

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Leadership

Adventist University of Africa

School of Postgraduate Studies

Title: THE IMPACT OF SMALL GROUPS ON EVANGELISM: A CASE STUDY OF NKETA 8 CHURCH IN NKETA/EMGANWINI DISTRICT, SOUTH ZIMBABWE CONFERENCE OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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The Seventh-day Adventist Church is evangelistic in nature. Its members believe that evangelism is the primary purpose for the Church's existence. Small groups are one important vehicle that can be used to carry the good news of the gospel to the entire world making a people ready for the Second Coming of Jesus, the Savior. Nketa 8 Church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, seems to be experiencing a problem in enlisting all the members in evangelism.

The purpose of this study was to discover how members could best utilize small groups in evangelism in Nketa, a suburb of Bulawayo. The researcher compared the literature on small groups in order to develop a body of information on small groups. Participants were drawn from Nketa 8 church where the researcher sampled 150 members, including fifteen (15) elders and nine (9) section leaders who shall be referred to as zonal leaders. A total of forty-five (45) board members were also part of

the sample. Small groups were formed, launched, trained and sent to study the Bible with members of the neighborhood. This was done on the 3rd of July 2016. An evangelistic effort was conducted from the 8th to the 21st of January 2017 mainly through these small groups that also were the respondents to the questionnaire. As compared to previous events where persons were only baptized when there was public evangelism, a total of forty-five (45) persons were baptized as a result of the small groups studying with people in their private homes.

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SOUTH ZIMBABWE CONFERENCE OF THE
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A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Leadership

by

Brighton Kohlisa

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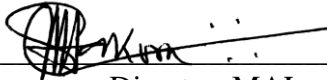
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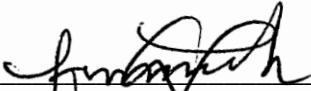
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I sincerely dedicate this project to my wife, Sakhile Kohlisa, for her full support in order for this project to sail through. Furthermore, I dedicate this project to my three children, Brandon, Gugulethu and Nomagugu for their patience as I spent most of the time on this study.

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Last but not least, glory and honor be given to God the Almighty for His guidance. May His name be praised forever.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a brief description of Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist Church and the background information on the study. In this chapter, the statement of the problem, the purpose of study as well as the objectives of study is clearly outlined. The chapter also deals with definition of terms and concludes with a brief program layout of the study.

Background

Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist Church is part of Nketa/Emganwini District in Bulawayo of South Zimbabwe Conference. It is an organized Church in a district that has six organized Churches including Maranatha Church that is always coming out top in terms of baptism that could be accounted to the availability of vibrant small groups. Nketa 8 Church is situated in the southern part of the city in one of the biggest suburbs in the city of Bulawayo. The majority of the residents of Nketa suburb are literate and there are two government high schools in the neighborhood. Approximately about 45% of the people of Nketa suburb are formally employed with around 35% being those who are self-employed. The neighborhood has other denominations apart from the Seventh-day Adventist and these include Roman Catholic, Anglican Church, Brethren in Christ and other apostolic faith churches. There are no Pentecostal churches in Nketa suburb as these are mostly found in the city and most of the members of these Pentecostal Churches are young people.

Having such a suburb it is clear that there are homes where small groups can do Bible studies even during the day as it is clear that close to about half the residents are always at home.

Problem Statement

Nketa 8 Church had a membership of 1208 as at 30th September 2015. Of these members it seems it is an insignificant number of members who are actively involved in evangelistic programs leaving the rest of the members inactive. Many of these members as it were, have not yet realized their importance in fulfilling the mission of the Church. It seems there is no deliberate intention in leadership in trying to have programs aimed at involving all the members in Church based evangelistic programs.

Objectives of Study

Based on the observations stated above in the problem statement, the objectives of the present study were:

- i. To examine the involvement of Church members in small group activities.
- ii. To find out the role of Church leadership in small group activities.
- iii. To examine the impact of small group activities on evangelism.

Significance of Study

The findings from this study might be significant to the following, but not limited to:

Church Leadership: The leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is critical in piloting evangelistic programs. Findings from this study could provide details on the dynamics of small groups that church leaders need to craft evangelism activities

that are soul winning and spiritually sound. Egli and Marable (2014) observe, “Leaders who pray more have groups that are more outward focused.” The prayer life of a leader, they observe “has a particularly strong impact on evangelistic effectiveness of a group” (p. 8). Leaders who pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit will be able to make their church based small groups more effective.

Academics: The findings could also be useful for anyone who may want to pursue any further study on small groups. The information is going to be useful to those who want to discover what other writers said on small groups when comparing with what the researcher would have put together in this project document.

Church Members: It is worth noting that small groups play a very important role in evangelism. If the members are well groomed into this small groups ministry they have a potential of excelling in soul winning and nurturing programs. Small groups provide a unique way of doing evangelism especially in the 21st century. Small groups will help every member to be an active soul winner. The study undertaken will help members of Nketa 8 Church to engage in evangelism through small groups.

Definition of Terms

1. Small groups—A collection of individuals who have regular contact and share ideas interacting with each other in order to complete a certain task.
2. Spirit of prophecy—Refers to the ministry and writings of Ellen G. White.
3. Evangelistic programs—Refers to the organized and systematic meetings or programs aimed at winning souls for God’s kingdom.
4. Small group—Small group according to Kelder (1 June 2010) is “an intentional gathering, meeting regularly for the purpose of joining God’s mission” (par. 1).
5. House churches—Christians who regularly meet in private homes for worship

6. Research design—A detailed outline of how an investigation will take place. It will include how data is to be collected, what instruments will be employed, how the instruments will be used and the intended means for analyzing data collected.
7. Population—These are all elements, individuals, or units that meet the selection criteria for a group to be studied, and from which a representative sample is taken for detailed examination.
8. Sampling—Sampling according to Awoniyi and Alege (2007) is selecting same members of the entire population for use in the study” (p. 41).
9. Zonal leader—It refers to the person appointed by the church to lead in prayers in the community where they reside.

Research Questions

The research question below guided the researcher exploration into the impact of small group on district level evangelism:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of age, gender and number of years in the Church?
 1. To what extent are Church members involved in small group activities?
 2. What are the roles of Church leadership in small group activities?
 3. To what extent do small groups impact on evangelism in the local Church?

Limitations of Study

For the study being undertaken, it appears that there are no locally published literature that addresses the problem. That being the case, the researcher had to rely mainly on non-local writers.

Delimitations

The study focused on Nketa 8 Church out of the 6 Churches in Nketa/Emganwini district in the South Zimbabwe Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The study focused on the formation of small groups as means of fulfilling the mission of the Church. The study was carried among the baptized church members of Nketa 8 Church beginning with the church board members cascading down to the rest of the other members.

Organization of Study

Chapter 1 is the introduction that deals with background of study, statement of the problem, definition of terms as well as research questions and objectives of the study. Chapter 2 basically deals with reviewing of the literature relevant to the study. This includes the biblical foundations on small groups and the writings of Ellen G. White on small groups. Chapter 3 contains the methodology, which includes program design for collecting data. It also deals with safeguarding of the respondents and data collecting procedure. Chapter 4 deals with presentation and discussion of results and chapter 5 is the summary including conclusion and recommendations.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter covered background information, study purpose, study objectives and research questions. It is in this chapter also where the definition of terms was dealt with. The chapter in brief gives the overview of what the researcher wants to

undertake, why this topic and the very reason why the researcher wants to carry out the study.

The researcher took time in chapter two to review literature from other writers in as far as the subject of small groups is concerned.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews different sources aimed at giving insights to the researcher in as far as small groups ministry is involved and concerned in the Church. The researcher used some of the findings to apply particularly to Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist Church, as it is the focus of study.

The chapter was divided into three distinct segments, where the researcher first looked at the Biblical foundations of small groups in evangelism that also covered the ministry of Jesus in using small groups and that of the apostle Paul. The second part of the chapter covered the writings of Ellen G. White commonly referred to as the Spirit of Prophecy, and lastly the researcher looked at what other contemporary writers said on small groups.

Biblical Foundations of Small Groups Ministry

In this chapter the researcher explores what the Bible says in as far as the small groups are concerned. Could there be any evidence of small groups ministry in the Bible and if so how did that impact the then community? What were the results and what lessons can be drawn from these small groups for the Christian Church today? Are small groups biblical? In Exodus 3:16 it is recorded “Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt.

Commenting on this verse, Icenogle (1994) says “Even as Moses feared a lack of personal eloquence, God enabled the smaller group of Aaron and Moses to become a leadership together” (p. 39). God used a small group to accomplish the task of going to meet with the king of Egypt with the message that otherwise Moses could not deliver alone.

Nehemiah’s Model

Chapter 3 of Nehemiah provides an interesting scene in the way the small groups operate in performing a common task, as the wall was being built.

Nehemiah 3:1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they built the sheep gate;

Nehemiah 3:2 Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

Nehemiah 3:3 Also the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

Nehemiah 3:5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

Nehemiah 3:32 And between the upper room at the corner, as far as the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs. These and other verses in the said chapter give us an insight on how small groups function. These men grouped themselves and coordinated themselves in order to accomplish the task ahead of them. Well organized groups can do more than a large group of people. The small groups understood each other and supported each other in their work and thus accomplished a lot in their task.

Jesus Model of Small Groups

In His ministry Jesus while on earth Jesus used small groups approach. Arnold (2004) says, “Jesus Christ is our first and greatest model for how small groups can stimulate faith and growth in others” (p. 18). When Jesus was about to begin His ministry He chose only twelve (12) men among a multitude of His disciples to work with. It goes without any doubt that if Jesus applied small groups in His ministry, it becomes critically important for the Church to make use of small groups in its ministry. In Luke 6:12-13, it is mentioned “One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles.” Out of the multitude of disciples He called only twelve whom He worked closely with. Even then Jesus went further to call only three disciples out of the twelve to go with Him to the top of the mountain during the transfiguration as recorded in Matthew 17:1.

Prime (2009) suggests, “In respect to evangelistic witnessing, Jesus Christ emphasized how important it is to function in twos, the smallest number of plurality.” Prime goes on to mention “This approach will provide the maximum number of harvesters” (p. 148). The idea that comes out clearly here is that when small groups are in place there is an increase in number of laborers. Through such methods total membership of the Church is involved in evangelism. The number of believers may be greatly multiplied through the involvement of all members.

Five Small Group Lessons from Jesus

1. Small groups are formed intentionally. Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him (Matt 4:19-20). Here Christ offered personal invitation to His disciples and He clearly spelt out what He called them for.

2. Small groups break socio-economic boundaries. After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me” (Luke 5: 27). Jesus gathered men from different backgrounds to form his small group of twelve. He regularly mixed with people that did not fit the profile of proper religious company.
3. Small groups offer opportunity to learn God’s Word. Christ was not only interested in calling the disciples, but He was also interested in teaching them. “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them” (Matt 5:1-2).
4. Small groups provide a place of refreshment. The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat (Mark 6:30-31). Although Jesus was working with His disciples, He did recognise the need to be alone and rest as a small group.
5. Small groups reach beyond their small group. Small groups are not just for the benefit of the members. They minister to others outside the small group. Jesus trained and commissioned the twelve disciples to go out and fulfill His ministry. “And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits” (Mark 6:7).

Comiskey (2015) states, “The disciples soon put into practice what they had learned in their small group with Jesus. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Peter’s sermon, the Church exploded in numbers from 120 (Acts 1:15) to over 3,000 people” (2:41) (p. 2).

Jesus' ultimate goal was to minister to all the people but He had to accomplish that by using a "small group" of men that He chose. Working in and through small groups help the members fully interact with each other thereby creating a bond. Jesus called these twelve men and bonded with them. Still yet He called three of the twelve who formed the inner circle and worked closer with them. These three men are the very ones who strengthened Jesus most of the times. He was with them in Gethsemane; He was also with them on the mount of transfiguration. Peter, James and John no doubt witnessed more of the miracles that Jesus performed than all the other disciples. Small groups fulfill the "one another" commands in the Bible. Boren (2010) talks about the *allēlōn* of the New Testament. He states, "The word *allēlōn* is a common but overlooked Greek word that is reciprocal in nature." He goes on to say a Christian community is shaped by the *allēlōn* sayings which include love for one another, pursue one another's good and building one another" (p. 7). Some of the texts addressing the *allēlōn* of the New Testament include the following:

Be at peace with one another—Mark 9:50

Love one another—John 13:34; Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12

Build up one another—Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

Be of the same mind toward one another—Romans 12:16

Give preference to one another—Romans 12:10

Greet one another—Romans 16:16

Esteem others as better than yourself—Philippians 2:3

Serve one another—Galatians 5:13

Receive one another—Romans 15:7

Be devoted to one another—Romans 12:10

Rejoice or weep with one another—Romans 12:15

Admonish one another—Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16

Care for one another—1 Corinthians 12:25

Show tolerance toward one another—Romans 15:1-5; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13

Be kind and forgiving to one another—Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13

Submit to one another—Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5

Comfort one another—1 Thessalonians 4:18

Encourage one another—1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13

Be compassionate with one another—1 Peter 3:8

Pray for one another—James 5:16

Confess your faults to one another—James 5:16

Accept one another—Romans 14:1; 15:7

Be truthful with one another—Colossians 3:9

All of the above tasks may be fulfilled if people are involved in small groups. Wheeler (2009) asserts, “Praying effectively for one another in a group setting is worth the time and effort it takes for your group to learn to do it well. As you and your group members lift each other up in prayer, you usher one another into the very presence of God and invite his work in your lives” (p. 45).

Paul’s Ministry and Small Groups

House Churches appear to have been very popular during the early Christian Church and one Biblical character who appears mostly is the apostle Paul. He was great missionary who preached and opened Churches in many towns and cities. It appears house Churches were his favorite as evidenced by the many Bible texts that he wrote. In Acts 20:20, Paul says “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.” While he was

preaching and teaching in public, he would not forget moving from house to house teaching and preaching as well.

In Romans 16:5, he continues to send greetings “Likewise greet the Church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia to Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 16:19, he goes on to say “The Churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” In Ephesians 4:15, it comes out clear as Paul sends his greeting to the members of the Church in Laodicea “Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.” In his letter to Philemon the beloved friend, Paul indicates that there was a Church meetings going on in their houses “To the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the Church in your house” (Phlm 1:2).

Fitts (2001) observes “A small house church makes it much more likely that the very shy will find their identity within the body of Christ.” In our house Church we usually had our noon meal together on Sundays. Each family would take part in preparing and serving the meal. The forming of relationships occurs much more easily in such "household" situations” (p. 20). A few of the advantages of house Churches could be the following resulting from the statement above.

1. Strong and supportive interpersonal relations among the members
2. Members quickly become one body
3. Worship done in homes offers personal touch to its members, and most of the times their needs are met
4. Clear and easy to follow instructions to new members since these Churches are more informal and relaxed
5. Love is easily expressed and members share their material goods

6. House Churches are evangelistic tools.

Summarising the ministry of Paul and small groups, it is important to note the following. The Church during the house Churches period grew in numbers. Members were able to share what they had and cared for each other. House Churches offered personal touch thereby meeting the needs of those who were in need.

The Impact of Small Groups in the Early Christian Church

One reason why the early Church grew rapidly was the small groups approach. The meetings held in houses played an essential role in the growth of the Church. “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46, 47).

These house Churches were made up of not more than twenty people in one place, as the apartments were not so big as to accommodate many people. The needs of the fellow brethren were met in these small congregations, young widows’ needs were met and everyone felt satisfied and important, resulting in having a feeling of belonging. Peter continues to point out “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42).

According to Cerna (1987) the then pastor of the Norwalk Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church, Cerritos, California “The most effective way to teach people how to reach people is through small group ministry in individual homes” (p.17). This means that a Church that is implementing these groups is bound to reach out to more individuals than the one not practicing small groups. In small groups setting people quickly adapt to the environment when they work together. In the early Church, the

small groups began as house Churches where the believers met in their houses and when the group became larger it would split and meet in another house. The Church grew tremendously as a result of these meetings where members worshipped as small manageable groups. Why small groups? People in the modern day are yearning for connectedness, a sense of belonging and a sense of community. Trawick (2007) explains it in the following manner,

“The silent churning at the core of our beings is the tormenting need to know and be known, to understand and to be understood, to possess and to be possessed, to belong unconditionally and forever without fear of loss, betrayal, or rejection. It is the nostalgia for our primal oneness, the silent sorrowing for paradise lost, the age long pursuit after the encompassing embrace for which we know we were created. It is the search for the freedom to be who we really are without shame or pretense, for release and repose in the womb-like safety of unalterable acceptance and of overarching love” (p. 15).

Small groups build Christian community and everyone in the community feels part of the group. The Bible teaches of the priesthood of all believers and that every member born into the kingdom of God becomes a minister of Christ. The early Christian Church believed in the community of all believers. They gladly shared their faith with others and they went on to share their possessions living together as a family. Human beings were created for belonging and cannot live without it. God’s intention is that His children live together as communities helping each other taking care of the burdens that others may have. The early Christian church believed in the community of all believers. They gladly shared their faith with others and they went on to share their possessions living together as a family.

Stetzer (September 24, 2014) points out: “ Small groups can become agents of

both individual and community change when they are organized around, bathed in, and focused on living out the gospel together. When we are honest, open, and vulnerable with one another, there is opportunity to bear one another's burdens" (p. 40). One thing that comes out clear in this is that small groups keep people focused on evangelism and members get to know each other and they help each other spiritually.

During the time of persecution, when the Roman Nero and others were persecuting Christians and banning them to hold meetings and building temples and or churches, it was quite difficult for Christians to meet and pray. At this time the Flavian Amphitheater was popular as it is where the persecution of Christians took place. When they were thrown in the middle of the arena about 70000 spectators were entertained by watching wild animals pouncing on Christians. It is interesting to note that it is during this era when house Churches and other groups such as home groups actually flourished. Comiskey (2009) comments, "Persecution soon made large group gatherings difficult and the preferred meeting place became houses of the individual believers" He goes on to mention that "these simple house Churches became the primary type of the church in the New Testament period" (pp. 84, 85). It could be seen that the small group was the "church." This is where the believers would meet every time they wanted to conduct worship. Although the Church was being persecuted, the idea of small group meetings made the Church to grow tremendously.

During this period not only was preaching and teaching done in the temple. It was also in the homes where members were gathered in small groups, and the apostles would preach and teach them the truth about Jesus. The members would understand well and commit themselves to Jesus. This is one reason why the Church managed to grow in numbers as well as in quality. The small groups experience of the early disciples was used to start the Church. In these small groups believers would gather

together, share the good news with others and support each other. They even shared their possessions in order to help the poor both in the Church and the then community. Daily meetings in homes to study the Bible and pray together was very common among the members. This would limit the number of those that come for these meetings thereby promoting small groups ministry.

Many early Christian churches like the Methodist Church, which was led by John Wesley a former Anglican theologian and cleric who together with his brother founded the Methodist Church, used the small groups method for “mutual confession to one another (Jas 5:16), to give encouragement and support in overcoming temptation and in developing a Christian style of life.”

Summary of the Biblical Foundations

Throughout the Bible we find evidence of small groups both in the Old and New Testaments, including the period of Jesus’ ministry. In fact for His mission to be accomplished Jesus had to make use of small groups resulting in the success of His ministry. The infant stage of the Christian Church was synonymous to small groups ministry. The success of the early church was as a result of the small groups that met in homes and prayed together, comforted one another and even taught each other in these homes. During Paul’s ministry, house Churches were very popular as evidenced by the greetings he would send to the brethren worshipping in their homes.

Ellen G. White and Small Groups

Ellen G. White said a lot on small groups in her writings commonly referred to as the Spirit of Prophecy. To what we refer as small groups today, Ellen G. White would use phrases such as “small companies,” “small gatherings,” and “cottage

meeting.” The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes her writings to be the counsel from God for the Church.

Who is Ellen G. White?

Ellen G. White is one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and she also participated in the small groups ministry that helped establish the denomination on a Biblical foundation. As a youth, Ellen G. White was involved in the Millerite movement and the subsequent formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She is one of the spiritual leaders of the Church. Case (2002) comments, “We shouldn't be surprised that God sent messages to a small group of Adventists through someone named Ellen White” (p. 61). It is the belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that Ellen G. White was the messenger from God with a special message for the Church.

Ellen G. White was baptized into the Methodist Church in 1842 after which she became a devoted active member of the Church. Johnson (2011) the Bible school director for Voice of Prophecy international radio ministry says, “As a member of the Methodist church, Ellen White became involved in what was called “class meetings” (p. 169). Her Methodist background helped the Seventh-day Adventist Church develop the small groups since these class meetings took the form of small groups.

Johnson goes on to say “Class meetings originated in England among the Methodist and later developed into the weekly prayer meeting that has found its way into many denominations, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (p. 169).

Ellen White’s involvement in the Millerite movement that specialized in small groups was a blessing to the formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She brought that knowledge and the church was formed based on this.

For the purpose of enlarging the scope of the research, the researcher will

establish what Ellen G. White said on small groups. White (1946) states, “In our Churches let companies be formed for service. In the Lord's work there are to be no idlers. Let different ones unite in labor as fishers of men. Let them seek to gather souls from the corruption of the world into the saving purity of Christ's love” (p. 115). White (1925) asserts “The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err” (p. 72).

Small groups is an initiative and program that is from above given to the Church by God for evangelism and it becomes an important tool to be used in fulfilling the commission. White (1925) further states: “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 also 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” (p. 72). The formation of small groups promotes the growth of the Church. The Church has to grow small in order to grow big. Small groups have a two faced growth. There is spiritual quality growth both to already existing members and the new members. There is also numerical growth since small groups reach far and wider territories. In the book, *Christian Service*, White (1925) observes: “In our Churches let companies be formed for service” (p. 72). This simply means that every member has a part to play in the service, be it at home, community and other places where people are to be found. White (1979) also states, “Let little companies meet together to study the Scriptures. You will lose nothing by this, but will gain much” White goes on to mention “Let small companies assemble together in the evening or early morning to study the Bible for themselves” (p. 11). One point that comes out clear here is that people can meet for prayers and Bible study in their homes rather than taking the long journey to meet with others in Church. It is easier to meet with those in the

neighborhood for Church programs in the morning and evening since these members will be living closer to each other.

Small groups serve to get everyone involved in the work of salvation of those that are lost. Once the small groups are set out and they begin to function as expected, every member finds something to do; no one becomes idle; they all become fishers of men. Every member will soon have the joy of seeing sinners repenting through their hard labor in small groups.

White (1885) further asserts, “The best work you can do is to teach, to educate. Whenever you can find an opportunity to do so, sit down with some family and let them ask questions. Then answer them patiently, humbly. . . . Preach less and educate more by holding Bible readings, and by praying with families and little companies” (p. 136). Although the work at the pulpit is important, it is not the forum for asking questions. There are so many people who could have been won had they been offered time and opportunity to be educated and they be afforded time to ask questions. Too much preaching without educating will not result in winning many souls. The people of today have shifted from the mentality of just accepting without further explanation and their questions answered. Additionally, White (1913) also observes:

“Let the teachers in our schools devote Sunday to missionary effort. Let them take the students with them to hold meetings for those who know not the truth. Sunday can be used for carrying forward various lines of work that will accomplish much for the Lord. On this day house-to-house work can be done”. She goes on to say “Open-air meetings and cottage meetings can be held. Make these meetings intensely interesting. Sing genuine revival hymns, and speak with power and assurance of the Savior’s love.” (p. 551)

Sitting down with members of a family, a community or a company will achieve far better results than when the teaching is done to a large group of people.

Both the members of the small group and the ones being reached tend to benefit.

White further states in the book *Testimonies* vol. 7 (1948):

“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. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others” (p. 22).

To form small groups simply needs a few individuals who know the truth and are willing to form themselves into such a group not only for members but also as a tool for reaching to the unbelievers. Small groups are formed for a purpose and one of them is for encouragement where the members get strength from other members of the group.

One of the strenghts of small groups is that members of the group get close to one another. This helps in knowing any problems and attending to them as much as possible. When effectively done, this helps to win souls for Christ easily. White (1905) points out that “There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen” (p. 143). She further mentions that “the poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted.” There is a lot that small groups and or companies can achieve if properly made use of, as compared to the whole congregation working together. Many more souls are

reached in their condition and are helped; yet the members of the small group will also find themselves growing to be Christ like.

Working out in small groups benefits members as they could help and encourage each other. They counsel and pray together, each one's strength supplementing the other's weakness. From the pen of inspiration, the servant of God clearly shows that working in small groups will help its members to compliment each other and they will enjoy their work. Not all members of the group may have the same weakness and strength. Where one is lacking they will be complimented by the strength of the others. Small groups are interesting in that they help reach out to those that cannot be able to attend church services because of other reasons which may include being bed ridden or old age among others. These souls can be reached easily by visiting and sharing the good news with them in their homes. White (1948) asserts, "One of the most effective ways in which light can be communicated is by private, personal effort. In the home circle, at your neighbor's fireside, at the bedside of the sick, in a quiet way you may read the Scriptures and speak a word for Jesus and the truth." (pp. 428, 429)

Small groups have a touch with every human being in the community and in their homes. Many would not be reached if the church does not operate the small groups evangelism. White (1897) comments:

"The people are deeply interested in the truth, and the important points of present truth are to them as a new revelation. The interest continues to grow, and those who embrace the truth go right to work for their friends, inviting them to come out to hear. More than this, they invite their neighbors and friends to come to their house. They then secure one of our ministers to give a Bible reading. These meetings are made very interesting." (p. 45)

It is an important thing to note that there are so many people in the communities where Christians live that should be reached. Many of these people are yearning for the truth. Small groups can take the truth to these neighbors. The truth presented in this kind of environment is more and clearly understood than when in large groups.

White (1896), in *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, goes on to mention “we must come close to those whom we desire to benefit” (p. 36). Engaging in small groups ministry will enable us to get as close as possible to those we desire to minister to with the good news of salvation. An observation also brought by White (1915) is put as follows, “The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls or Churches” (p. 193). True success in winning souls will be realized when members of the Church are involved in small groups. There are those we may never reach out to in sermons and big tent meetings, but can be reached in their homes through the vehicle of small groups.

Summary of Spirit of Prophecy on Small Groups

The issue of small groups was presented to Ellen G. White by God so as to bring out this to the Church. God in His own wisdom used this prophetess knowing that these small groups will be needed in times like these. Small companies of believers, house-to-house visits and cottage evangelism can be used to reach out to those who may not be reached otherwise. As a way of summarizing what Ellen G. White said about small groups, we can say the following:

1. Many souls can be reached out to through the use of small groups, those people who may not have had an opportunity to be reached if there were only

large open gatherings.

2. The formation of small groups does not only benefit those that will be reached by these groups, but small groups also benefit the members of the groups in that they compliment each other and grow spiritually as well, while taking care of each other as members of the group.
3. Small groups have far greater results in soul winning as compared to any other method.
4. Winning souls through small groups proves to be a good nurturing tool.
5. Every member of the church has an opportunity to be involved in outreach work.

To Ellen White, small group are not an event that is organized by the Church when there is an evangelistic effort, they are the major organizing principle of the church. The Church is to be built on small groups. Small groups provide an opportunity for those inactive members of the church to be involved in evangelism.

Contemporary Literature on Small Groups

In the secular world today, in business, sports and other organizations, the use of small groups is being implemented simply because of the benefits and effectiveness they render to that particular entity.

There are some helpful points that have been said by other different writers in as far as the issue of small groups ministry is concerned and it is in this regard that the researcher will find out what these writers said. It is also in this chapter where the researcher will find out if there are any gaps that the writers did not fill, so that they can be filled if need be.

Burrill Russell the then North America Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church Director of Evangelism Institute had a lot to say on the early Christian Church

in comparison to the Church today. In his book *Revolution in the Church* (1993), he observes, “The early Church had only a few great preachers like Peter, Paul, Apollos and Barnabas and yet it turned the world upside down.” He goes on to suggest “It is precisely the same way that the Church of the last days must finish the work of God with power of the ministry of the laity” (p. 37). Involving the laity in the Church today will give the Church the power and zeal for soul winning and desire to work for the Lord as did the early Church. Describing the early Church, Burrill says “To them witnessing was a way of life, because every believer had a ministry and the entire Church worked together and realized that each person had his place in God’s Church” (p. 28). When the local Church implement small groups, all the members will be involved in the work of the Lord. In the same book, Burrill makes an observation on small groups, “The small group movement sweeping America today is destined to totally revolutionize the Church of the future. It is not a passing fad but a return to our biblical and Adventist roots” (p. 119).

Mallison (1996) puts it this way “The small group is the basic building block of the life of the local congregation and is fundamental to the development of individual and corporate Christian lifestyle” (p. 2). Small groups have so many objectives but for the purpose of this study small groups are people who come together, agree to share life together and for the cause of God. They plan where and when to meet and arrange their schedules to be there. They have a purpose for getting together. It is not just a small group of people meeting together, they have an intention to grow and make God’s kingdom grow. And this growth takes place through many aspects among them is the following:

1. Through studying the Word together
2. Through loving and caring for each other

3. Through praying and sharing each other's burdens
4. Through reaching out to those in the dark

Levine and Moreland (19 February 2008) editors of the book *Key Readings in Psychology* state, "The 1930s marked the beginning of systematic research on small groups by social psychologists and several notable research projects were conducted prior to World War II" (p. 3). They go on to mention that; "Interest in small groups surged after the war and remained strong during the 1950s" (p. 3). It could be seen that the issue of small groups both in secular and religious world started many years back and today they are being used to achieve goals. Although in the secular world, small groups may have been started after World War II, they were already in use in the religious world back dating to the early Christian Church as will be seen later.

Impact of Small Groups in the Secular World

The issue of small groups has been around even outside evangelism; in the secular world, be it health, sport, education, insurance and many other disciplines. Small groups can be found in all forms, shapes and even sizes. They range from informal to formal. Fujishin (2007) comments, "Working in small groups is part of life. Whether you are the president or a marketing, a member of a PTA group, or the head of a high school reunion committee, you will be working with others in small groups to solve problems" Tim (2016) observes, "When the use of small groups as the key way of following Jesus was eliminated from the Church, the secular world took it, gave it different names like "cell group" "unit" "team" "quality circle" "leadership model" "empowerment" etc." (p. 17). Tim goes on to say "Communists took the small group model from Jesus and used it as an effective tool of making revolution in order to change social systems" (p. 17). Secular world has applied small groups and perhaps is still being applied up to now. The researcher took time to find out how the small

groups impacts other sectors and also find out what other researchers said about it. Historically it may be found that the power of small groups can change the world. A good example is the World War II.

In his term paper, Moon (2012), points out, “The Second World War was triggered by Germany, which was by then a failing country, on the verge of its demise. However, a small group of individuals formed the Nazis, evidently causing the slaughter of many unfortunate people during the World War. Despite the fact that Germany was a small country with a failing government, it had people who were concerned about their nation, influencing the world in a significant way” (par. 3).

One may find that more often than not people are involved in the small groups involuntarily, they only not aware that they are implementing small groups. For example a few individuals may decide to come together and form a poultry project where they put their money together and start the project and share dividends at the end of a certain period, which thing cannot be done by one individual. This is a kind of small group. One may want to think of individuals who come together and form a group of “stop smoking” who may be having a hard time doing away with the habit of smoking. These individuals are there to help each other achieve a certain goal that cannot be achieved by one person alone. They have a common problem hence coming together to form a “small group.”

In this chapter, the researcher also looked at both the religious circles and the secular world. What did the secular writers say on small groups? Are there any specific lessons that could be derived from their writings? How did accomplish their goals specifically by applying the small groups methods.

Hawkins (2014) observes “Teams {small groups} have so much potential than individuals to rise to the growing current and future challenges that face all

organizations, countries and our species, and this is being increasingly recognized in many areas” (p. 23). He points out how far the small groups can go as compared to the individual work. Margaret Mead (April 16 2016) an American cultural anthropologist once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” There is power and great achievement in small groups; people can achieve more through them.

What is the power of small groups?

1. Working together enables us to achieve more
2. They are an agent of both individual and community change
3. They bring about growth to the group members
4. Members get the sense of belonging and satisfaction
5. A lot is learnt while working with others.

Pennington (February 25 2015) puts it this way “A certain cohesiveness must exist for any small group to be able to work together, and groups that lack cohesiveness may be characterized by members who dislike each other and are unable to agree on the group’s task and objectives” (p. 83). For the small group to function well, all the members must be in harmony with each other, and a wise small group leader will strive to make the group to be well coordinated. A small group that is not well coordinated ceases to be a small group. The difference between a small group and a mob is the coordination. Coordination has to do with bringing the minds of the people together, have one common goal that they need to achieve, spell out the function of each of the group members and strive to make every group member to see the value of being part of the group.

In the education system, the use of small groups as one of the aids proves to be the best way of teaching. Lack of engagement, participation and motivation are some

of the biggest factors related to students dropping from school. They would not see the importance of school if they do not participate in the learning process. Forming small groups in a school set up helps to group the learners according to their ability thus creating confidence in them.

Students' problem solving technique and skills get to improve as they work in small groups. Compared to whole-class discussions, Hamann, Pollock and Wilson (2011) found that small group discussions were:

- a) "More conducive to critical thinking and higher-order learning
- b) Fostered more participation and more equal participation for students of different backgrounds, and
- c) Generated higher student reviews regarding engagement" (p. 57).

Surgenor (January 2010) observes "Small groups teaching has become more popular as a means of encouraging student learning" (p. 2). This has been proven to be the most effective way of teaching students, as they are all engaged in the lesson and they make meaningful contribution to that discussion.

Alcoholics Anonymous commonly referred to as AA, which was started by Bill Wilson in the 1930s, are conducted in the form of small groups and it has proved to be working for the small group members. People living with HIV & AIDS have formed support groups, which also take the form of small groups. Without these groups some would actually find the going tough since the stigmatization that comes with it is too much for the family members of the infected person. One woman interviewed infected had this to say, "When I tested positive in 1992, I went through a hard time because my family members did not accept me, but because of the support group, I find myself soldering on in life and even my family is now supportive and they accept my status" (name withheld for privacy) Small groups can be applied

almost anywhere and the results are positive. People tend to open up when they discuss whatever things are bothering them when they are in small groups.

Small Groups in the Religious World

The religious world like the secular world has its success shaped by the engagement of small groups. In fact, in the religious world, small groups are more emphasized. Commenting on the events after the Great Disappointment, Sheldon, (1981), an American minister in the Congregational Churches and leader of the Social Gospel movement comments, “Those who refused to give up their faith in Jesus ... met in small groups to study the Bible” (p. 16 & 17). This simply shows that the best way to study the Bible is to use small groups approach. Sheldon further says “And it was in these small groups that they began to rediscover all of the truth about God that Jesus had revealed” (p. 17).

One advantage of engaging in small groups is that those who are involved in this will be able to help each other realize truth from error. There are a lot of hidden truths that do not only benefit those being studied with but also the members of the group as well. Snyder (1975) suggests “virtually every major movement of spiritual renewal in the Christian church has been accompanied by a return to the small group and the proliferation of such groups in private homes for Bible study, prayer and discussion of the faith” (p. 164). The power of small groups according to Snyder can make great change in the Church.

Small Groups and Evangelism

The research was mainly looking at small groups in evangelism and how they impact on the Church and how best the members can be involved in this program. Cerna (1987) gives a testimony “I can personally testify to God's leading in two

Churches that learned to use small groups in their evangelistic outreach. In the 40-year-old Van Nuys Spanish Church in southern California we saw 350 new members baptized in just two years of small group ministry.” He goes on to say “At the end of 1984 the Norwalk Spanish church had 70 adult members. Cerna continues to give us the interesting statistics “In 1985 those members saw 71 added to their membership through small group ministry. In 1986 the same Church had 140 baptisms as a result of their small group ministry” (p. 17). This is very interesting observation from Cerna. The membership appeared to be growing when small groups were enforced. Earley and Gutierrez (2010), comment “We rejoice in ministering to people through evangelism, teaching, disciple making, praying, preaching, administering and leading” (p. 1). All these tasks that have been mentioned here are accomplished through small groups. An observation they make is that when people are working in small groups it becomes an enjoyment.

Small groups, when well implemented by the Church tend to become the church’s solution to disconnected members of both the society and the Church. Neighbour (2009) puts it this way, “Small groups are an integral part of many pulpit-centered Church growth strategies” (p. 49). Applying small groups in evangelism becomes an extension of what is started at the pulpit, reaching out to the people with the message of the cross and salvation of mankind. Atkinson and Easum (2007) indicate “A healthy and growing small groups ministry will unite and connect your church in an amazing way” (p. 7). When all the members are involved in one way or the other in evangelism there comes among them an atmosphere of connectedness and members grow in knowing and taking care of each other. Wollen (1976) affirms, “Every major revival has been influenced by a ready access to the Bible and the gathering of believers in small, intimate groups” (p. 32). Revival among the members

comes as a result of being involved in small groups ministry.

In his article in the Ministry Magazine, Gruesbeck (1982) suggests: “The small group becomes a substitute family. It brings identity and intimate fellowship to the lonely. The stranger is accepted regardless of his cultural, ethnical, or religious background. Regardless of his sin or his skin, he is loved, and that makes life very important” (p. 22). There is tolerance in small groups, everyone is accepted and feel at home.

Looking at the disciples of Jesus we have discussed earlier in this chapter, it could be seen that these men came from different backgrounds, different occupation and mindset but when they were put in a small group they all began to behave and do things like people who never came from these diverse environments. Some were accountants by profession, some were merely fishermen who spent the better part of their livelihood by the sea, yet still some were tax collectors, but despite all this they worked together and enjoyed each other’s company. When people are involved in small groups there is bonding and belonging. There are close relations that take place and yet the members begin to see that they are part of the bigger family thereby making them want to stay in the church where they are being appreciated and accepted as they are.

A Church in America that is the largest small group church grew from a small group that met in the house of the pastor to a membership of 5000 in less than twenty-five years. The pastor of this congregation, Dale Galloway, according to Cox (1995) concludes thus: “I believe that people grow at least eight times faster when they’re in a small group and attending weekly worship services than if they just attended the service itself” (p. 69). There is rapid growth in a Church if small groups are implemented. This Church is a replica of the early Christian Church.

Benefits of Small Groups

There is greater communication, bonding and closer relationships are maintained among the members as compared to the large congregation. There is sense of belonging in every member of the group, no one is misplaced and forgotten. They help in facilitating both in reach and outreach. There is total member participation. Baker et al (1985) suggest, “Spiritual growth, like emotional growth, does not occur in a vacuum. It comes as we relate to others in the body of Christ, His Church. By meeting in smaller units we make intimacy at least possible” (p. 14). They also observe “When members are in small groups they bond together more quickly more strongly. The gifts of different members are identified, utilized and coordinated” (p. 113).

There is recognition and affirmation. Members of the group get time to discover and put to use their spiritual gifts. Dick (2008) affirms, “Spiritual formation and development as Christian disciples requires that we address some of the most fundamental questions of faith, life, meaning, and purpose. Small groups provide the ideal setting to wrestle with such important issues” (p. 7). According to Dick, small groups make an impact in the church. In evangelism, the Church will do well when there are laid out ways that are clear and straightforward. Members become co-laborers with Christ in the vineyard.

In the book *Witnessing for Christ*, a manual for leading people to Jesus, it reads, “Members who live far away from church can meet for mid-week prayer meeting in a home in their territory. They can meet in the same way to organize their witness visitation and they can return after their visit to share encouraging reports. These small groups can form a nucleus of new congregations” (2015, p. 27). One big advantage about small groups is that anyone is easily reached even those who stay far

away from church. Bunch (2003) observes, “Spending time together in informal settings will help group members become more comfortable with each other and help them appreciate people in different environments” (p. 12). The more the small group members spend time together, the more they get to know and appreciate each other. The environment is informal and all the group members feel free to say their views without thinking that they will be criticized. The strength of the groups is the strength of the Church.

How do Churches Start and Run Small Groups Ministry?

Like any other program, small groups begin somewhere and they move on to grow and mature to a point where they need to be split and continue in that cycle for as long as the church is there. First and foremost, seek wisdom from God so that He can guide in the formation of the groups. A vision must be shared. The vision must be clarified. The vision will keep the group focused and it helps give direction of where the group intends to be. A vision is the picture of the future that raises a passion. The vision can be shared with the pastor, the evangelism leader in the Church, and the youth director for young people. When people buy into the vision they will be happy to participate. In the early stages of small groups formation vision is the most important tool one would want to use. Commenting on building a Church of small groups, Donahue and Robinson (2001) observe, “If you seek to build a Church of small groups make an unwavering commitment to instill authentic relationships into every group in the Church.” They go on to mention “Weave these five practices; self-disclosure; care giving; humility; truth telling and affirmation into the very fabric of community life” (p. 70). According to Donahue and Robinson, these five practices are important in small groups.

Identifying members to be recruited, and this is also a key aspect in the formation of small groups. Key people to survival of the small groups are the leaders who must possess certain qualities including caring for members. One other key quality of the small group leader is listening to the group members. When a small group formed it decides what exactly this group will be about. Is the group for evangelism or prayer only? For the purpose of this research however the formation of small groups is mainly for evangelism. Knowing the purpose of the group will help in knowing who to recruit. It is at the formation of the group where the group decides who the clients of the group are. At times forming a group without knowing what the group wants to do and who are the clients may make a small group dysfunctional. Training is also a key in the success of the small group. Members of the group need to be trained and they learn to apply what they have been trained when they visit people in their homes.

Can Small Groups Fail to Live?

The researcher discovered that there is little if any that most writers said about small groups that are started and they fail to live. There are reasons however why small groups ministry can fail. At times a small group can be started and sooner than later that small group may fail to live and function well. It was therefore of necessity that the researcher explores the issues that may make the small group not live to its expectation. Small group members need each other and they must be there for each other in order for them to go on and not die. The New Testament way of living and supporting each other is needed in the life of small groups today.

If there is too much waiting between their formation and function the zeal that had been there at the time of forming the group soon gets away. Another reason that can make small groups fail to live is lack of vision. If the group knows where it is

going then it will have the reason to live. If there is no proper training on the members of these small groups, they may fail to live to the expectation. Williams (1991) observes, “Small groups training should impart an understanding of the mechanism of growth, and it should do this with the whole group and not just with leaders” (p. 20). Training therefore is an important aspect of keeping the groups going.

Small Groups in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The early Christian Church was anchored on the teachings of small groups as evidenced by the house Churches found in the book of Acts. This has been dealt with earlier in this chapter however as a way of reflecting on it, it therefore would be appropriate to mention it here. Jesus Himself started the small groups when He called the twelve out of multitude of disciples.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began with a strong emphasis on small groups. This is partly because of its Methodist roots and also because of the inspired counsel of one of its pioneers, Ellen G. White. At the time she visited Australia, there was a major Christian revival that took place in Melbourne. About 200 small groups were meeting in homes. Small groups have continued to play a significant role in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Sabbath School classes in the Seventh-day Adventist Church take form of small groups where the department favors that when the members of the school are having their lessons they form what is called Action Units. These Action Units when looked at closely, they take the form of small groups, and one of the reasons why they learn in Action Units (small groups) is for evangelism and friendship. Johng Haeng, the North Asia Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventist Stewardship director shares a story of a Church that grew from 7 to 37 within a short space of time. He attributes this growth to total member involvement and the love the members showed to the community. He states as follows “As the

result of the total member involvement of all seven members of the Church and by the abundant grace of the Lord, 14 people were baptized” (December 2016, p. 8). If the members organize themselves into small groups and begin to show love to the people around them, no matter how small that group is there are great and tremendous results realized.

Smith (1992) comments, “Sabbath School members who unite as one in love for souls, who show unselfish, caring concern, are able through the power of the Holy Spirit to provide an atmosphere where outreach can truly be effective and lasting” He goes on to point out that “the church becomes a safe place for the Lord to bring new believers” (p. 2). Looking at the above statement, it is clear that small groups and action units serve more or less the same purpose, that of enabling members to win souls and nurture these new converts. The Seventh-day Adventist Church itself was born out of small groups where Jesus engaged only twelve men out the many disciples to build His Church upon.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Personal Ministries Handbook (2000), it is suggested, “Organize the Church into neighborhood prayer cells. Families who live close to each other can meet together at specific times. This way the entire membership is involved in intercessory prayer” (p. 65). These prayer cells mentioned here are small groups, and they are organized for strengthening each other as well as evangelism. Total membership involvement has always been the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. White (1898) observes, “Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary” (p. 195). Every Seventh-day Adventist member is an evangelist and has a mission to accomplish. There was record-breaking figure of baptism in Rwanda when all the members were involved in evangelism. The figure stands at 97,344 for the evangelistic efforts that were conducted from 13-28

May 2016 (Adventist World August 2016). When asked about the secret success of the program, the East-Central Africa Division president Blasious M. Ruguri said, “I can tell you that this success came about because each member in Rwanda Union got involved in every detail of the operation” (Adventist World 2016, p. 17). This is a clear indication that if members are involved in evangelism through small groups the Church can do more wonders like the early Christian Church.

Summary of the Chapter

Based on the Bible there is evidence that the early Christian Church’s success was based on small groups. Jesus used small groups in His ministry when He called only twelve men out of the multitude of disciples. The apostle Paul applied the small groups approach in his ministry, and the house Churches he opened in many places evidence this. Small groups have been in use from time immemorial, they could be traced, as far back as there has been humanity although research on small groups began in the 1930s. Small groups have been used in many areas and faculties and disciplines, be it in the education system, health system and the religious systems. Several authors have shown evidence that small groups in evangelism bring about success especially when they are made use of properly. However, there are some factors that do contribute to small groups failing to live up to their full potential.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes in the use of small groups in evangelism. Ellen G. White, whom the Seventh-day Adventists believe to be the messenger of God, had a lot that God showed and said to her in connection with the small groups, and today the Church is practicing those things. As the Church does so, it prospers in evangelism thereby winning and preparing more souls for the eternal kingdom.

In the next chapter, the researcher dealt with research methodology that spells out how data will be collected.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents different methods and techniques used to collect, process and analyze the data on the involvement of church members in small groups ministry as a way of evangelizing and ministering to the people generally and particularly focusing at Nketa 8 Church. The information however could be applied to any other church when someone else is conducting a research or is intending to start small groups ministry. The chapter focuses on the target population, the sampling procedure, data collection instruments and data presentation methods and analysis techniques of the findings. The researcher also determined the validity and reliability of the research instruments used.

Research Design

The researcher chose the descriptive survey method for this study. This design was specifically selected because of the objectives of study. The researcher adopted a program development approach in this study. Focus group interview was also used so as to get more detailed information. Information gathered from the respondents through a designed questionnaire was presented in tables and charts for easy analysis. While Nketa 8 was the main focus of study Maranatha Church was used as the pilot study where the researcher tested the validity and relevance of the questionnaire. Percentages were expressed to the nearest after calculating and conclusions were arrived at.

Population

The population for the study was made up of 1208 church members of Nketa 8 Seventh-day Adventist Church. Within this population of study there were 15 elders, who are the administrators of the church, with a total membership of 40 Church board members. The population also included 9 nine zonal leaders who are not members of the Church board, but are coordinating evangelism in their territories of abode and work hand in hand with the personal ministries department of the Church. The Church was chosen for study because the researcher at the time is pastoring the district where the Church is. It also has the largest membership in the district. Nketa 8 Church is also the oldest in the district, it is the first Church to be established. The district has five (5) other organized Churches that were a result of Nketa 8 Church.

The Sampling Method

Of the 1208 Church members who are the target population, only 150 were drawn out as sample representing the whole population. All the fifteen (15) elders will be given questionnaire to respond. The researcher made sure there is fair representation in terms of the adults including men and women as well as the youths.

Research Instrument

Data collected from the respondents through questionnaires that were designed by the researcher was analyzed. Small groups were also formed during the time in which the researcher conducted an evangelistic campaign. The campaign was conducted through these small groups. The campaign was done as from the 8th to the 21st of January 2017. This was a follow up to the small groups that were formed in the month of July 2016. There were training sessions done to these small groups. Data was also collected from the leadership of the church through open interview at the

time when the small groups evangelistic campaign was being run. All the nine (9) zonal leaders were given questionnaire to complete.

Methods of Collecting Data

A questionnaire was designed and given to each of the participants. A clear explanation was given at the top of the questionnaire in order for the participants to know what they are expected to do. This was done to 150 selected members of Nketa 8 church who represent the whole population. The questionnaire comprised of three (3) sections where the researcher determined to find out about the member involvement in small groups as well as the spiritual growth of these members. The other section the researcher was finding out about the church leadership and their involvement in small groups. The last section comprised of questions that dealt with the impact of small groups in evangelism.

Ethical Safeguard

The researcher treated all participants with due honesty, respect and fairness. The researcher never attempted to alter or manipulate the views given by the participants, information was received analyzed and used raw as it was received. In the questionnaire, names were not given as a way of safeguarding the respondents' privacy.

Table 1. Table for Interpretation of Mean Scores

Scale	Responses	Scale interval	Interpretation
5	SA	4.51-5.00	Strongly agree
4	A	3.51-4.50	Agree
3	UD	2.51-3.50	Undecided
2	D	1.51-2.50	Disagree
1	SD	1.00-1.50	Strongly disagree

The above table gives information on the interpretation of mean scores with the scale ranging from 5 going down to 1, being represented by (SD)= strongly agree, (A)= agree, (UD)= undecided, (D)= disagree and (SD)= strongly disagree respectively.

Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 3 basically describes the methods, procedures and instruments used in the collection of data. The chapter also addresses who the target population was and the sampling of the population where the researcher selected a total of 150 participants. These participants were in different categories ranging from the administrators of the Church, the board members together with the nine (9) zonal leaders. The rest of the other participants were the general Church members so that the researcher widens his findings. In the next chapter the researcher took time to present and discuss the results after receiving data.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter deals with the presentations and discussion of results that the researcher collected. Out of the expected 150 questionnaires, only 141 were successfully filled in and returned to the researcher making 94% of the responses received. The other 6% could be attributed to the fact that some respondents could have failed to read and understand instructions. There could be other reasons why the questionnaire was not returned. The questionnaire was divided into sections that included the following, member involvement, small groups and leadership, and the impact small groups have on evangelism.

The researcher used quantitative method to get the responses. Apart from the questionnaire, the researcher also used the focus group interview method. The aim of using this method was to get clarity that otherwise would not come out in the questionnaire. The questionnaire remained the primary instrument of collecting data. The focus group interviews were done in the month of December 2016 and the zonal secretaries recorded the responses. Those who participated in the focus interview are the nine zonal leaders, their assistants and the personal ministries director and the elder for personal ministries. Ten participants in total were interviewed. The interview questions are found in Appendix D.

Findings Presented in Tables

Research question 1: What are the demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of age, gender and number of years in the Church?

In response to the above question, Tables 2-4 show the demographic characteristics of respondents according to gender, age and number of years as church members. Table 2 below shows the demographic characteristics of respondents according to gender.

Table 2. Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	63	44.7	44.7	44.7
	Female	78	55.3	55.3	100.0
	Total	141	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, 63 (44.7%) of the respondents were male while 78 (55.3%) were female. This shows that the majority of the respondents used in the study were females. This could be as a result of the fact that the majority of the church members in Nketa 8 are females.

Table 3 below shows distribution of respondents according to age.

Table 3. Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
15 - 20 years	12	8.5	8.5	8.5
21-30 years	37	26.2	26.2	34.8
31-40 years	37	26.2	26.2	61.0
41-50 years	23	16.3	16.3	77.3
51-60 years	24	17.0	17.0	94.3
61 years and above	8	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	141	100.0	100.0	

From table 3 above respondents ranging from 21 years to 30 years are 37 (26.2%) and those between 31 to 40 years are also 37 (26.2%). Those who are 61 years and above are the least of the respondents as only 8 (5.7%) were among the respondents. This shows that Nketa 8 church is made up of members who are youths to middle aged people. It is a middle-aged Church.

Table 4. Number of years

Years	Frequency	Percentage
1-10	57	40.4
11-20	50	36.2
21-30	18	12.8
31-40	11	7.8
41-50	3	2.1
51 and above	1	0.7

Table 4 above shows that the majority of respondents are between 1-20 years as Church members. It could be seen from the table that amongst all the respondents, those that are in the 51 and above as members there was only one respondent.

Research question 2: To what extent are Church members involved in small group activities?

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I participate in small group ministry.	140	3.6500	.95905
I find that small group activities assist me in evangelism.	140	3.8786	.99977
I use small group activities to win souls into the church.	140	3.7500	.87429
I am always consulted whenever small groups are being implemented in my local church	140	3.4214	1.02535
I participate in the planning of small group activities.	140	3.5071	1.00714
I feel I play a meaningful role in membership retention through small group activities.	140	3.8429	.93124
Small groups produce souls who quickly grow mature in their faith and in Christ	140	4.1929	.83015
I believe to some extent that small groups play a role in identifying the needs of those coming to church	140	4.4214	.74975
Average	140	3.8330	.87578

From table 5 above the Church members agreed that they participate in small groups ministry, that small group activities assist them in evangelism and that it helps in winning souls into the church with means of 3.6500, 3.8786 and 3.7500 respectively. The low standard deviation for the three items indicates that the respondents were homogeneous in their responses. The respondents were undecided on being consulted whenever small groups are being implemented in their local Church as well as participating in small groups activities with means of 3.4214 and 3.5071 respectively. They are however heterogeneous in their responses with standard deviations of 1.02535 and 1.00714 respectively. Respondents agreed that small group activity play meaningful role in membership retention (mean=3.8429) produce souls who quickly grow mature in their faith and in Christ (mean=4.1929) and that small groups play a role in identifying the needs of Church members (mean=4.4214). The respondents were homogeneous in their responses to the three items. The overall

mean of 3.8330 indicates that members agreed that they are involved in small groups activities.

Research question 3: What are the roles of Church leadership in small group activities?

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Church leaders play an important role in making small groups meaningful	140	4.1143	.96026
Small groups are a way of offering pastoral care to church members and community	140	4.1857	.90232
There is proper training and promotion on small groups in my church	140	3.6143	1.16041
I attend and lead out on small groups activities during the week	140	3.5357	1.08893
Average	140	3.8625	.98793

From table 6 above church members agreed that church leaders play an important role in making small groups meaningful, offer pastoral care and that there is proper training and promotion on small groups with means of 4.1143, 4.1857 and 3.6143 respectively. For the 3 items the low standard deviations show that respondents were homogeneous in their responses for leadership playing a meaningful role and that pastoral care and they were heterogeneous in proper training and promotion. The respondents were undecided on leading out on small groups with means of 3.5357. The respondents are heterogeneous in their responses with standard deviation of 1.08893. The overall means of 3.8625 indicate that members agreed that leadership plays an important role in making small groups meaningful in the local church.

Research question 4: To what extent do small groups impact on evangelism in the local church?

Table 7. Impact on evangelism

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it easy and interesting to work in small groups	4.2357	.84488
I simply believe in the power of small groups and its impact in evangelism	4.2786	.80527
Small groups are an agent of church growth.	4.3357	.74535
I believe small groups are the best way of winning souls in the modern day world.	4.3143	.78736
Small groups ministry afford members to cover wider territories and reach more people.	4.3357	.71581
Small groups offer every member an opportunity to labor for the Master thereby becoming a true disciple of Christ.	4.3500	.83040
I believe that my church can reach the baptismal goal easily when engaged in small groups	4.3357	.84488
Public evangelism yields better and quick results in as far as soul winning is concerned than small groups	3.7000	1.19170
The success of Jesus ministry was as a result of using small groups of twelve (12) men.	4.4929	.73452
Average	4.2643	.79895

From table 6 above Church members generally agreed that they find it interesting to work in small groups, they believe in the power of small groups, that small groups are an agent of Church growth as well as that small groups are the best way of winning souls in the modern day, with means of 4.2357, 4.2786, 4.3357 and 4.3143 respectively. Respondents also agreed that small groups help cover a wider territory in evangelism, that small groups offer every member an opportunity to labor for the Master, that baptismal goals can be reached easily with means of 4.3357, 4.3500 and 4.3357 respectively. The low standard deviation for the 7 items indicates

that the responses were homogeneous in their responses. Although respondents agreed that public evangelism yields better results mean=3.7000) the high standard deviation of 1.19170 shows that respondents were heterogeneous in their responses.

Table 8. Zonal Record Card Attendance: December 2016 Nketa 8 SDA Church

Zone Name	Wednesday		Friday		Visitors
	Groups	Total	Groups	Total	
Zone A 1	7	54	8	57	7
Zone A 2	9	60	9	64	9
Zone B	8	68	9	73	8
Zone C	10	78	11	82	10
Zone D 1	11	82	13	86	12
Zone D 2	9	63	11	72	10
Zone E	8	59	9	66	8
Zone F	7	60	9	67	7
Zone G	9	78	11	84	9

This card is to be filled in by the zonal leader for all the meetings that are held during the week in zones. The zonal leader is to give the number of groups that have been formed as well the total number of groups that now exists in their zones. These cards are to be brought to the personal ministries on Sabbath and they are all reported and the totals are added to determine the number of members who are active in evangelism during the week and are reaching out to their neighbors. This has been going on from the month of October 2016 up to the time an evangelistic effort was conducted in the month of January 2017. The number of visitors is recorded and then handed to the department of personal ministries on Sabbath. Names of these visitors in zones are then invited to the evening meetings when there are efforts.

Data from the Focus Group

When the focus group interviews were done the researcher discovered that the majority of the members indicated that they are involved in small groups although not to a larger scale. They did mention the need for all the members becoming soul winners. However they mentioned that fear could be the main reason why some of the members are not involved in the small groups program. Some also mentioned the belief that the work of evangelism is for pastors and yet a few pointed out laziness. A few however indicated that the main reason is that the leadership of the Church has never tried to implement the program. Members mentioned that the leadership of the church is key in coming up with the program and when the program is launched the small group leaders become key as well. It also came out from the interviewed members that small groups help nurture both new and old members, while allowing the members to live together as family and helping each other.

Summary of the Chapter

This section deals with the discussion emanating from the data collected as a whole in relation to the research questions. Although most of the members are not active in small groups ministry in Nketa 8 church, they indicated that if there were any small groups started they would participate fully. The analysis given in the tables may be used to close the gap in terms of what small groups real are against what these members may presume. Giving the respondents options on each of the questions helped them to think critically and respond truthfully. Figures were converted to percentage for easy interpretation since simple figures would not clearly show the picture of how respondents treated each question. From the questionnaire the researcher picked those key questions that answer to the research questions and these are the ones that were presented in tables in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the content of the research and its scope, provide conclusions derived from the data presented and forges ahead to make recommendations on the impact of small groups ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church particularly Nketa 8 Church where the research was conducted.

Summary

Small groups' ministry and its impact on evangelism in the 21st century remain as key program. The ever-changing trends in the world both in and out of the Church are forcing the Christian world to rebrand the way of evangelizing the inhabitants in the communities. Why small groups in this day and age? Simply because we live at that time in our lives where everyone is ever busy with the issues of this life, no one has time to leave their usual place of work, home or other places to come and be evangelized in the church building. In this day and age, people would rather have the gospel message in the comfort of their homes as compared to being invited to church.

The 21st century sees Churches sprouting and mushrooming everywhere on daily basis. Any other person claims to have their Church as the true church, which therefore calls for sitting down and differentiating truth from error. This could be done only through engaging small groups.

Friendships and bonding can only be achieved when the church is engaging itself in small groups. Small groups do close the gap that is naturally created between the new members of the Church and those old. Needs of the new members are quickly

met as they are close to each other. Small groups do offer the members to identify and put to use their spiritual gifts. These disciples are committed to following Jesus. These disciples walk with God, they study the word of God and they also go on His mission.

The most important impact that small groups have on evangelism is discipleship. Discipleship for both the church member who is a small group member and the one being evangelized is reached. Small groups' ministry is convenient in that the meetings are held in homes and at the agreed time. No one has to go miles to attend the program. Small groups are cost effective, the members are manageable and there is no need for such things as the tents, P. A. systems and other equipment that is normally needed when there are large gatherings.

Study Findings

1. Church members agreed that they were involved in small group activities.
2. Church leadership plays an important role in making small groups meaningful in the local Church.
3. Respondents agreed that small groups impact positively on evangelism as they serve as agent of Church growth; small groups are the best way of winning souls in the modern day as it help cover a wider territory in evangelism. Those small groups offer every member an opportunity to labor for the Master thereby making it easier to reach baptismal goals

Conclusion

Based on the findings the researcher got the following is the conclusion. Member involvement in evangelism and its impact is an aspect that most of the members in Nketa 8 church agree that it is the best approach in the 21st century. Most of the members did say they participate in small groups although there are some who

said they have never been involved in these groups. The research clearly showed that the leadership of the Church plays important role in as far as small groups are concerned. If the leaders of the Church would have a vision that the modern day way of evangelizing is through reaching people in their homes, then they will initiate the formation of these groups. Although there are some small groups already formed but to a larger scale in Nketa 8, findings from the research suggest that many are willing and ready to be trained and organized into these groups. Small groups could be a stopgap measure in more members dropping out of Church. There are many members who soon after joining church leave for another denomination and the reason to this could be that the person would not have been taught. After forming some pilot small groups that culminated with an evangelistic effort from 8th to 22 January 2017 the following could be said about small groups:

1. The church could do a lot of soul winning programs through small groups.
2. All the members of the Church have a part to play in evangelism no one is exempted.
3. Small groups ministry is friendship evangelism, and everyone who joins the Church through such programs finds love and warmth in the Church.
4. Small groups to some extent play a pivotal role in nurturing the new members while meeting the needs of every member.
5. Through small groups, spiritual gifts are identified, cultivated and put into use.
6. Small groups are not an option in the 21st century; they are the vehicle through which the gospel is transported to neighbors, colleagues, family and workmates.

7. Small groups are cost effective and convenient. The groups meet at their convenient time and place upon agreeing on the schedule.
8. Small groups produce disciples who love to work for their Master and have a desire to become co-laborers with Christ.

Recommendations

The study conducted by the researcher on small groups is just the starting point where further study could be done in terms of rebranding these small groups to be even more meaningful than what has been discussed in this research project. The researcher has the following recommendations:

1. A further study could be carried to run a curriculum for the fishers of men's program to include training and enrolling into small groups.
2. As a Church there must be a deliberate move towards having permanent small group programs that are not only formed when there are events.
3. Leadership should take an active leading role in spearheading the formation and running of church based small groups.
4. The local Church must pursue better strategies of making small groups meaningful.
5. Leaders of the Church should allow members of the small group to work independently from the Church programs but only report progress weekly, monthly or quarterly.
6. The South Zimbabwe Conference can launch and train at least Trainer of Trainees in each Church so as to have more people joining and participating in these small groups.

7. Sabbath School Action units can be turned into small groups for soul winning programs rather than for studying the Sabbath School study guide only.
8. All mid-week and Friday/Sabbath services to be conducted in zones so as to promote small groups. Non-members to be invited to these meetings.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
CORRESPONDENCE

Pastor Brighton Kohlisa
Nketa/Emganwini District
Box 2811 Bulawayo

5 January 2017

Nketa 8 Church Board
Nketa 8 SDA Church
P.O. Nketa
Bulawayo

The Church Clerk

**REFERENCE: NOTIFICATION OF CONDUCTING SMALL GROUPS
QUESTIONNAIRE.**

I greet the saints in the name of Jesus Christ. My name is Brighton Kohlisa the current pastor of Nketa/Emganwini, currently studying towards a Masters of Arts in Leadership with the Adventist University of Africa in Kenya. I am conducting a research on “**The impact of small groups on evangelism in Nketa 8 Church**” I wish to bring to the board’s attention of the research I am intending to conduct at Nketa 8 Church from amongst 150 members as follows; 15 Church elders, 9 zonal leaders, 40 Church board members and 86 other general members.

This research will be done in the form of voluntarily responding to the questions in the questionnaire that will be availed to the said group. The information given will be treated with strict confidentiality, as no names will be needed. Information will be used for academic purposes only.

For further information on this the Dean for School of Postgraduate Studies at Adventist University of Africa Professor Daniel Ganu can be contacted. His email is ganud@aua.ac.ke

In His Service

Brighton Kohlisa (Adventist University of Africa)

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent

My name is Brighton Kohlisa, an MA student at the Adventist University of Africa in Kenya. I am conducting a research on Small Groups and how they impact on Evangelism in Nketa 8 Church of Nketa/ Emganwini District in South Zimbabwe Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am kindly requesting your time to respond to the questions below. Your responses will be treated confidential and will be used for the purpose of this study only. Do not write your name.

Section A: Demographic Data

Direction: Tick the box that correctly describe your demographic characteristics

1. Age group

- 15-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 60+

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female

3. For how long have you been a church member?.....

4. Through what program did you decide to join the church?

.....

Section B: Member Involvement

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which you agree that small group's impact evangelism in Nketa/ Emganwini District on a five point scale of **strongly agree** to **strongly disagree**. Check your position by ticking (✓) the box, which corresponds with the extent of your choice. Use the following scale:

Description	Scale
Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Undecided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1. I participate in small group ministry.					
2. I find that small group activities assist me in evangelism.					
3. I use small group activities to win souls into the church.					
4. I am always consulted whenever small groups are being implemented in my local church					
5. I participate in the planning of small group activities.					
6. I feel I play a meaningful role in membership retention through small group activities.					
7. Small groups produce souls who quickly grow mature in their faith and in Christ					
8. I believe to some extent that small groups play a role in identifying the needs of those coming to church					

Section C: Small groups and Leadership in the church

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which you agree to the statements below. Kindly check your position on the scale, as the statement first impresses you. Use the scale below:

Scale	Description
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Undecided
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1. Church leaders play an important role in making small groups meaningful					
2. Small groups are a way of offering pastoral care to church members and community					
3. There is proper training and promotion on small groups in my church					
4. I attend and lead out on small groups activities during the week					

Section D: Impact on Evangelism

Instructions: Indicate the extent to which you agree to the statements below. Kindly check your position on the scale, as the statement first impresses you. Use the scale below:

Scale	Description
5	Strongly Agree
4	Agree
3	Undecided
2	Disagree
1	Strongly Disagree

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
1. I find it easy and interesting to work in small groups					
2. I believe in small groups and its impact in evangelism					
3. Small groups are an agent of church growth.					
4. I believe small groups are the best way of winning souls in the modern day world.					
5. Small groups ministry afford members to cover wider territories and reach more people.					
6. Small groups offer every member an opportunity of becoming a true disciple of Christ.					
7. I believe the church can reach the baptismal goal easily when engaged in small groups					
8. Public evangelism yields better and quick results than small groups					
9. The success of Jesus ministry was as a result of using small groups of twelve (12) men.					

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of the term small groups evangelism?
.....
2. What do you think is the reason why small groups have not been effective in your church?
.....
3. Who do you think is key in small groups ministry and why?
.....
4. What tasks would you consider to be accomplished by small groups?
.....
5. How effective are small groups in evangelism?
.....
6. Have you ever been involved in small before? If so what was your experience?
.....
7. What are the concerns or fears you have about small groups?
.....
8. How comfortable are you in participating in small groups?
.....
9. In your view what would be the characteristics of an ideal small group Bible study?
10. How does small groups play an important role in soul winning and membership retention?

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