church should also help them find meaning in life in a world fraught with suffering and social disharmony.³⁹

Among the challenges faced are the poverty and unemployment in Southern Africa, together with the situation of street children, many of them male and black. They come from poor living conditions at home, which result in many disadvantages. To this, many add parental loss through death or abandonment, conflict, family tensions and/or housing shortage. These challenges directly or indirectly affect the way the church does its evangelism. And it can rightly be said that "the church cannot escape culture in which it is set. It has to relate to it if it is to exist and witness at all." Evidently, growing churches intentionally incorporate community service in their plans for outreach and evangelism.⁴⁰ This requires a sermon that is preached in the right context by which the present hearers may identify themselves within the Story of salvation. The story which stretched from creation to Abraham. From Abraham to David, through Christ to Paul, God's purpose was to bring blessing to all nations to all life.⁴¹

In 1922, the Home Missionary Department of the SDA General Conference produced a small textbook entitled *The Art of Giving Bible Studies*. Since then, "local pastors and missionary leaders conducted hundreds of classes based on this text."

³⁹Zebon Masukume Ncube, "Ancestral Beliefs and Practices: Program for Developing Christian Faith among Adventists in Zimbabwe," DMin Project, Andrews University, 1988, 151.

⁴⁰John M. De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 45.

⁴¹Roger E. Van Harm, *Preacher, Can You Hear Us Listening!* (Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans, 2005), 48.

Furthermore, in 1930, at the General Conference Fall Council, the importance of working hand in hand of pastor and laity in evangelistic endeavors was greatly emphasized. As a result, the *Lay Preachers' Manual*⁴² was published, followed by the *Lay Preachers' Magazine*, in 1937.⁴³

In addition, Christ-centered material was published in 1951, in the form of a training course entitled *Lift Him Up*.⁴⁴

In harmony with the counsel of E. G. White, a decision was made to assign each member a specific territory in which to work. And ever since the concept of territorial assignments has been embraced in different Divisions around the world. The truth of God is to be scattered by all who claim to be disciples of Christ. It must be sown besides all waters. In this work, our church members are to join hands with our workers and unite in one great missionary endeavor. In this respect, the General Conference Session of 1954 took the following action:

We Recommend, that the plan to unify the entire world field in greater lay evangelism and to assure uniformity of reports be adopted as follows:
1. '120' members. Members of the church may be commissioned as members of the '120' who attain the following four objectives: have completed the Training Light Bearers or the Christ-Centered Evangelism course. Actively participate in one or more church missionary activities such as giving Bible studies, holding neighborhood cottage meetings, conducting branch Sabbath schools and follow up interests created by Bible correspondence school, Dorcas welfare, radio, telecasts, literature contacts, etcetera. Are instrumental in winning at least one person to the church

⁴²General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Lay Preacher's Manual: Instructions in the Principles and Methods of Public Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1934), 6.

⁴³R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant: Denominational History Text Book of Seventh-day Adventist College Classes* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 547, 548.

⁴⁴General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Lift Him Up: A Training Course in Christ-Centered Lay Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1951).

during the two preceding years. Are recommended by the board and conference.⁴⁵

Similarly, the fifty-sixth General Conference session in Utrecht, Netherlands (1995), stressed the same truth by the survey which indicated that the priority funding for evangelism and mission should be devoted to training lay members for soul winning both globally and locally.⁴⁶ Basically, there have been some attempts by the world church to set viable programs by which a large number of members make witnessing their way of life.

However, the strategy of *every believer a minister* should go farther than a concept. It should articulate and shape the way the church allocates her resources. If mobilized for evangelism, church members direct their energy in the right direction, great change will happen within the church. “The difference between non growing and growing churches is the conviction on the latter that lost people must be found, that there are hurting, lonely, dying people around us and that Jesus Christ is the answer.”⁴⁷

While God, through the Holy Spirit, convinces and leads the heart to repentance, we too have a part to play to prepare the soil. This is our responsibility (1Cor 3:6).

⁴⁵ Ralph S Watts, “Lay Evangelism: Highlights of the General Conference Session,” *African Division Outlook*, vol. 2, No.18, 1 October 1954, 1-7.

⁴⁶ McBride Duane, “GC Delegates Share Their Vision for the Church’s Future,” *Adventist Review*, 25 July 1996, 18-21.

⁴⁷ Zunkel, 165.

CHAPTER 3
THE ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE
ZULULAND DISTRICT

Geographical Setting of the District

Chapter 2 gives a descriptive biblical and historical background of laity empowerment in the Christian Church in general, and in the Adventist Church in particular. Chapter 3 now focuses on the initial step of the process of strategy formulation: community and church analysis.

Community analysis is undertaken mainly to ferret out information useful for the initial step of establishing the program. According to Donald McGavran, “All thinking about the church should be done against the graph of church growth, because when done without exact knowledge of how the church has and has not grown, it is likely to find itself in error.”⁴⁸

If we are to reach out to people where they are, we have to take time to understand them. The Master teacher aptly uses the fishing analogy to describe the method of reaching out for people where they are. Just like fishing we have to have a strategy. And also, as a recipient of the Adventist message the community furnishes us with the data essential for reaching out to it. On the other hand, the knowledge of how the church has and has not grown helps us to strategically plan for programs which will catalyze church growth.

⁴⁸ Donald McGavran, and C. Peter Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*. 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 109.

Central Zululand, with the population estimated at 964,005, in 142,541 households, is 25.4 per cent urban and 74.6 per cent rural.⁴⁹ More than half of the area is under the jurisdiction of traditional authorities while the remainder is divided between commercially-owned farms and conservation areas.

The two main towns in the Zululand District are Ulundi and Nongoma. The latter is a residential area with limited services and facilities and few employment opportunities. As a result, many of its residents move to Johannesburg or Durban.

The introduction of Adventism in Zululand was through immigrant workers in mines or farms. Those workers, once they accepted the Advent message, passed it on to their own families. The Similane family is among the first families which accepted Adventism in this manner.⁵⁰ Since then, the means by which Adventism is introduced has slightly changed, yet the ratio of Adventists compared to the total population remains the same.

According to the International Religious Freedom report released in 2006, 80 per cent of the district population belonged to the Christian faith and 4 per cent to other religions, such as Hinduism (2%), Islam (1.5%), Judaism (0.2%), and traditional African beliefs (0.3%). Approximately 16 per cent of the population of the whole country indicated that it belonged to no particular religion, or declined to indicate an affiliation.⁵¹ The 10 million members of 4,000 African independent churches belong mostly to Zionist or Apostolic churches and some Pentecostal branches. The percentage per church appears in Table 1.

⁴⁹ Zululand District Integrated Development Program (IDP), Ulundi: 2006, 11-23.

⁵⁰ E. Simelane, *Early Adventism in Zululand: An interview with E. Simelane, a son of one of the forerunners of Adventism in the area*, interviewed at Nongoma on 15 August 2006.

⁵¹ Adrian Hastings, *A World History of Christianity*, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 1221. 244.

Table 1: Churches membership

<i>Church</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Christians</i>
Zionist	11.1
Roman Catholic	7.1 (approximately)
Dutch Reformed	6-7
Methodist	6.8
Anglican	3.8
Lutheran	2.5
Presbyterian	1.9
Baptist	1.5
Congregational	1.1

Source: "International Religious Freedom Report 2006," [http:// www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/13325. htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/13325.htm) (accessed 26 December 2008).

The Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assembly of God, and the Full Gospel Church are the largest traditional Pentecostal churches. Unlike other churches, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa had enjoyed some privileges and advantages. For quite a long time it has been taken as the state church. Thus, it grew rapidly in many areas. It is not surprising that Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses are not even mentioned on the list. They have been in the minority, wherever present. African Christian Churches are on top, due to socio-political history. Most of the African-initiated, independent or indigenous churches, resulted from a process of acculturation between traditional African beliefs and Protestant Christianity and have split from their present western churches.

Adventism came after other denominations, such as the Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, and Lutheran Churches, had already made their presence felt by securing themselves some members from the black community. Christianity, with its values held so dear by westerners, was perceived by indigenous people as an intrusion into traditional religious values. For instance, to accept Christianity meant to be ostracized from the family since one had to abandon one's conventional family values. After conversion, one had to choose between African rituals and a Christian lifestyle. It was worse with Seventh-day Adventists, since it was perceived that Adventism was demanding a complete transformation of lifestyle. The resistance to Christianity, by blacks, was also aggravated by the then prevailing socio-political situation in South Africa.⁵²

To be accepted by the black community, the missionary had to use health and education services. For instance, at Nongoma, Dr. Haupt secured a place for surgery, which also served as the place of meeting for worshippers. The same happened at Babanango, where Dr. Le Roux performed surgeries and also run a mobile medical service. Each time he started his service he began with a short devotional and the distribution of truth-filled tracts. As a result, thanks to the efforts of his nurse by the name of Hilder, a group of believers started to worship at Dr. Le Roux's home and continued even after he left Babanango.

Presently, the trend has been somehow altered. There is a great number of those who once were Christians, but apparently joined either African-initiated churches or chose not to affiliate to any denomination.

⁵² De Gruchy, 73-87.

The Adventist Church in the Zululand District

Like any other organization, in order to serve most effectively, one must first have a clear concept of what the church is, what it is to accomplish, and what resources are available fulfill the mission of the church. The following section is about the church and its resources that contribute to the success of the church in accomplishing its objectives.

Church Membership and Attendance

The present church membership in the district is 712. There are 1,200 Sabbath School members. The sporadic attendance average per week during the past six months of 2006 was hardly 1,000 persons at Sabbath School, and 1,123 at the worship service. The weekly average of community visitors attending services in the past year was 132. The age categories of members attending are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Members in attendance

Age of members	Non attending	Attending
0-4		23
4-13	8	150
14-17	17	39
18-20	13	26
males 21-44	29	49
females 21-44	12	155
males 45-64	20	36
females 45-64	13	54
males 65-over	6	27
females 65-over	4	31
Total	122	590

The membership growth in my district is shown in Table3. It should be noted that membership in each local church is the number of members on the official list. There is a different number, which counts those adults who attend regularly, whether they are on the official list or not. Unfortunately, some new members are added while not removing inactive members from the list. Conference statistics often do not tally to this list.

Table 3. Membership growth for years 2001-2006

Churches	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Ulundi	217	229	243	269	361	351
Nongoma	113	119	144	148	175	177
Ekukhanyeni	38	43	45	51	62	70
Nkonjen	27	28	28	28	34	34
Vimbisikhala	25	27	27	27	32	25
Maphophoma	20	20		20	20	25
Total	440	466	507	543	689	682

Table 4 shows the number of people who joined the church by baptism or profession of faith, and the number that dropped out, from 2001 through 2005. The total number of baptisms for the past five years was 318.

Table 4. Accessions and dropouts in the Zululand district

Year	Baptisms/ Prof. of faith	Apostasies /missing	Transfers	Deaths	Gain or Loss	Percent
2001	33	22	5	2	4	12.12
2002	63	29	4	5	25	39.68
2003	41	31	8	7	-5	-12.19
2004	36	14	26	4	-12	-36.36
2005	46	20	15	6	-4	- 8.69
2008	71	32	20	9	10	14.08

A careful look at the accessions and dropouts in the Zululand District in 2001-2005 (Table 4) shows that 287 people came in, and 259 persons left. These figures indicate the urgent need to establish and implement a plan that will help in assimilation and discipling of new members. The researcher has painstakingly secured the above information which was not readily available since the records were hardly kept properly.

Other information about church members: 23 per cent live within five miles of the church; 67 per cent are scattered all over the district; and 10% come on weekends for they work far away. These use the school classrooms to worship.

The percentage of church members who have a non-Adventist spouse is 63. The other 27 per cent are either in a totally Adventist family or are single members in the church.

Education in the District

The educational status of members in the Zululand district is given in table 5.

Table 5. Educational level of members of the Zululand district

<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>N</i>
No. of formal education	279
Below a high school diploma	234
High school diploma	98
Attended college	71
College graduate	23

From 2001 through 2005 the average attendance of church members' children in the church school was 34. Of the total church district's school-age children (K-16), 10 percent attend SDA schools. Since my district operates a church school, the district as a whole emphasizes Christian education and is actively involved in promoting Christian education, especially the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education. Table 6 shows the growing school enrollment, which includes children of church members.

Thus, adequate provisions need to be made to ensure a Christian education for every elementary age child in our church. Although our school has no written philosophy which reflects the uniqueness of Seventh-day Adventist education; our church is well aware of the Christian philosophy and objectives held by our school. There is no plan yet of financial assistance for young people who otherwise could not enjoy a Christian education. Some of our church members are involved in the financial support of our church school.

Sabbath School

Sabbath Schools are effectively organized. However, most of our Sabbath Schools are conducted in the classrooms or in the open air. There are only three church buildings in the entire district. With exceptions, our Sabbath Schools provide good learning opportunities for all ages. At the moment, there is a need of an organized method for regular visitation of all Sabbath School members.

Regular Sabbath school classes provide for member discussion. While the church has an effective training program for Sabbath School workers, attendance to the weekly training meetings is very poor. In some places, teacher training no longer takes place. Generally, members show positive interest in the lesson and in mission reports. Furthermore, our Sabbath School subscribes to the mission spotlight program.

Most of my churches are meaningfully involved in Sabbath School evangelism and follow-up. Our church usually conducts effective branch Sabbath Schools and has established a careful follow-up program in connection with these branch Sabbath School. We usually conduct an annual Vacation Bible school program and a follow-up program afterwards.

Physical Facilities

Church

One of our church building is attractively landscaped and maintained in good condition, yet incomplete. Others are in fair condition, needing some repairs and repainting, inside and out.

Though our churches are not equipped with heating or air conditioning, we have done all we can to make our churches representative places of worship. Of course, if our churches are to be representative in this community, we must have new facilities. Presently, the standing committee for building and maintenance is working hard to set things in place and to erect new buildings in Nongoma and Ulundi.

School

The church school is readily accessible to the parents of all elementary school-age children. The plant and grounds are attractive and the school has adequate playground area. Although we have not secured an appropriate sign to identify the school; the school is well known by the community. Often the entire church is encouraged to participate in the maintenance and operation of the school plant. Consequently, the school environment and facility are conducive to a productive learning experience. The church school plant meets or exceeds all safety codes. We still have the challenge of making our school facilities friendly to people with disabilities.

Community Service Center

Although the church in the district does not have its own Community Service Center, it participates in effective community services. Currently, plans are in place to build

a community center. Envisaged is a center with sufficient space for members to work effectively, sufficient space for community gatherings, such as cooking schools, and storage space. It will be attractive, clean and well maintained, and properly identified with an appropriate sign. The vision is to have a center that has adequate equipment for effective outreach.

Church Finances

Tithe

Generally, the congregation has a good understanding of tithing and its use. However, due to lack of regular reporting of tithe income in many congregations, it is not easy to assess the progress of members' faithfulness. If tithe income reports would have been regularly made to the congregation, as tithe receipts are issued promptly by the treasurer, or tithing would had been featured at least once a year by the pastor, the tithing trend would have been different. Truly, tithing is explained as a biblical obligation for church members. Tithing is also a test for holding church office.

Table 7 shows the tithe for the years 2001 through 2005. The tithe income was uneven through the years. Some congregations seem to not return their tithe. This is partly due to the lack of a skilled accountant. As a result, members put the money under pillows until someone could help, or they send their tithes to the mother churches. This is especially evident in the Bethany and Ceza companies.

The total tithe for 2006 was 497,310.35, an increase over 2005. All tithe sums are expressed in South African rands.

Table 7. Tithe in the District, 2001-2005

Church	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Babanango	327.65	903.20	934.00	1 591.00	1 305.00
Denge					5 834.10
Ekukhanyeni	4 991.00	5 492.52	2 448.50	13 579.00	12 220.76
Melmoth			8 707.00	17 244.95	11 666.23
Manekwane	3 927.50	0.00	4 890.50	0.00	36 327.40
Maphophoma	5 175.27	10 190.95	13 728.50	21 826.97	30 825.65
Mpungamhlophe	500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	911.35
Njoko	0.00	2 011.00	0.00	1 532.69	2 196.80
Nkandla	2 381.40	0.00	0.00	6 007.10	2 230.00
Nkonjeni	6 992.74	11 276.77	12 832.00	20 256.88	6 391.37
Nongoma	16 873.90	23 028.90	14 202.79	23 336.10	27 024.00
Ogedleni	9 157.47	17 009.40	15 976.63	19 458.56	7 734.10
Sovane	6 256.50	5 030.10	425.60	3 716.20	4 791.33
Ulundi	95 465.53	93 499.80	100 939.61	104 360.85	90 706.19
Vimbisikhala	2 391.68	6 859.22	5 387.40	6 171.30	0.00
Grand Total	154 440.64	81 802.06	783 799.03	239 081.60	235 372.95

The percentage of tithe-paying members was 51% in 2001, 59% in 2002, 65% in 2003, and 60% in 2005. These percentages reflect the district as a whole, but there were churches which had 70 per cent of the members returning regular tithe. Some, from rural areas, are very poor and are living on government grants. Understandably, because of South

Africa's past history, most church members in the district are unemployed. And those who are farming still earn much less than their white neighbors. The dependence syndrome still dominates in some churches. Members were not taught how to return tithe because their Adventist bosses used to deduct the tithe from their salaries. They even received food as a portion of their salaries.

The Zululand District is considered a poverty-stricken area. The situation had been further worsened by the suddenly change of government, which brought many opportunities and threats to the church. For instance, after the 1994 election many people moved from rural to urban areas. As elsewhere in South Africa, the Zululand District has a high percentage of illiterate people, and of young adults with low educational qualifications. The shift of political power did not just cause unrest but also a great movement of civil workers from Ulundi to Petermaritzburg, where the Parliament is operating today.

Strategies Used During the Past Five Years

Even if there was no specific or strategic plan of evangelism or church growth for the last five years, the church gradually grew due to people coming in contact with Adventist relatives.

In some instances, there was a school of lay evangelism almost for three months. The results were very impressive. However, as soon the training stopped church members went back to their routine of not evangelizing.

District Pastors between 1996 and 2005

From 1995 to 2004 the district was under the direction of one experienced pastor, teacher and administrator who led and oversaw the progress of the work in the district.

During that period, one evangelistic campaign was conducted, which resulted in the formation of the Denge Company. From 2004 until now the author has been a pastor there.

CHAPTER 4

PROGRAMM DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

In this chapter we look at how the strategic plans for laity empowerment were prepared, implemented and evaluated. The actual implementation of the strategic plan started in 2007 and finished in 2008. It started by preparation.

Preparation

Realizing that programs like this one are definitely partnerships, the researcher began by enlisting the entire membership through revival and planning meetings. The researcher made sure that the idea was first sold to elders and leaders of the various churches, as they are key links in a chain of laity empowerment.

Such preparation required the meeting with the various church boards and strategic committees, under the direction of the pastor, to make some plans for the organization and for carrying out the program in the churches. It began by the spiritual preparation of the churches, which lasted almost twelve months.

Vision and Mission

The preparation began by stating the vision of the district so that everyone would have a mental picture of what it is striving to become. The vision was to become a loving and caring people of God, proclaiming the everlasting gospel in the context of the Three Angels' Messages, and leading people to a redemptive relationship with Christ and perfect obedience to him while waiting for his soon return.

In line with the goals of the world church, the district promotes quality of personal and church life, fosters church unity, promotes church growth, and addresses the HIV/AIDS crisis.

The mission is to lead people to a saving relationship with Christ and to become serviceable members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. The following are *key elements* of our mission:

1. To grow closer to Christ through personal Bible study, prayer, meditation and individual commitment.
2. To uphold Christ before all within the church--adults, youth, and children-- through worship, instruction, fellowship and personal concern.
3. To present Christ to the people of the Central Zululand District and surroundings, through community service and personal witness.
4. To carry Christ to the world through prayer, financial contributions, and personal service.

The *core values*, on which this vision and mission stand, are fellowship, commitment, involvement, and service.

Strategic Focus Areas

This section of the thesis provides details on the strategic focus areas for the Zululand District. The strategic focus areas were four:

1. To train lay preachers to effectively prepare and deliver spirit-filled biblical sermons,
2. To set up an ongoing stewardship training,
3. To promote a visitation program,

4. To instruct new converts on the Christian lifestyle.

The following tables show the plan to meet the objectives in each strategic area.

Table 8. TRAINING PREACHERS EFFECTIVELY

ACTION PLAN	PERSON RESPONSIBLE/METHOD/TIME
<p>To call upon all lay preachers to make a total commitment to studying God's Word and obeying what the Lord has revealed to us in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.</p> <p>To encourage lay preachers to take time praying for God's guidance in their life, and for discernment on spiritual matters.</p>	<p>To encourage them to buy Ellen G. White books. To encourage them to read through the whole Bible, chapter by chapter. To help them build a good preachers' library.</p> <p>To help them find God's will for their lives by studying and meditating on God's Word, by introducing and letting them have the principles of <i>How to Get the Most out of Bible Study</i>, by Leo van Dolson.</p>
<p>To annually organize and run a lay preachers's seminar course.</p>	<p>To run a 15-hour preachers' seminar in August. To invite the Conference Personal Ministries Director for the training of lay preachers. And to give them a Certificate of Achievement towards the end of the seminar.</p>

Table 9. STEWARDSHIP TRAINING

ACTION PLAN	PERSON RESPONSIBLE/METHOD/TIME
Inculcate stewardship values.	Promote and make available children’s envelopes Leaders promote the Stewardship “honour” for the Adventurers classes. Promote and make available stewardship materials to local church.
Clarify/encourage stewardship principles	By using principles from nature to teach stewardship principles By running stewardship seminars on family finance By giving a 10-minute stewardship promotion every Sabbath
Embark on large-scale membership training	By using the month of May to promote stewardship By holding two stewardship seminars a year By using [Sabbath School?] quarterly and camp meetings to further teach about stewardship and strengthening fellowship.

Table 10. VISITATION PROGRAM

ACTION PLAN	METHOD/TIME
<p>To train lay leaders to embark on pastoral care.</p> <p>To care for visitors.</p>	<p>To train elders, deacons, deaconesses and Sabbath School Superintends to visit church members and missing Sabbath school members.</p> <p>By putting visitors'-friendly people to welcome visitors and to show them suitable places to sit.</p> <p>By letting one who came with a visitor introduce him/her to not less than six church members and to the elder/leader.</p> <p>By making follow-up call to each an every visitor and inviting them to come again.</p> <p>By providing enough hymnals for visitors in case they will need them.</p> <p>By choosing somebody who is kind and has tact in dealing with visitors.</p> <p>By making our church visitors friendly.</p>
<p>To care for backslidden members.</p>	<p>By visiting them and inviting them to church again.</p> <p>By setting a <i>homecoming day</i> for all those who once were active members, to come back.</p> <p>By giving a report on what the response was to <i>homecoming day</i>.</p>

Table 11. ASSIMILATION AND NURTURE OF NEW MEMBERS

ACTION PLAN	METHOD/TIME
To train members to assimilate the newly baptized member.	By surveying the needs and the treatment the new converts receive on entry. By sensitizing old members about the importance of receiving new members and continue discipling them. By establishing/electing a new member ministry team.
To monitor new member ministry.	By opening a class of new member ministry, where they will spend whole year after baptism. By opening a separate file folder to evaluate the progress of the new member, and by interviewing him/her every quarter to check the progress.
To assign new member to a ministry.	By assigning the well-established-in-faith member to church duties where she/he will grow.

Spiritual Preparation of the Churches

We organized revival meetings for two weeks, before the plans for the laity empowerment program were presented. In these meetings the following topics were studied:

Mission and organization of the church

The purpose and responsibility of the church and church members

The uniqueness of Adventist doctrines

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The loud cry

The revival helped to secure the support of spiritually revived members and to forestall the dropping out of new members who might have become discouraged by seeing the sins of unconverted or backslidden members. Believing that prayer and planning are two indispensable components of success in God's work; we further divided the entire church membership into prayer bands. This was done by groups in the churches and in the different homes during the week. The purpose was to seek the Lord and pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By taking these steps, we tried to make sure that we were receiving God's wisdom for the plan.

Just like Joshua did, to find out God's plan for taking Jericho (Josh 6:2-5), we prayed in order to learn of God's plan for the church and for carrying out the program. Thus we solely relied on God's unusual methods to bring his truth before the people. Christ taught us that we should plan if we would lead orderly lives. So we proactively moved towards objectives. We have many examples of God's blessing upon those who plan (see Luke 14:28-32; 1 Cor 14:40; Acts 26:16-18).

The encounters for revival series of special Bible studies were used in many instances, as groups met to study. As a result, we had an enriching experience as we witnessed the stirring of conscience, the heart being agitated, and the will submitted in perfect obedience to God.

We then set the objectives for what should be accomplished. Our clear goal was to enlist every member in our church to be fully involved in reaching out to others with the good news, and also ministering to the needs of other members as to build each other in the faith. Realizing that such goals were above our ability to reach, we placed a faith factor in every effort we made.

Some questions were asked:

- What will the program contribute to the overall mission of the church?
- What are we trying to achieve with this program?
- How will we achieve these objectives?
- What measurement will we use to evaluate the success of the program?

After answering these questions, a *training need analysis* was done by scanning for the obstacles to achieve the objectives, identifying symptoms, gathering evidence, analyzing human and spiritual resources, and reaching consensus on training needs with the various church boards in the district. The main reason to do this was to obtain the full commitment of church leaders and members.

Also important was the idea of instilling the “basic vision that ministry is an every-member responsibility.”⁵³ This also was an attempt of realigning all the activities of the various departments with the main purpose of the existence of the church, namely: strengthening the spiritual nurture of the church, and planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases.⁵⁴ In addition, we instilled in each district leader the team spirit as we mapped out our common mission, charted our common course, and also set guidelines to be followed in achieving our goals.

Mapping out our common destination required that I let each leader express his/her own ideas of a mission statement, analyze these ideas, draft a mission statement, and finalize by committing ourselves to a mission statement.⁵⁵ This, in turn, enabled the lay leadership, on whom I rely so much for the accomplishment of God’s work, to learn to

⁵³ David Guerrero, “Growing Churches in a Multichurch District,” *Ministry*, August 2008, 22.

⁵⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 104.

⁵⁵ James W. Zackrison, *How to Write a Statement of Mission for Your Church* (Lincoln, NE, Nebraska: North American Church Ministries Resource Center, 1998), 1-4.

appreciate and use their spiritual gifts. By being, myself, visible and reachable by all district leaders in the time of their needs; they were encouraged to share their experiences, and relate their challenges and obstacles on their way to accomplish the agreed-upon plans.

The impact of change for the entire church, as well as for the individuals involved, and the advantages of changing, were outlined. We realized that change was likely to significantly affect the way of life of the entire membership. So, they needed to be fully informed about the program and understand and accept the idea of every member a minister.

Therefore, we repeated the impact analysis, which laid the groundwork by helping us identify the plan's underlying requirements. Equipping laity to properly execute their missionary duties was essential if 100 per cent of the church membership would be involved in various ministries.⁵⁶

Announcements were made as to the time, venue, and topics of the seminar, with the features of special interest highlighted. Telling members about the benefits of attending the seminar also whetted their interest to attend.

Implementation of the Program

The revival and preparation of the church came to a closure at the Sabbath morning service. After the call for the consecration and the dedication prayer for the service, the plans of laity empowerment were presented. Then we distributed blank registration forms, with the explanation that participation was voluntary, but that it was hoped that all would take part. An appeal to young people was also made.

⁵⁶Kennon L Callahan, *Twelve Keys for an Effective Church Strategic Planning Mission*. (London: Harper & Row, 1983), 15.

A course designed for training church officers on visitation, stewardship, preaching, and assimilating and discipling new members was advertised. It outlined how one discovers his or her spiritual gifts. Youth and adults were encouraged to attend the course, with a clear understanding of what the whole course entailed and the benefit thereof, of getting equipped for the ministry. Immediately, announcement of the day the hour and the place where the program would take place were made, with detailed explanations of the requirements for attendance, the duration of the course and the plan of graduation. The first training on preaching began from the 25th up to 28th of August, 2007. It started on Thursday and ended Sunday afternoon. The session began with 30 people and the number increased up to 537 on Sabbath as the role of listeners to the sermon was presented. The second session on stewardship took place during the camp meeting week on 28 September-5 October 2007. The 1016 attendees benefited a lot from the presentations of Pastor D. Mwemba, a stewardship director of Southern Africa Union Conference. Weeks of Prayer on Stewardship emphasis followed up on different churches from April up to June, 2008. A visitation program took one month on every Tuesday and Thursday in the church and 300 people participated. Again in August, 21-24 at Manguza Seventh-day Adventist Church preaching training was conducted with 75 trainees presence.

There was a lot of enthusiasm to enroll. In the first course we had 30 regular trainees who attended and participated in all the practical activities during the sessions. The

The lessons were conducted in the Zulu language in order to accommodate even elderly people who attended the course. Special attention was given to make the lessons so simple that they could be taught in a clear and definite manner, and thus even the most inexperienced lay member might be prepared to apply it in a real situation.

Ten steps to achieve an effective training were adopted in order to systematically develop teaching material.⁵⁷ For instance, the researcher started by identifying the training need, which was involvement of the whole membership of our district in evangelism and nurturing newly converted members. This called us to clarify the *training objectives*, namely 100 percent involvement of membership. Then the researcher farther considered the target audience, which were the young adults and the newly converted members. It ended up having the clear objective of 100 percent involvement of young adults and newly converted members in ministry.

Likewise, a *course overview* was developed, which focused on giving necessary skills for members to fully participate in church activities and spiritually maturity. The methods and media chosen were through presentations and practical engagement at work. A *leader's guide* was prepared to assist facilitators. Just to test the effectiveness of the program, a bench test was done where two small companies came to gather to worship and trained for various duties in the church.

It took one and half month to implement and monitor the progress. Meanwhile, the meetings were held twice a week to carefully monitor progress.

Quarterly meetings were held in different places, where churches met together for celebration and fellowship. These meetings had a tremendous impact, especially on the small groups which most of the time felt isolated. Such meetings allowed them to fellowship with members from the other congregations in the district, and thus become aware that they were part of a larger family of believers.

⁵⁷ Leslie B. Flynn, *How to Save Time in the Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1966), 102-103.

Meanwhile, conference leadership was kept informed about the developments. We also enlisted the help of the personal ministries department director of our conference for the presentations of some subjects, such as *preaching* and *stewardship*. During our camp meeting, the Union Conference stewardship director spent the whole week teaching the congregation about evangelism and stewardship. As a result, the entire church was on fire and the tithe increased immediately.

Also the plan included a *discipline program* to nurture new members. It was enthusiastically welcomed by new and old members alike. From the meeting with old members the following questions were asked: What will new members brought into our fellowship find? Will our church be ready to nurture new members in faith? Will new members find our church a gracious community where friendships are easily formed?

Consequently, a plan was drawn up whereby the *needs of new members*, namely *prayer, worship, service, witnessing, and fellowship*, could be met. Ellen White had expressed these needs in these words: “New converts will need to be instructed by faithful teachers of God’s Word that they may increase in a knowledge and love of the truth, and may grow to the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. They must now be surrounded by the influences most favorable to spiritual growth.”⁵⁸

Such a *new member ministry* served to bridge a new member’s gap between joining and reaching a sense of belonging in our church. The plan took a full year of nurture, training, and supervision just after baptism. In counsel with the church board and based on these essential qualifications (spirituality, teaching ability, tact and care in dealing with people), a leader of the new member ministry

⁵⁸ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 337.

class was chosen among the elders. The success of this ministry can be rightly attributed to the entire church that assumed it as its major responsibility. Ellen G. White also had pointed out: “God’s spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience.”⁵⁹

The training was *principle-practice based*, that is, operated on the principle of learning by doing. The majority of participants were young adults and those of mature years who learn far more readily through a practical demonstration of principles than by an explanation and laying down of rules. The training plan provided for projects, quizzes, and a final examination. Each participant was assigned to the particular work he/she was to do. We encouraged every member to dedicate a minimum of two hours a week to sharing the good news with people in their respective territories.

To facilitate the transfer of learning back to their local churches, we used action planning during training. For instance, at intervals during the training (daily, during a five-day course), participants were asked to focus on the usefulness of what had been discussed. Participants were given colored sheets of paper to write down two or three things which had been covered during the day which they thought likely to be particularly useful in their respective churches. They were also asked to write notes on how they intended to make use of it. This helped them to focus on building up an action plan to be presented when they returned to their congregations.

Towards the end of the program, the participants clustered the items on the sheets into areas, and then arranged them in some order of priority. The action plan for the next

⁵⁹ Ellen White, *Evangelism*, 352.

six months was then drafted by putting a time frame on each area to be tackled. They also wrote down, on each area, the likely countervailing forces, and how these were to be overcome. Vital questions were asked, such as, Will this action have an effect on the spiritual life of church members? How will they react to it? Whose authority will be necessary to implement this action? How do I ensure that this will be available? What kinds of behaviors or attitudes of church members are likely to prevent this action? What can be done? So, by the time each participant left the training center he/she had an action plan which was as a set of goals to be achieved, with a time frame and rationale for each item. This plan had been further discussed with church elders before the participants returned to their churches.

After six months, follow-up questions were asked: How much of your action plan have you been able to implement? Which actions have been shelved and why? What positive benefits, in terms of effectiveness in your part of the congregation, have resulted from carrying out your action plan?

The *visitor's follow-up project* was used as the learning focus for participants. The project had increased attendance and the number of returning visitors. It covered almost all areas from Sabbath School, divine service, and Sabbath afternoon program. Participants were also asked to form groups and exchange information on the progress of their projects. They were to meet at least once a month to discuss plans and progress.

Most of the meetings were devoted to discuss, in depth, some issues raised by one cohort. The main purpose was to help participants to support and encourage each other until they all finished their projects. Indirectly, it improved their interpersonal skills and boosted their confidence in carrying out church duties without close supervision.

Since the responsibilities of the “interest co-coordinator” and “personal ministries leader” are intertwined, we asked the church interest coordinators to coordinate the projects. The first Sabbath of every month was used for reporting the happenings in small groups as well as giving testimonies. Gradually, the burden for souls was instilled to other church members.

Evaluation

At the beginning of the course we had given pre-tests. Then, and at the end of the course we gave post-tests, to assess the knowledge of the participants about the subject, before and after the course. From that we determined what actions were being taken by each participant in the congregation where she/he came from.

What they had learned was further assessed to determine whether the new skills learned were consistently applied. Participants were encouraged to put immediately into practice what they had learned.

Evaluation Results

Feedback from the participants regarding the program reflected outstanding results in terms of quality and helpfulness of the program. Participants expressed having learned how to prepare a sermon and deliver it. Visiting and caring for the missing and backslidden members was performed better than before. Overall, participants found the material appropriate, interesting, and usable. Facilitators were reported to be helpful, motivated and knowledgeable.

Four out of five local church elders and lay preachers were preaching more edifying sermons, visiting more members and giving more personal counsel than the pastor. In comparison to the time before the training, worship was more spiritual and congregations

were really blessed in different ways. For instance, when I followed up to establish whether preachers applied what they had learned, most of the church members reported that preachers were preaching more biblical, clearer, more informative and soul-touching sermons than before. Preachers were also reported as preaching helpful, well structured sermons which “translate into enjoyable experience.” And they, confidently, called for decisions at the end of their sermons.

Visitors keep coming back for more truth. Similarly, preachers learned of their flaws and asked for more help whenever necessary. Some reported that they were receiving more invitations to conduct devotions at work, schools, and health institutions and for memorial services of their colleagues. The preachers are looking forward to having more preachers’ seminars. In fact they wanted it to be an annual event.

In one church, visitors are flocking. Some Sabbaths, late comers hardly find a seat. However, in other congregation it is still a struggle for young men to get a preaching appointment. An experienced person was chosen to lead the welcoming and ushering staff. To be associated with him there were people selected to welcome and greet the people as they come to the meeting place. The group was chosen to serve during the whole year. Their training helped them to be thoroughly acquainted with their duties and apt in their work. They were also evaluated on courtesy and patience, quietness and reverence. Such attitudes prepared the people for a worshipful study of God’s Word and support of his work.

If adults are accompanied by children or youth, they are also welcomed by name and taken to proper classes. So the class teachers are reported to be friendly and courteous to the visiting children.

Furthermore, church members expressed their gratitude for understanding stewardship principles for the first time. Others confessed that they were baptized before they understood church doctrines, even returning tithe and offering. For the first three months after the training, there was an improvement in tithing at Ulundi Church 98% of membership returned tithe and 70% began returning offerings.

Effective stewardship committees to run the on-going stewardship program were established in each church. Also, they received a follow-up letter reminding them of their duties and inquiring about their progress.

There were three categories of members who committed to be faithful to their baptismal vows by supporting the church through tithe and offerings. The first, Plan-A, was for those who were starters. Plan-B was for those who had begun yet needed more motivation to stick with their plan. Plan C consisted of the veteran members who had been Adventists long enough that they no longer think of the church and themselves as separate entities. They have grown in Christ, and continue returning God's tithes and giving their offering of time, talent, possessions and money. Yet, they are not satisfied merely doing that which God requires of them. Rather, they are determined to actively seek out and meet a person's with physical, social, or spiritual needs and do their best to help them. All did well to stick in their commitment, at least for the first six months after training.

Visitation went very well. Some hospitalized members were visited and even the dying ones were cared for until the last moment of their lives. Newly converted members received a warm loving home church welcome. In some instances, when the spouse seemed to be against the church doctrines, they were invited to the church after long resistance; and eventually they joined the church. On occasions, church members felt that the whole church was behind them during their hard and seemingly unbearable circumstances. They

felt that being visited strengthened them to endure. Even visitors from nearby congregations expressed receiving a warm welcome from church members.

Forty percent of the backslidden members were reclaimed. And of every five visitors, four joined the baptismal class. In the Ulundi Church, twenty seven backsliders became regular members.

In section A, at Ulundi, a prayer band organized all women and men of Seventh-day Adventist Church and community members to pray with them using a town hall. The result was overwhelming. From that band two prominent members of the community took a stand to join the church.

Now we have five church buildings in the district. We are in the process of building a large Adventist Church at Nongoma Central. The rest of the small companies have secured sites to build their churches. Some have been given the permission to occupy. That means that the site will be theirs without buying it. For the first time, church officers have been elected according to their spiritual gifts and assigned the duty to explore whether their calling really is in that particular ministry.

Proper keeping of church records has been improved. Thirty percent of the churches which had no records of membership now are sending correct records straight to the conference, quarterly.

Also there is a willingness on the part of church members to take duties assigned to them. Elders report that Sabbath School superintendents are actively involved in giving training on personal witnessing, visiting class members, and opening new Sabbath School branches. There are more than seven branch Sabbath Schools that have been opened by one church as the result of small group meetings. Increasingly, there is need of baptismal class teachers in these small groups because new converts have outnumbered the present

teachers. This, in turn, has given me ample time to plan and begin the preparations to plant two churches in different un-entered places. A cottage meeting was held in a very difficult area and the whole family made the decision to join the church.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarizes and draws conclusions based on the biblical models, the historical background as presented in Chapter 2, and the evaluations as recorded in Chapter 4.

Summary

By calling Abraham and promising him to multiply his descendants as the stars in the nocturnal sky, God established a nation to represent him in the world. From Abraham to Moses, to Christ, to Paul and to John we have patterns of laity being empowered for ministry. God called different people from all walks of life and empowered them with his Spirit to fulfill the mission assigned to them.

These Biblical models show that the best way to multiply church members is by preparing the soil, and calling, assigning and sending those who have accepted the gospel. Early church models kept the church growing and surviving even under severe persecution. In mission-driven early church, every believer was a minister.

The same concept is essentially found in early Adventism. There were no settled pastors to look after churches. Lay members took care of the growing congregations as they continued witnessing, while the pastors were busy planting new churches.

Conclusions

This study calls for the empowerment of the laity in the Zululand Pastoral District. Qualified lay members, serving as local leaders may care for other members' needs without waiting for the pastor. This harmonizes with the basic concept that every member is a

minister called to minister to other members' needs, but also to reach out to the unbelieving world. And also requires that all departmental goals should be co-coordinated as to accomplish the core mission of the church.

This study confirms that the unwillingness of the laity to take on church duties is normally due to their feeling inadequately prepared to carry these responsibilities.

Immediately, after training, many were willing to participate in ministry.

Discovering their spiritual gifts also helped members to focus on what matters most: the spiritual life of the entire church. Many of the backslidden members, 34 to be precise, began attending church again, and are actively involved in social activities of the church and the midweek meetings. The entire membership is revived.

Recommendations

The Conference can help the pastor in developing and equipping lay leadership by keeping him/her at least seven years in the district. Often pastors are moved to another district after only three years, just when the most productive years of a pastor are about to begin. The exception would be the pastor who is uniquely gifted in starting churches but not in expanding them.

The Conference can assist the equipping pastor by providing him with the resources needed to equip the church. The College can also play a very important role if it prepares pastors to be equippers and church planters, placing more emphasis on the mission. If possible, the pastor should have been taught at the College about the various departments of the church, how to manage them and coordinate their efforts with evangelism.

The local pastor can also be a good help in developing and supporting local lay leaders by focusing on three to five things that he/she wants to help the church with. This

means to accept the idea that, as an equipper, the pastor must allow lay people to be his/her co-equippers and prayer partners. Such spirit encourages trust between the lay leaders and the pastor.

APPENDIX 1

COMMUNITY RELIGIOUS SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to obtain your opinion on the matter of religion. This will assist us to identify the religious needs of our community; you are guaranteed that there will be no adverse consequences. Thank you for your co-operation.

- | | Yes | No | No opinion | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1. In your opinion, is there a God | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| 2. Is there life after death? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| 3. Is Christ coming again? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | |
| 4. Who is Jesus, according to your understanding? | | | | |
| | <input type="radio"/> Son of God | <input type="radio"/> Saviour of man | | |
| | <input type="radio"/> Creator | <input type="radio"/> Prophet | <input type="radio"/> Not sure | |
| 5. Do you feel you understand the Bible as well as you would like? | | | | |
| 6. What church did your parents attend? | | | | |
| 7. Do you belong to the same church? | | | | |
| 8. About how often are you able to attend? | | | | |
| | Weekly | Monthly | Seldom | Never |
| 9. In your opinion how does one become a Christian? | | | | |
| 10. If you had the opportunity, would you like to study the Bible more? | | | | |

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