

# The Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America



*Can We Be Spiritual?*

*One Giant Leap*

*Finding and  
Empowering  
Visionary Leaders*

*Inverting the Pyramid*

*Sharing the Vision*

*A Revival of Christian  
Education*

*Growing Churches in  
the 1990s*

Dear Reader:

Mission is the single most important priority for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Christ has called His church to a specific, vital purpose in these final days of the 20th Century. He wants to reach out in saving grace to every man, woman and child on our globe. We are His hands and feet.

The focus on a mission-driven church brought leaders from across the North American Division together in 1993 to find consensus during a strategic planning retreat. I felt that the Holy Spirit was present in a marked way during that weekend, and many have told me how much they appreciated the strong vision for proclamation, nurture and service that emerged.

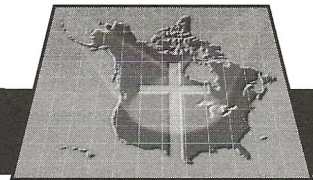
In this booklet is reprinted the planning document voted by the North American Division Committee at its 1993 Year-end Meeting and a series of articles that appeared in the Adventist Review during 1994 which present each of the seven major objectives. I would encourage you to review these goals often and ask how your local church—your school, institution, specialized ministry, conference or union conference—can move toward them.

God needs faithful people in the 1990s; a church that is obedient to His will and purpose in a time of complexity and temptation. We cannot take our eye off the prize.

Yours in His service,

Alfred C. McClure  
President  
Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America





# Mission Statement

## *North American Division Office*

**W**E the staff of the North American Division office, are a team of committed Seventh-day Adventist professionals from diverse cultures and experiences providing compassionate ministry as leaders, educators, health professionals, and evangelists. Under the leading of the Holy Spirit, we seek to nurture the church and mobilize it in Christian service.

WE believe in the power of the gospel and its proclamation through a trained, empowered, and healing community, and will continuously devise creative ways to share the Good News with all the people groups in our Division territory, and then to nurture them in the love of Jesus. We are a team that fellowships, prays, and worships together awaiting our Lord's return. Holding these values, we make these commitments:

**To Church Members**, we will provide nurture, information, and a sense of purpose and identity.

**To Congregations**, we will provide leadership training and tools for ministry.

**To the Unions and Conferences**, we will mentor leaders, provide needs-driven resources, funding, strategic plan-

ning, and Division unity through the vision of the mission of our growing world church.

**To our Institutions and Professional Groups**, we will provide networking opportunities, in-service training, and information resources.

**To Church Employees at large**, we will provide opportunities for career development, leadership that inspires confidence, and retirement security.

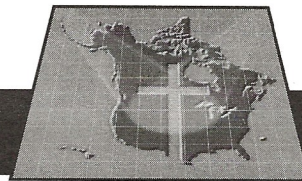
**To the Division Office Staff**, we will be a nurturing family promoting each person's potential in an atmosphere of acceptance and in the security of Christ's unconditional love.

**To the General Conference**, we will be a responsible division, conscious of world needs and willingly contributing to them so the gospel can go to the entire world.

## Goal

We believe in the power of the gospel and its proclamation through a trained, empowered, and healing community, and will continuously devise creative ways to share the Good News with all the people groups in our Division territory, and then to nurture them in the love of Jesus.





# Evangelizing North America

## *A Strategic Plan*

The local conference presidents, union officers, NAD officers and staff, and invitees (including a number of pastors, lay leaders, and consultants) met October 29-31, 1993, the weekend prior to Year-end Meeting, to engage in strategic planning for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. The theme of the retreat was "Planning for Service." Several task forces worked in preparation for the planning retreat and submitted proposals. Small groups worked throughout the weekend to identify desired outcomes, methods to achieve these outcomes, and resources necessary to undertake these methods. The small group reports were reviewed by the entire group and placed in the hands of an editing committee for synthesis. This document resulted from the weekend and was voted by the 1993 Year-end Meeting of the division committee.

### ASSUMPTIONS

Undergirding this strategic plan are a number of assumptions about the mission and nature of the Church as taught in scripture, the writings of Ellen G White, and the essential characteristics of healthy, growing congregations as revealed in practical research. They are documented in "A Shared Vision

for the Local Church" published by the NAD in 1992.

### OUTCOMES

Achievement of the following outcomes by the end of this decade:

- 1. Spiritual Life**—The vast majority of Seventh-day Adventists will perceive our message as Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful, and steps will have been taken to move our religious experience toward an authentic, vibrant spirituality characterized by the observable presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 2. Local Church**—The character of the local church will be transformed, with the majority of congrega-

tions described by their members as mission-driven, inclusive, and accepting. There will be abundant evidence that local churches meet the needs of their communities, display a creative passion for evangelism, energize their members, and generate significant youth and lay involvement, utilizing the spiritual gifts of at least 100,000 identified, trained volunteers in accredited ministries.

- 3. Church Growth**—Steps will be taken to create a climate for faithful, effective community-driven worship and outreach, and there will be clear evidence of dramatic growth in the number of men and women becoming

disciples of Jesus Christ through the church. Indicators: Sabbath attendance will be the number given emphasis in Church statistics and will exceed book membership, and there will be a doubling of the 1993 percentage of the net increase in membership.

- 4. Leadership**—Strong, visionary leaders will report that they feel empowered and supported. Church leaders will increasingly demonstrate a lifestyle of evangelism and compassion for people. Increasing use will be made of professional evaluation to hold leaders accountable instead of the present emotionally-charged election process.

## Spiritual Life

The vast majority of Seventh-day Adventists will perceive our message as Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful, and steps will have been taken to move our religious experience toward an authentic, vibrant spirituality characterized by the observable presence of the Holy Spirit.





**5. Denominational Structure**—The NAD, including its unions, conferences, and the church institutions located in the division, will have developed a more flexible, responsive, productive, and effective organizational structure and management system with an emphasis on mission of the Church instead of institutional maintenance. These changes will transform the climate of the organization, make evangelism a priority, reestablish the local church as the central focus and driving force of the denomination, and ensure the integrity of relationships with financial supporters.

**6. Information and Communication**—Information will be immediately available to local leaders and every member by fully utilizing new media technology. Communication of the facts about the financial management and needs of the denomination will be greatly improved. Greater two-way communication will be in place with more information flowing from the local church to denominational leaders. The majority of local churches will regularly utilize some means of goal-setting and action-planning such as Vision for Mission.

**7. Christian Education**—Each college and university in the NAD will perform an annual assessment of the institution's effectiveness in providing for the spiritual growth needs of its' students and also provide specific pathways for new or non-Adventist students to learn basic Biblical understandings and Adventist beliefs. The effectiveness of faculty and staff in role-modeling, mentoring, and leading students into a relationship with Jesus Christ will be a component of the evaluation process. As part of their education, students will be helped to define their mission in life as it applies to their specific

career pathway and provided significant opportunity to participate in service learning activities, including community services, church planting, and public evangelism.

#### **METHODS**

**1. In the near-term** the following action plans are already underway and should be fully implemented:

**a. Build a culture of evangelism** in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, including a continued emphasis on prayer and church renewal.

**b. Continue ongoing strategies** for Asian Evangelism, Ebony Evangelism, and Hispanic Evangelism.

**c. Implement Net '95**, an evangelistic campaign encompassing the entire division by satellite over the Adventist Communication Network.

**d. Develop Phase II** of the Reclaiming Project, a long-term Reclaiming Ministry during 1994 and 1995.

**e. Continue planting new churches.**

**f. Plan youth evangelism.**

**g. Use direct marketing techniques** to enroll people in Bible studies through 1-800-HIS-WORD and develop a network of His Word Associates to improve local follow-up to interested persons with whom contact has been established through media ministries.

**2. For the longer term**, focusing on the time-frame beyond these "in-place" action plans, when we must move into actual achievement of the desired outcomes described above, the following steps will be taken to detail the methods to be utilized:

**a. The Anglo Evangelism, Ebony Evangelism, Hispanic Evangelism, Asian Evangelism and Youth Evangelism** task forces are asked to propose specific steps to achieve each outcome in the context of their cultural focus.

**b. Each local conference** is asked to share the seven outcomes described above with the conference committee, lay advisory council, and pastors, and to propose specific methods to achieve those outcomes that relate to the local church.

**c. A task force** will be formed for each of the seven outcomes including assigned NAD staff and one representative from each union to finalize detailed action plans and budget proposals. Each task force will begin its work by reviewing the complete, written reports of the small groups from the October 29-31, 1993 pre-session.

**d. A one-day strategic planning** session, involving the NAD staff, union presidents and local conference presidents, will be scheduled in June 1994, to receive and prioritize the proposed action plans.

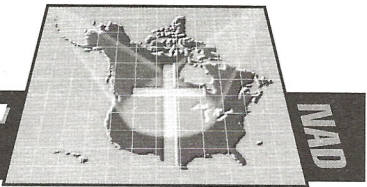
#### **RESOURCES**

**1. The allocation of financial resources** throughout the NAD must reflect the outcomes described above and the priorities of a culture of evangelism. The NAD officers are requested to commission a study of financial policies and budgets at all levels, to ascertain the degree of congruence between funding allocations and strategic priorities.

**2. The NAD Materials** Development & Marketing Committee (North American Church Resources Consortium) is directed to make as its top priority the development of resource materials, training systems, resource centers, and consultant networks that will support the outcomes and projects included in this strategic plan.

For additional information contact Robert Dale, vice president for strategic planning of the North American Division.

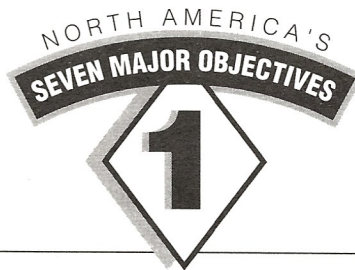




# Can We Be Spiritual?

*A rediscovery of God's vision for His church is our first step toward renewal.*

BY BEN MAXSON



## Spiritual Life:

**The vast majority of Seventh-day Adventists will perceive our message as Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful, and steps will have been taken to move our religious experience toward an authentic, vibrant spirituality characterized by the observable presence of the Holy Spirit.**

*Long-range dreams and goals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America were developed last fall when the presidents of the local and union conferences, division officers and staff, and a number of pastors and lay representatives met for a strategic planning weekend retreat.*

*During the next seven months we'll share these major objectives with you in a series of articles written for these monthly NAD editions of the Adventist Review. The following is the first of the seven.—North American Division Officers.*

**A** hunger sweeps the land. Executives meet in boardrooms to study spiritual principles. Young people gather in classrooms, dormitories, and around flagpoles to study Scripture and pray. Housewives meet in small study groups.

Businesspeople and community leaders meet in cafés for early-morning prayer and Bible study. Farmers and tradespeople pause to study and pray with each other. Scientists and professors are returning to a search for values and meaning.

A similar hunger surges through the church.

Exhaustion also settles over the

church. A strange lack of power disturbs our hearts and saps our vigor. From east to west, from north to south, young and old members yearn for a church where God's presence works in a greater way.

We know that we the church have problems, and we also know that there's a better way. Must we continue struggling over minutiae when those around us are in need of God's touch through us? How can the church really be *the church*?

### Good News

There is something better! There is something more! A new vision of what God can do pulses with the promise of His power and the reality of His presence.

John and Sue are young professionals whose lives have focused on the activities and interests that characterize persons of their age. One weekend they attend a seminar and come to understand the gospel. The awareness of what Jesus has provided for them floods their minds. Now their passion focuses on Him and what He has done for them. They want to tell everyone they know about Him. This change leads to healing in broken relationships, and new spiritual power and focus in their lives.

Tom is a pastor of a two-church district. Each church is embroiled in a power struggle that polarizes its membership. With a sense of *déjà vu*, he asks himself if he really wants to con-





tinue pastoring people whose desire for control of the church is greater than their passion for Jesus Christ. However, he has caught a vision of what God can do. His trust is growing—not in the human potential of the church, but in the divine reality. This is God’s church, and He can turn things around.

A rediscovery of God’s vision for His church is the first step toward renewing His church. That rediscovery must include an unfolding of relevant meaning in truth.

The second step is to recognize that human effort will never realize this vision. “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord” (Zech. 4:6).<sup>\*</sup> Our challenge is to seek God first and realize that because it is His church, He wants it to be even more than what we can dream.

**Renewing Our Vision**

What will God’s church be like when we give Him room to do what He wants to do? As the church we are “his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph. 1:23). We are God’s people, members of His household, joined together in Him. We rise to become a holy temple as a dwelling for His Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

When we join together in ministry (service), we reach unity in belief and relationship with Christ. We become mature, reaching the fullness of Christ. We grow into Him, and He holds us together and empowers us to build ourselves up in love. He is the builder, using us as living stones to build of us a spiritual house—a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:4, 5). As this happens, our institutions and organizations become tools in His hands. Through them He does His work.

God wants a home on earth where He can dwell. He calls that home His church. Jesus proclaimed to a Samaritan, one outside the church, that our response to God must go beyond form and become spiritual worship (John 4:21-24). The church becomes

God’s home only as we become spiritually connected in a relationship with Him that impacts everything we are and do.

This leads to a crucial issue. Spirituality is our individual and corporate foundation and essence. It means moving every part of our lives toward

God—opening ourselves individually and corporately to His presence and power.

God created us in His own image. We find ourselves as individuals or as the church only when we give Him room to restore that image in us. We will continue being dissatisfied and searching for something more until we find Him.

Much of the current pain, confusion, and frustration in the church is the direct result of our attempts to create the church in our own image—how we think it ought to be. And thus it becomes a mere cliché—an empty institutional shell with neither substance nor meaning. We must rediscover our purpose and meaning.

**Rediscovering Our Message**

Our heritage was built on clear proclamation of biblical truth. Most of us found our entry into the Seventh-day Adventist Church through doctrinal presentations. Yet having truth—the right doctrine—is meaningful only when we know Jesus. He *is* “the truth” (John 14:6).

Today that same heritage has become the battleground for church power struggles. As with all wars, the corpses of antagonists and innocent victims litter our battlefields. Jesus said that others would know His disciples, not so much for their doctrinal understanding, but rather for the way they love one another (see John 13:35).

Is it possible that our zeal for doctrine has blinded us to divine imperatives? Can we find a better balance? God’s description of His people at the end of time balances truth with relationship—“they . . . keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12, KJV).

Ellen White supported this text when she said: “The soul-saving message—the third angel’s message—is the message to be given to the world. The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are both important, immensely important, and must be given with equal

**Seven Major Objectives for North America**

*(In this issue)*

▶ **Spiritual Life**—living and projecting a Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful message.

*(April 7)*

**Local Church**—developing a mission-driven, inclusive, and accepting body.

*(May 5)*

**Leadership**—continually evaluating, supporting, and empowering leaders.

*(June 2)*

**Denominational Structure**—restructuring and transforming the organization, making the local church the central focus.

*(July 7)*

**Information and Communication**—utilizing technology and improving two-way communication.

*(Aug. 4)*

**Christian Education**—effectively providing direction and spiritual growth opportunities for students.

*(Sept. 1)*

**Church Growth**—creating a climate for effective worship, outreach, and dramatic growth.





force and power. The first part of the message has been dwelt upon mostly, the last part casually. The faith of Jesus is not comprehended."<sup>1</sup>

Our doctrinal understanding becomes powerful and significant when we see each doctrine as Christ-centered and relevant. Truth alone is not enough for people living in the 1990s' information-saturated society.

We cannot keep up with the overwhelming flow of knowledge, so we look for that which is relevant to and meaningful for us. We search for what will make a difference in our lives—what will bring power and meaning. Abstract truth can never do that.

Recently I asked my barber what would make a church attractive or appealing to him. Though he has known Adventists for most of his life, he could not relate to my question. Churches as he knows them are totally irrelevant to his life. He went on to say that he was as good as any Christian or church member, and that he had everything they had.

Christ, "the truth," has given all of Scripture as facets of truth that lead us to know more about Him. To the degree that we isolate truth from a personal relationship with Jesus, it becomes a curse for us as it did for the Jews of Christ's day. The focus on truth alone creates a new form of idolatry that blinds us to the person of Jesus. Secure in our knowledge, we see need for little more. However, because our understanding of truth becomes the essence, the substance, of our spiritual security, we war with anyone who does not agree with us.

It is time to present our doctrines—our truth—in the context of what they say about God and His ability to make a difference in our lives today. Seen from outside this relationship, the doctrines become hurdles we must overcome on

our way to God. Seen from within, each point of truth becomes a mirror and a window. A mirror reflecting more of our relationship with God, and a window through which others see the blazing light of His love spilling out into the world's darkness of sin. It is Christ and His cross that have the power to fill

seek of this experience, the greater will be the value of your life."<sup>2</sup>

Many have not seen our message as Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful because for many of us it has not been so. The world, and also the hurting in the church, are looking for someone who can help them find the fulfillment



the aching void in the human soul. "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32).

"We need a power to come upon us now and stir us up to diligence and earnest faith," says Ellen White. "Then, baptized with the Holy Spirit, we shall have Christ formed within, the hope of glory. Then we will exhibit Christ as the divine object of our faith and our love. We will talk of Christ, we will pray to Christ and about Christ. We will praise His holy name. We will present before the people His miracles, His self-denial, His self-sacrifice, His sufferings, and His crucifixion, His resurrection and triumphant ascension. These are the inspiring themes of the gospel, to awaken love and intense fervor in every heart. Here are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, a fountain inexhaustible. The more you

of Jesus' promise that we can "have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

A letter to the editor in a recent issue of the *Review* tells a tragic story. The writer tells of her mother, who had not been to church "since a pastor . . . told her that God would not hear her prayers because she was a sinner." On the "Rejoice With Me" Homecoming Sabbath, she came "home."

"Then one of our elders began preaching on all the do's and don'ts of keeping the Sabbath," she wrote. "My mother's observation, 'Not much has changed, has it?' was more true than she realized. Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, stands knocking at the church door, waiting to show us grace instead of judgment. My mother waits too."<sup>3</sup>

God has entrusted truth to us that, rightly understood, leads us closer to Him. In order for that to happen, our search needs to focus more on God than





on His truth. Doctrines are critical in protecting and guiding us in our search for God, but they easily become substitutes—substitutes that never satisfy. We must continue on in our journey after God, growing in our relationship with Him, not content with mere knowledge about Him.

### Moving Toward God

The quest for God and a growing walk with Him are to be the primary focus of our lives. Jesus calls us to seek God first (Matt. 6:33). Everything else falls into place naturally with this search. God has risked His own integrity in His promises to provide all our needs and to reward our search. “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

This pursuit becomes an exciting and fulfilling pilgrimage that changes every dimension of our lives. We have the assurance that He races to meet us as we move toward Him. There is no one in the universe God wants to be with more than you and me. As He comes into our lives, He transforms us—sharing with us His very nature.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

This authentic, vibrant spirituality is a demonstration of God—His nature, His character, and His power. It is never a reflection of ourselves. As Jesus came to reveal the Father, so He lives in us to reveal God to those around us. Maintaining our own individuality, we find ourselves becoming more than we ever dreamed we could be.

The presence of God, though shrouded by our humanity, becomes so powerful and real that others notice. Those around Peter and John realized

they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

Walking with God, we touch those around us with the power of His love. God became a man to be with us. Now through His Spirit He comes to us again—to dwell in us. As we center our lives in God, we experience the unique peace of His presence.

We rarely recognize the reality of the Holy Spirit’s work in our midst. While longing, hoping, and praying for God to send His Spirit, we have too often ignored the reality of His presence. Looking for the wrong thing, we reject

### *Our challenge*

*is to live*

*a new reality—*

*God’s reality.*

the wondrous Gift that is already ours.

Shortly before His death, Jesus promised to send another One like Himself. His promise was that the Spirit would be with us. Though Jesus must leave, He declared that He would return to us, and even if the world would not see Him, we would (see John 14:16-19). He went on to say: “Because I live, you also will live. . . . You will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you” (verses 19, 20).

Notice that the focus of the Holy Spirit is on Christ’s presence in our lives, not merely on what He would do in leading and convicting us. Christ’s promise gives us the right to receive this Gift by faith. Paul states that Christ redeemed us so that we might receive the Holy Spirit by faith (Gal. 3:14). We need not beg for what is already ours.

“The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all


other blessings in its train,” says Ellen White.<sup>4</sup>

We can experience the power and presence of Christ in our lives and church through His Spirit. Jesus becomes visible in and through us as our lives reflect His character.

### Setting An Example

The vibrant spiritual life, empowered by the living presence of God, answers the soul’s hunger. Others around us will find the answer to their search when they see our satisfaction and fulfillment in God. In Christ we find salvation. In Jesus we find peace and meaning. In the Son of God we find power and life.

Our challenge is to live a new reality—God’s reality. Instead of living from the perspective of our sinful past, God invites us to savor where we are in Him. We are His body—His joy and His fulfillment. He died and now reigns for us. As long as we nurture our spirituality and walk with Him, we have the assurance that nothing can separate us from Him (Rom. 8:38, 39).

God has made us a “new-creation” (2 Cor. 5:17) and seated us in heaven with Him (Eph. 2:6). His vision for His church can be fulfilled in what He has already made. We are His church! In Him we can be all He wants us to be. It is the spiritual walk with Him that brings us His reality. Our yearning is satisfied, and so is God’s passion! 

*Next month: NAD long-range goals for the local church.*

\*Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts quoted in this article are from the New International Version.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White *Manuscript Releases*, vol 8, p. 271. This was given at the ministers’ tent in a Denver, Colorado, camp meeting, September 1889.

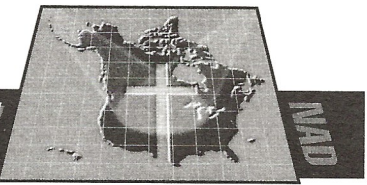
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>3</sup> *Adventist Review*, Jan. 13, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

*Ben Maxson is Ministerial Association secretary and stewardship director for the Upper Columbia Conference, Spokane, Washington.*





# One Giant Leap

*Taking time to do some Spirit-filled dreaming about local churches*

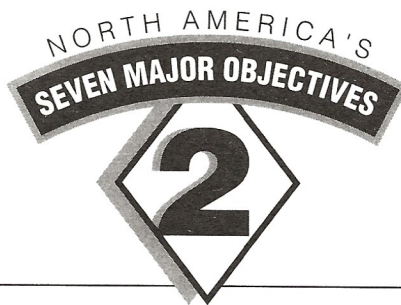
BY PAUL RICHARDSON AND CURTIS J. RITTENOUR

*Long-range dreams and goals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America were developed last fall when the presidents of the local and union conferences, division officers and staff, and a number of pastors and lay representatives met for a strategic planning weekend retreat.*

*Since March we've been sharing these major objectives with you in a series of articles written for these monthly NAD editions of the Adventist Review. Following is the second of seven.—North American Division officers.*

**O**n May 25, 1961, U.S. president John F. Kennedy made a bold statement. He challenged the people of the United States to put an American on the moon by the end of the decade. When the authors were grade school boys, our country was caught up in achieving this dream. We remember spelling bee teams named the Astronauts. We learned to spell words like "rocket" and "capsule." And we built model rockets at school or just for fun. Then one day we huddled around black-and-white television sets and watched the nation's dream come true.

Like the United States three decades ago, our North American church needs to get caught up in a dream that propels it into the future with enthusiasm, innovation, and clarity. Unlike three decades ago, the church does not need to work as much on its outer space



## Local Church

**The character of the local church will be transformed, with the majority of congregations described by their members as mission-driven, inclusive, and accepting. There will be abundant evidence that local churches meet the needs of their communities, display a creative passion for evangelism, energize their members, and generate significant youth and lay involvement, utilizing the spiritual gifts of at least 100,000 identified, trained volunteers in accredited ministries.**

(programs, buildings, structure) as it needs to define its inner space (relevance, acceptance, effectiveness).

If your church could "have it all" (spiritual commitment, unlimited finances, an abundance of spiritual gifts, a variety of ministries, etc.), what would it look like? What would Sabbath morning feel like? What ministries would be taking place? What positive conversations would you hear in the foyer? Have you ever taken time to do some Spirit-filled wishing and dreaming?

### Should We Dream?

It's a good idea to dream about the local church. Picturing the future is referred to in Scripture by such words as "hopes," "visions," and "goals." Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV).\* Joel 2:28, 29 prophetically reminds us that visions and dreams among God's people signal the end of the age. Acts 2:17 applies visioning to God's church.

Our denomination is rooted in the visions of women and men. Consider a 17-year-old teenager with a third-grade education. The vision God planted in Ellen White's heart led her to become one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Early Adventist Church leadership was progressive, daring, and bold. The pioneers were visionaries and dreamers. They planted churches, built health-care centers, established city missions, sent missionaries





internationally, and started schools in an amazingly short period of time.

We need their spirit of planning and dreaming. We must try new ideas and methods. "Men [and women] are needed who pray to God for wisdom, and who, under the guidance of God, can put new life into the old methods of labor and can invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members and reaching the men and women of the world."<sup>1</sup>

**A Mission-driven Church**

When I (Paul) worked in British Columbia a decade ago, I traveled on many roads in that beautiful province. But there was no better perspective than being in the seat of a small plane with the conference president. From the sky I got a different view of the terrain than on the ground. A mission statement created by each local church gives its members an overview perspective. Setting goals and creating specific plans in a participative way gives personal power and passion to church members. To be mission-driven is to move with purpose and direction.

Someone once quipped, "If you don't know where you are going, you will probably get there." Of all organizations on earth, God's church ought to have a clear, well-defined mission. Not a general, lukewarm, "we all know what we are here for," unspoken mission, but a specific, written-out, prayed-over statement of mission created by, owned by, and carried out by local church members. The unique opportunities and challenges that face your church and community should shape your mission.

We are all invited to share and live the gospel of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20), but our methods will be as varied as our personalities and past experiences. Congregations too have personalities. If we are seeking to share Christ with a churched person who knows where the books of the Bible are located, our methods will reflect this. But if we are reaching out to an unchurched person with no background in Christianity at all, our methods will be different.

Once while doing business in a bank, I (Curtis) noticed a plaque on the wall for all to see. It read "Our Mission: A Commitment to Excellence." A bank with a mission statement? How many churches have a clear vision of purpose on a plaque in the lobby, on each bulletin and hand-out, or in the heart of each member?

**An Inclusive Church**

I (Paul) was once in a Sabbath School class in which the teacher did not speak to people as they entered the room. After every person was seated, he saw someone new sitting in the third row. Instead of

welcoming her as an honored guest, this teacher said, "Do you belong here?"

"I'm a visitor," she replied as her face turned bright red. Fortunately, other members of the class stepped right in and gave her a warm welcome, but this woman surely must not have felt very included in that class!

Jesus died for every person. Christ interacted freely with people from every walk of life. Although this brought conflict, Jesus' outreach methods crossed barriers of gender, race, culture, handicap, and status. Are we intentionally inclusive in our local churches?

A muddled remnant theology can foster exclusiveness. Firsttime guests or returning members may sense an arrogant atmosphere in a church. "We have it all" thinking drives people away. Jesus sought to reach a variety of people through a spectrum of avenues.

A paradigm that describes an exclusive church is the castle. Castles have one entry, a narrow bridge, guards, and a moat with snapping crocodiles. This view of the church makes it more challenging for people to come to the church. It is not inviting.

Perhaps we need a paradigm shift. A better model might be a tent. The "essentials" are poles and stakes. The tent walls are flexible. People can freely come and go from many different avenues to bring people to Christ. John the revelator saw a vision of the New Jerusalem with "three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west" (Rev. 21:13). God's people stream in from many avenues, not just one. The church must be inclusive in its outreach.

A pastor friend once said, "We choose our members; they don't choose us." His point: We set up unspoken barriers for people coming into churches by our non-verbal cues or unfriendliness that says "Certain types of people are more welcome here than others." These attitudes do not match Christ's words and example.

**An Accepting Church**

An Adventist church member once called to seek encouragement after expe-

**Seven Major Objectives for North America**

*(March 3)*  
**Spiritual Life**—*living and projecting a Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful message.*

*(In this issue)*  
**Local Church**—*developing a mission-driven, inclusive, and accepting body.*

*(May 5)*  
**Leadership**—*continually evaluating, supporting, and empowering leaders.*

*(June 2)*  
**Denominational Structure**—*restructuring and transforming the organization, making the local church the central focus.*

*(July 7)*  
**Information and Communication**—*utilizing technology and improving two-way communication.*

*(Aug. 4)*  
**Christian Education**—*effectively providing direction and spiritual growth opportunities for students.*

*(Sept. 1)*  
**Church Growth**—*creating a climate for effective worship, outreach, and dramatic growth.*





riencing some nonaccepting attitudes in her local church. It seemed that one of the Sabbath school classes was putting the concerns of its members over the tradition to "finish the lesson's content" on any given weekend. Church leaders authorized the head deacon to lock the door to the classroom where they met because they wouldn't stop this "destructive practice" of filling much of the classtime with talk about people's struggles. If you were a member of that class, would you feel accepted by the other members of that church?

For some, hurts begin at church because of nonaccepting attitudes. Militaristic methods of accountability do not draw people to the church or Christ. Cold stares, avoidance tactics, and careless comments create barriers. Members who care about compromising standards creeping into the church sometimes compromise Jesus' highest standards of love, tenderness, gentleness, and patience with the hurting.

We can articulate all the objective facts of the gospel as we know it, but unless the subjective experience of the gospel is ours, people will doubt the facts. You can be an Adventist member in good standing because you hold to church teachings, and at the same time have the personality of a crowbar. We are good at asking "Are we right?" It is time we ask, "Are we kind?"

Speaking of Christ's ability to reach lives, Ellen White remarks, "His words bore with them a convincing power, because they came from a heart pure and holy, full of love and sympathy, benevolence and truth."<sup>2</sup>

I (Curtis) once visited a church with a big red stop sign by the front door. As I approached the entry I wondered if security guards would do a body check before allowing me to enter! I was relieved to see a few additional words on the sign. It read "Hurts STOP Here."

### **A Community-focused Church**

On one of my (Paul) recent trips I lost some valuable papers. In that folder I had several receipts for some major year-end

purchases I had made that I wanted to list on my tax return. I looked for weeks to find them. I asked friends and family if they had seen them. I searched diligently for something that was important to me.

Ask yourself, "Does my church have a passion for people who don't know Jesus? Or does it mostly seek the already convinced?" Perhaps Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees might apply to our church today. "Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. . . . For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners'" (Matt. 9:12, 13).

We are theologically convinced we need to reach the lost, but has this conviction touched us emotionally? We speak of lost "souls." Does even our terminology distance us from getting to know people who have no faith or hope? It is essential that all members feel the hurts of the

*We must try new ideas  
and methods.*

homeless and poor, the challenges of the single parent, the pain of the abused in dysfunctional relationships. Jesus did. How can we do any less?

**A community-focused church goes to lost people.** Many see effective evangelism as bringing people to a church event. But evangelism in its best form brings the church to the individual. It recognizes that Christ's favored method is through friendships.

**A community-focused church is honest.** It must freely admit to its weaknesses and failings. Abuses have and do take place in the church. If the local church cannot deal with its own dysfunction, how can it effectively respond to the hurts of the community? Our hidden shames cripple us from healing and moving forward together. We must be honest with each other and with our newfound friends in the community.

**A community-focused church is also relevant.** It touches where people hurt. It

illustrates the principles of Scripture through recent stories, survey results, present-day authors, etc. Worship services are designed with a sensitivity to appeal to the unchurched. Programming its relevant to the individual and family concerns of people at every age.

We do not compromise principle by being sensitive to the needs of others; we uphold principle. Christ never asks us to sin to reach a sinner or to let go of God to take in someone else. We affirm Christ's methods by sensitizing our methods and language to people who know nothing of Christ and the gospel.

My (Curtis) college roommate went to Indonesia as a student missionary. I listened as he told me what he was learning in a required class before he left. They studied about the culture, some about the language, and how to personalize the Christian message to the lives of the people he was intending to meet. Should we do any less in North America as we reach people who do not know Christ?

### **An Empowered, Spiritually Gifted Church**

I (Paul) like to do some public speaking, but I'm not a preacher. I like to interact in small groups, but when that group is playing table games, I'm not as interested. Each of us has personality strengths and weaknesses and is uniquely gifted by God's Spirit. If in the church we can use our strengths and invite support in our weak areas, we are empowered to contribute our time, energy, professional ability, and money to make a difference.

We want the fullness of Christ to be seen, heard, and felt in local churches. A church empowered by Christ is a church utilizing the gifts of the Spirit. Members freed by local leaders to pursue their passions for Christ are to serve in areas of giftedness that bring an explosion of energy into the church's ministry.

Leadership gifts are described in Ephesians 4 as preparing "God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature,





attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, 13).

It is unfortunate for local churches when pastors are viewed by members (or view themselves) as the person who carries out the work of the church. This unbiblical view stifles members from exercising God-given gifts to build up the church. Ellen White writes, "The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him, not on the ministers."<sup>3</sup>

Volunteering for church work is often viewed as a list of jobs "we have to fill." When members are not involved, it is seen as a people problem when it may be a placement problem. Skilled leaders who train and place people into areas in which they are gifted take an important step in empowering members. Local churches would take giant steps by developing an ongoing ministry of teaching spiritual gifts, providing a structure for gifts implementation, and loving support. We have a lot to learn from volunteer organizations run in our communities with professional efficiency and awareness of variety in talent.

I (Curtis) have regularly listened to the frustrations of nominating committees as they struggled to "fill slots." Warren Salvesson calls this the "Buffalo Bill" method of recruitment. "[We ride] into a herd of buffalo and, as they scatter, [we look] for the stray that lags behind because it is not fast or cunning enough to get away, and lasso it. We look for those members who haven't learned how to get away, and we snag them into doing what we need done, regardless of whether the job has anything to do with their gifts or interests."<sup>4</sup>

### **Making It Our Own**

A local elementary school committee was developing plans and goals for the upcoming year. The process was going slowly. Finally one board member complained, "I'm tired of filling out forms and sending them on to a committee that will look at them and then dump them into the round file." Exactly!

Creating goals for someone else is not the same as creating goals for one's own

God-encouraged causes. It is crucial for plans and goals to be created by the local church, owned by the local church, and carried out by the local church. While other entities within our denomination give direction, support, and encouragement, we are cooperative, but not dependent on them.

Has Spirit-filled dreaming fallen by the wayside? Perhaps we do not believe God has great plans for our church. Maybe we need to capture the essence of Jesus' words in John 14:12-14 when He said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

If God gives you a vision of what your church could be, you become a bridge to your church's future. God has given all of us the freedom to invent our future. Let's break our narrow views of the way we think church ought to be, and purposefully shape it in the way God is leading you to be involved in its future.

The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 3:20, "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." We need to remind ourselves as Jesus reminded His skeptical disciples in Matthew 19:26: "With God all things are possible."

### **One Giant Leap**


Astronaut Buzz Aldrin describes how his dream came true when men landed on the moon 23 years ago. "[After the *Eagle* landed] we were supposed to try to sleep for four hours before exploring the surface. But whoever signed off on that plan didn't know much psychology. We'd just landed on the moon, and there was a lot of adrenalin zinging through our bodies. Trying to sleep before the [walk] was like telling kids on Christmas morning that they had to stay in bed until noon. . . .

"Suiting up for the moonwalk took us

three hours. . . . [Soon] we depressurized the lunar module, and Neal [Armstrong] opened the hatch. He backed out on his hands and knees, working slowly, trying not to jam his backpack on the hatch frame. He moved down the ladder carefully, then reached over and pulled a line to deploy the lunar module's television camera. Bruce McCandless said, 'We're getting a picture on the TV.'

"I'm at the foot of the ladder,' Neil said. From my window I watched Neil move his blue lunar overshoe from the metal dish of the footpad to the powdery gray surface.

"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."<sup>5</sup>

A president once challenged his country to put an American on the moon—and it happened. The time has come for a number of people to be challenged by God to make our local churches all they can be—driven by a mission, inclusive and accepting, sensitive to the community and empowered by gifts from the Spirit. If that happens, maybe before the end of the decade we will see people go beyond the moon—to heaven. 

*Next Month: NAD long-range goals for leadership.*

\*Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

<sup>1</sup> *Welfare Ministry*, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 469.

<sup>3</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 19.

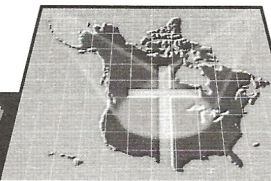
<sup>4</sup> Marlene Wilson, *How to Mobilize Church Volunteers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1983), pp. 54, 55.



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## Finding and Empowering Visionary Leaders

*These times demand top quality leadership for the church.*

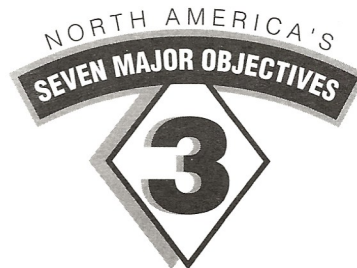
BY HAROLD L. LEE

*Long-range dreams and goals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America were developed last fall when the presidents of the local and union conferences, division officers and staff, and a number of pastors and lay representatives met for a strategic planning weekend retreat.*

*Since March we've been sharing these major objectives with you in a series of articles written for these monthly NAD editions of the Adventist Review. Following is the third of seven.—North American Division Officers.*

Athletes competing in the 1994 Winter Olympics were driven by the slogan "Go for the Gold." Their goal was high, not just to receive a medal for their athletic achievements, but to receive a gold medal—the highest award possible.

The words "Go for the Gold" have been used as a slogan to spur others on to attain high goals, to achieve something of great value to them and others. One goal for every Seventh-day Adventist is to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . and teaching them to



### Leadership:

**Strong, visionary leaders will report that they feel empowered and supported. Church leaders will increasingly demonstrate a lifestyle of evangelism and compassion for people. Increasing use will be made of professional evaluation to hold leaders accountable, instead of the present emotionally charged election process.**

obey" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV). The Lord Jesus says, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir" (Isa. 13:12).

We are told that "God has given us a commission which angels might envy."<sup>1</sup> Yet many people are apathetic and serve merely as "pew members"—Sabbath morning spectators in local churches.

Many members are passive and inactive. Consequently, churches are weak and unable to respond well to the challenges and opportunities of Christian faith and to the many needs in the communities in which they are located.

#### Committed Team Players

Why does it seem that leaders have to work so hard to entice church members into faith development and faith sharing? Can you imagine the coach of a skating or basketball team pleading with players to get them to attend practice? Such a thought is ludicrous! If the coach says anything, it will be something like "Practice is at the regular time tomorrow. Be there!"

Organized sports use a basic principle from the church. Inherent in joining the team is a commitment to play the





game. Inherent in playing the game is a commitment to practice.

And of course, the role of the coach is crucial in enlisting and maintaining this commitment. The quality of coaching is just as vital to the achievement of team goals as is the skill and dedication of each player.

Within the leadership of the church there is an ongoing focus on the mission of the church as we move toward the twenty-first century. Turbulent times are everywhere, and daily challenges make business as usual impossible.

It is still true that growth and action are the main evidences of life. As baby boomers move into middle age and baby busters burst on the scene, societal changes are taking place so rapidly that it is difficult to plan and implement fast enough to keep up. Because the rate of church growth has fallen significantly, it is time to examine a few of the old paradigms carefully and critically and consider new ones that would be relevant today.

Institutional maintenance and preservation are demanding even larger time blocks from leaders than ever before. Leaders are, therefore, reevaluating the role and responsibility of the denomination as a service entity for the local church. The local church must again become the center of ministry and mission; congregations must be the central focus and focal point of gospel proclamation, the primary dispensing agency for the love and grace of God. It is at the local church that people commit to faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour. This historic Adventist paradigm for ministry and leadership seeks revisitation, revitalization, and reinvention by leadership.

Leaders at all levels of the church know that the most important factor for the church's mission is its people—the Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, Anglos, and others who make up the church in North America. Resources to meet the church's needs are available in its members, as many people are gifted by the Holy Spirit for service.

### **Seven Major Objectives for North America**

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Christian pollster George Barna says that the 1990s are a time of trying to win adults back to the church. He says that the greatest thing that needs to be considered is "the way" in which we do this.

People in general, and Baby Boomers in particular, have become more distrustful of large organizations, including institutional religion as manifest in denominational structures. Barna states that more than 60 percent of the adult unchurched population feel that the church is not relevant to their needs. His surveys reveal that only a small number of people would turn to a church for

help during times of personal crisis. Many feel that churchgoers are intolerant and uncaring.<sup>2</sup>

The reality of these attitudes means that our fruitful efforts in spiritual and numerical growth will come not so much as a result of our organized efforts, but rather as a result of people caring about people. In spite of much distrust of organized religion, Barna reports that one in four of the unchurched would attend church if invited by a friend.<sup>3</sup>

The times in which we live test the church to its limits. Church leaders must enable members of the local church to think about its lifestyle, its faith commitments, its relationship to the community, its care of its members and their families. The congregation must be encouraged to look at the quality and character of their moral intent and at the meaning of Christian faith to them.

The same urgency for mission-driven ministry that shaped the church in its beginning must be rekindled to re-create the church of the future. But this urgency is being short-circuited by the tyranny of the immediate.

How can the corporate church help a congregation or conference get hold of itself—its mission and purpose, its direction, the quality of its own life, and its relationship to the community around it? What do leaders and pastors need to activate, mobilize, and transform in order for churches to come alive in the Spirit and grow so that Christian faith can be more profoundly expressed in the life of a congregation? What must congregations do to prepare themselves for the future? A prepackaged plan is not the answer.

The North American leadership of the Adventist Church is committed to a reemphasis on the primacy of evangelism—focusing the church and its human resources on people helping people, inviting people to know and experience the love of God. This is who we are, what we are about, how we do things.





## Provocative Questions for Leaders

A number of crucial questions about the mission and future of Adventism require dialogue from leaders at every level of the church, from the congregation to the division:

- What does it mean to be a Christian in a post-Christian, secular, multicultural, diverse society?
- What is the calling of church members in daily life, in the home, the community, and the workplace?
- How can congregations recover a clear sense of focus on Christ's great commission, the task of making disciples—of enabling men and women to relate their faith to their life and ministry in the workplace and the world?
- How can congregations and conferences be transformed from an inward preoccupation with institutional survival and success to a preoccupation with God's plan to demonstrate His love and redeem the lost?
- What would be the marks of a transformed congregation that is capable of empowering its members for ministry?
- What do congregations need from the conferences that they are not now getting in order to empower them to rise to the current challenge?
- What kinds of training in skills development as well as spiritual formation do pastors and lay leaders need in order to effectively lead their congregations in facing the new mission frontier?
- What kind of reorientation and training do conference leaders need in order to provide what is needed by congregations and pastors?
- What will be the role of union conferences in working with local conferences and congregations to bring about the desired results?

### The Need for Leaders

The work of leaders is crucial at every level of the church. Each president, pastor, teacher, elder, small group leader—anyone who seeks to influence another person or group to do something, “to go boldly where they have never gone before”—is a precious gift of God.

Leadership is the work of sharing the vision of a proactive future for the shape and work of the church. A leader is any person who has the gift of influence, the one who knows where he or she is going and is able to persuade others to go along.

A leader is one who takes you where you have never been, where God wants you to be. Leadership, therefore, is more than position and power: it is not a title but a function, and it has more to do with responsibility than rights.

Growth means change and often discomfort. God's people must be set free to grow. Both growth and the lack of growth demand it. From the parables of Christ we learn that a tiny seed grows into an enormous plant. The church must be in the “business of growth,” or it will die. It is God's will that it grow both numerically and in faith maturity.

The calling of the clergy is to build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11, 12). A healthy church is built up because it has a balanced ministry involving all of its members. The motive for ministry is service to people. The church exists for ministry. Leaders bring people into ministry according to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Today's leadership is very different from yesterday's. It takes more than just good preaching and quick wits for the church to grow and achieve the spiritual

strength required in today's environment, let alone tomorrow's world. It takes a special kind of man or woman to exercise godly, strong, visionary, enlightened, people-empowering leadership.

A godly, visionary leader is certainly not a reactive leader. Achievement of desired outcomes depends on the leader's ability to reach and empower other people, to enable others to take ownership of the mission, goals, and objectives of their church(es) and conference(s).

Accountable leadership is based on trustworthiness, not success. The breakdown of leadership occurs as a result of unwillingness to be held accountable, not because of failure. Understanding accountability encourages us to learn how to be trustworthy as we share leadership and empower others to accomplish the needed tasks.

### Leadership Commitments

The leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America—the presidents of the division, unions, and local conferences—have made renewed commitments to planned growth and proactive, intentional processes to bring about positive change. They carry a particular responsibility to carry our Advent hope and remnant mission into the years ahead of us.

“Leadership is the key factor responsible for growth,” says author and lecturer Daniel Brown. “Leadership is cultivating in people today a future willingness on their part to follow you into something new for the sake of something great.” George Barna states that leadership is the “key component if the church is going to progress.” Leaders who do “business as usual” will fail to capture the attention and stimulate the interest of the average adult.<sup>4</sup>

The task of leadership is to create the means whereby members can act upon their commitments. Leadership wants to assist the local church through the provision of appropriate tools that will enable it to express its mission and





commitment to Christ and the community it serves. One of these tools is prayer-based, Scripture-centered strategic planning.

Many times strategic planning has been seen as a way to “deal with our problems.” Rather than clarifying or discerning God’s will for the church, the planning process has focused on demographics, identifying “target audiences” and trying to figure out how to keep structures and institutions alive in a time of declining financial support and generational shift. My own sense is that we are facing issues, questions, contradictions, and trends that require reexamination of who we are rather than reorganization or new programs. The issues seem to call for a new way of planning.

We need processes that bring people together to pray, talk, and think. If we simply focus on goals and achieving them, we may end up with a lifeless document that sits on the shelf, rather than new life in the church. We need an open, nonthreatening process that allows questions to be asked, the Scripture and other inspired counsel to be discussed, and creative new ideas to be shared. People need the opportunity to share their hopes and dreams for their church, to pray together and recommit to making God’s will real in their midst.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). The people of the Adventist Church have hopes and dreams for the future of their church—God-given hopes and dreams. We get so used to responding to others’ expectations that our own vision remains at an unconscious level. Drawing out this vision and empowering people to move in the direction of that ideal requires inspiration; it is the core task of leadership.

Truly effective leaders are change agents constantly challenging and repositioning people, programs, resources, objectives, and whole organizations to best accomplish the mission. Accomplishing legitimate, meaningful change is the real test of leadership.

Enlightened leaders are people who

see today’s challenges and changes, and work with today’s resources to meet tomorrow’s agenda. Strong, visionary leaders utilize a balance of logic, emotion, compassion, and control to lead with effectiveness.

### Empowering Others

Enlightened leaders empower others by creating an environment, or “corporate culture,” that unlocks their creativity and energy, allowing them to make contributions to personal, spiritual, and church growth. Leaders do this by following certain eternal principles.

*Ministry and mission*

*belong to every*

*member of the church.*

First, there is prayer. Prayer sets the stage for regaining a strong sense of vision. “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9, 10). Prayer produces faith, vision, courage, and encouragement.

Second, godly leaders utilize the art of delegation. Delegation of responsibility is essential for effective leadership. Delegation is the ability of the leader to transfer work to another person, giving that person the power to see that the task is carried out. Delegation is a strategy that promotes success, especially in an organization that is constantly getting larger, where leaders can no longer keep pace with all the details that they once did.

Third, visionary leaders work constantly to sharpen their skills. A leader does this by learning new leadership methods that work. Leaders can sharpen skills by reading quality books on leadership, attending leadership seminars,

and spending time with other successful leaders who are willing to share what they know. They ask questions, listen, take notes.

“There is no freeway to the future and no paved highway from here to tomorrow. There is only wilderness. Only uncertain terrain. There are no road maps. No signposts. So pioneering leaders rely upon a compass and a dream. Leaders look forward to the future. They hold in their minds visions and ideals of what can be. They have a sense of what is uniquely possible if all work together for a common purpose. They are positive about the future, and they passionately believe that people can make a difference.”<sup>5</sup>

As the body of Christ, we are asked to carry the vision of His kingdom into all the world. This involves a church that knows itself and its community, a church that knows its mission, goals, and plans of action to do what our Lord commands us to do. It requires strong, visionary leaders.

“Go and make disciples of all nations.” We cannot be faithful to that mission unless we grow, affirm, and support those who exercise the spiritual gift of leadership. Unless leaders are valued as a gift of God.

In a time when all of the traditions about organizations and the exercise of authority are changing, it is necessary for the Adventist Church to find ways to continue to value and empower leaders. Church leaders and members must work together to build the leadership roles and processes needed.

<sup>1</sup> *Medical Ministry*, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle*, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

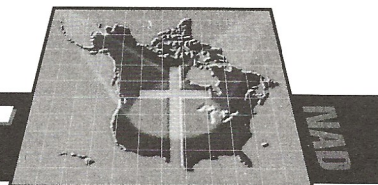
<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, p. 79.



Harold L. Lee is secretary of the Columbia Union Conference, Columbia, Maryland.





# Inverting the Pyramid

*Have you been praying for church leadership to reform?  
Now look what you've done!*

BY JACK CALKINS

It was my first trip to the General Conference. I hadn't even been baptized yet.

It was 1969, and those large, majestic paintings of Moses and John the Beloved, in the lobby of the old General Conference building, mesmerized me. Takoma Park was Vatican City as far as this almost former Catholic was concerned.

My patient pastor, Thurman Petty, ushered me through the halls and offices. We got to pray with several church leaders, and I was impressed. They prayed for me. They prayed for my ministry. I wasn't even a member yet! Didn't they know how immature I was? How silly I could be? How thoroughly un-Christ-like I was?

Yeah, they probably did. But they realized something I didn't. I was the church.

Enfeebled and defective as I was—and still am—I was and am the church. And so are you.

Hallowed halls, inner sanctums, official de-



partments, and boardrooms are not the church. No architecture is involved, except that of character building. The church meets in buildings, but buildings aren't the church. Notice: "the church that meets at their house" (Rom. 16:5), "the church in her house" (Col. 4:15), "the church that meets in your home" (Philemon 1:2).\*

The church is people, people who follow Jesus because He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life of God's kingdom.

And there's another key concept: Leadership is not the church. Leaders are the *servants* of the church. Notice: "the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17), "shepherds of the church of God" (verse 28), "and in the church God has appointed first of all . . ." (1 Cor. 12:28), "the elders who direct the affairs of the church" (1 Tim. 5:17).

Leadership equips and empowers members, and provides resources for their ministries. That includes providing and facilitating a vision of what we're doing in our

## Denominational Structure

**The North American Division, including its unions, conferences, and church institutions, will develop a more flexible, responsive, productive, and effective organizational structure and management system, with an emphasis on the mission of the church instead of institutional maintenance.**

**The changes will transform the climate of the organization, make evangelism a priority, reestablish the local church as the central focus and driving force of the denomination, and ensure the integrity of relationships with financial supporters.**





following after Jesus. Members do ministry, building up the body internally and externally—together. Are you still with me?

Paul put it simply in Ephesians 4:11, 12: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (NKJV).

Another essential concept: the church is the *local* church, not the conference, union, division, or General Conference offices. That local body of believers is the church, the biblical church: “the church at Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1), “the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria” (Acts 9:31), “the church at Antioch” (Acts 13:1), “the church in Cenchrea” (Rom. 16:1), “the church of God in Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2), “the churches in the province of Asia” (1 Cor. 16:19), “the church of the Laodiceans” (Col. 4:16), “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess. 1:1).

Is this congregationalism? No. Here’s why:

Congregationalism makes one cell of the body the whole body. Congregationalism pits the will of one cell against the will of the whole body. We have not bought that—nor will we ever. One cell doth not a whole body make. But all the cells, under the will of one body, are a whole body.

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church” (Eph. 1:22).

“Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior” (Eph. 5:23).

“After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church” (verse 29).

“This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church” (verse 32).

“And he is the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18).

“... in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the

## Seven Major Objectives for North America

(Mar. 3)

**Spiritual Life**—*living and projecting a Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful message.*

(Apr. 7)

**Local Church**—*developing a mission-driven, inclusive, and accepting body.*

(May 5)

**Leadership**—*continually evaluating, supporting, and empowering leaders*

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(July 7)

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(Aug. 4)

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(Sept. 1)

**Church Growth**—*creating a climate for effective worship, outreach, and dramatic growth.*

church” (verse 24).

Each local church is a manifestation of the church, Christ’s body—unique, yet dependent on sister cells for a healthy life. And leadership is to facilitate the health of those cells.

### Turning Point

The body has come to a turning point. And it’s no small thing. There are many reasons for it, but one central issue: to be more effective in our ministry for Christ and *with* Christ.

Without reciting a litany of horror stories, we’ve all witnessed or experienced the abuse of spiritual authority in the church. And I hope we’ve matured

to the point that we can discuss it.

### The Body Needs Some Changes

One symptom I’ve observed over the years is that the local church begins feeling that it’s there to serve the leadership institutions, rather than the other way around. You know what I mean? The tail is wagging the dog. I don’t think I’m the only one who’s felt that way.

So, some changes are in order. And this is why you’ll be hearing about some major changes at the North American Division level of our church organization. Here’s what you can expect:

**If it hasn’t happened in the local church, it hasn’t happened in the church.** This means that leadership’s reason for existence is to serve the ministry needs of the local church. If there are institutions that do not contribute to the life and ministry of the local church, we need to take a hard look at why we maintain those institutions. And this process has already begun.

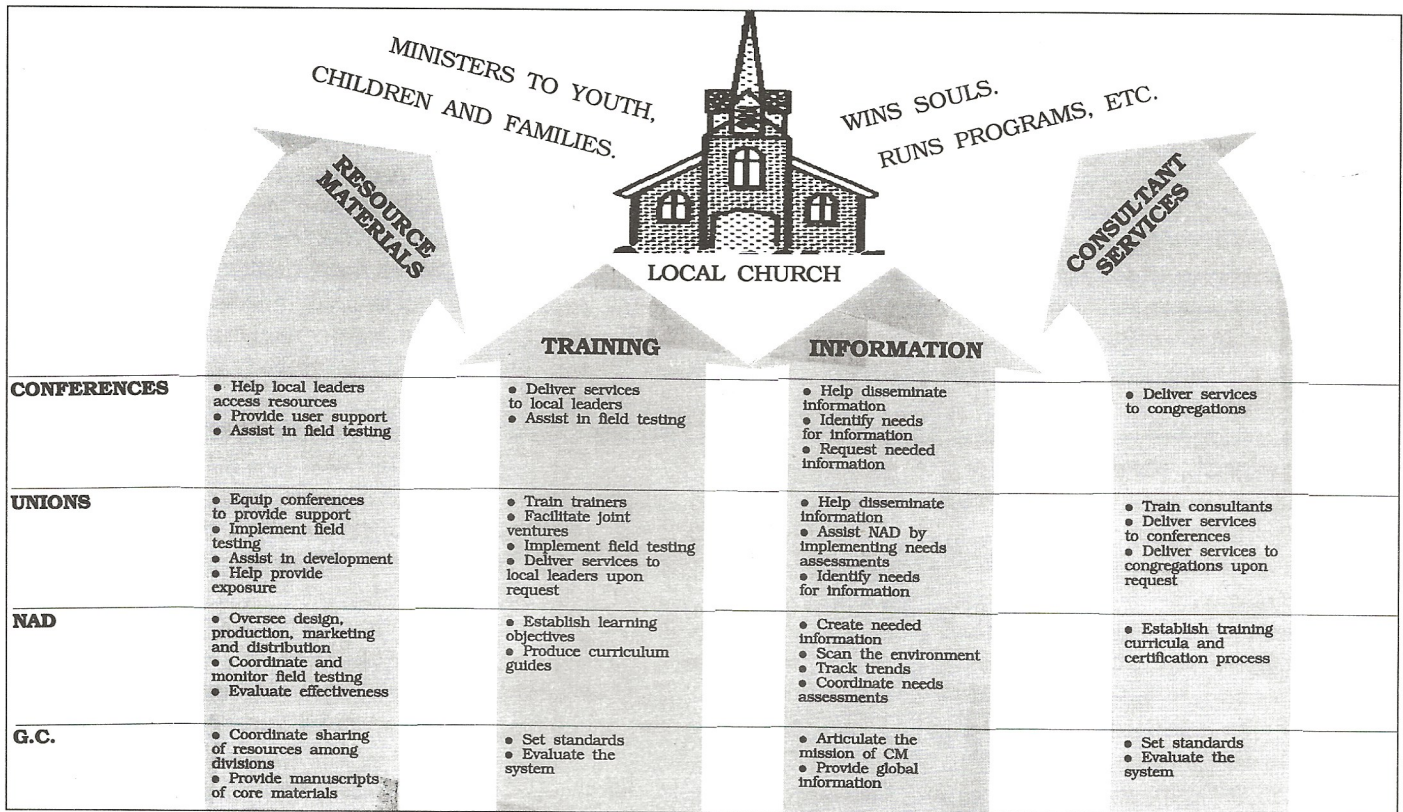
**One essential function of leadership is to do local church needs assessments.** It’s a simple idea: If you haven’t asked churches what they need for more effective nurture and outreach ministries, then you can’t know for sure. We haven’t always created resources based on this process.

### Someone Has to Say It . . .

I want to be kind, but someone has to say it: there have been too many top-down mandated programs of questionable value aimed at the local church. The problem isn’t the programs; the problem is the process by which those programs were developed and funded.

In the North American Division, a division-wide local church needs-assessment process has already begun. It’s a profound shift in resource development. It will take us a few more years to learn how to do this smoothly. It requires a level of unprecedented cooperation from all levels of church organi-





zation. It mandates human resource development, power sharing, and participatory management.

**The local church can't utilize effective resources if it doesn't know they exist.** This sounds pretty simple, but let's face it—most of us don't really know what's available.

You probably aren't aware of the marketing revolution taking place within the church, but you will be. In the near future (some resources are in place now) there will be telephone resources (800 numbers) you can call to find answers to your local church ministry questions. Soon there will be extensive on-line computer services through which you can access downloadable information and share ideas. Plans are now being laid to have a satellite TV downlink site within an hour's drive of every local church in the North American Division. This means that most future communication and training can be done continent-wide, at minimal cost.

To make a long story short, the North American Division is making unprece-

dent investments in providing nearly instantaneous communication; state-of-the-art training experiences for local church officers and leaders; the highest quality, most cost-effective resource materials for spiritual growth and evangelism; and more stuff than there is space to write about it. Things are changing, and changing quickly.

To make all these things happen, there's a significant reorganizational effort going on at the North American Division. You'll hear more about the details as time goes on. But the most important thing to remember is why this is all happening. It's because *your ministry matters!*

If I may use these terms in the best sense, your church leadership is involved in repentance and reformation. This is not to malign the past, but to affirm the present. There is a growing shared vision among leaders that prioritizes *your ministry* for Jesus Christ. It's not just lip service. Bucks and brains are being committed to facilitating your growth in grace and ministry.

Some have called it servant leader-

ship. It's a paradigm shift with the sole purpose of empowering you, the church.

In the near future the following realities should be the rule, and not the exception: empowering members, meeting needs, and sharing the gospel. This is the vision of your servants in the North American Division.

Jesus died to pay our debt in full. He lives to bring fulfillment to every person living by faith in His love. He longs to give His church greater gifts than we would ask for ourselves. Heaven's resources await our reception. Local church needs cry out for prioritization. The needs of the world are begging for those willing to serve. You are needed!

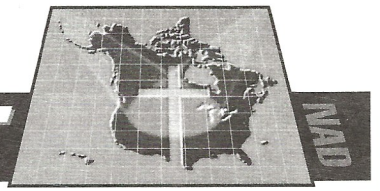
Should any church institution exempt itself from such a mission?

\* Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.



Jack Calkins is marketing director for the Adventist Communication Network of the North American Division.

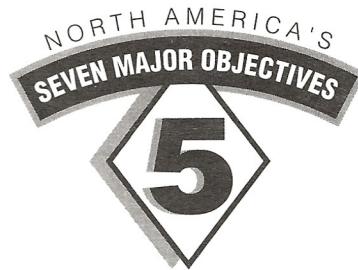




# Sharing the Vision

*Church life and ministry in the information age*

BY JEAN THOMAS



*Long-range dreams and goals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America were developed last fall when the presidents of the local and union conferences, division officers and staff, and a number of pastors and lay representatives met for a strategic planning weekend retreat.*

*Since March we've been sharing these major objectives with you in a series of articles written for these monthly NAD editions of the Adventist Review. The following is the fifth of seven.—North American Division officers.*

**S**oldier ants scurry along their well-worn paths, carrying sticks and bits of grass to their holes in the ground. As they move along they touch each other to make sure they're on the right track. Disrupt them by destroying part of their track, and they become confused. Only after scurrying

around do they connect with each other and go on with their day's tasks again.

People react similarly when lines of communication and direction are broken. Confusion often results. Distrust, disillusionment, and disruption come when

there's a lack of clear communication. In business, in a church organization, or at home with the family, communication—the sharing of information, ideas, plans, and concerns—is key to a productive and smooth-running operation. When all parties feel part of the whole by being included in the plans, it enables them to work together productively.

The concept of sharing ideas and plans was graphically illustrated recently when my husband and I were taken to our first live basketball game. Not knowing much about the game or its rules, we were kept briefed

## Information and Communication

**Information will be immediately available to local leaders and every member by fully utilizing new media technology.**

**Communication of the facts about the financial management and needs of the denomination will be greatly improved.**

**Greater two-way communication will be in place, with more information flowing from the local church to denominational leaders. The majority of local churches will regularly utilize some means of goal-setting and action-planning such as OMR (Outcomes-Methods-Resources) or Vision for Mission.**





by our hosts on what was taking place.

As the minutes passed and the scores climbed, the game's dynamics intensified. Just two or three points separated the opposing sides. The atmosphere became tense. Perspiration glistened on the players' brows. The coaches paced back and forth. The scores were too close to allow for a mistake. No one team could really get ahead—they were too well matched.

Watching the tactics the coaches and their teams used to stall for time was fascinating. With only minutes left and the scores nearly tied, one wrong move could mean defeat. Every tactic had to be carefully calculated and every move planned. Time-outs came frequently—a tactic used by both sides to get their team into a huddle to share their strategy for the next play.

Today we're nearing the end of the "game" here on earth, and the scores between right and wrong are too close for us to be fragmented and unsure of our strategies. This is not the time or place to be fuzzy in our thinking or have plans that are uncertain. This is not the time to send out mixed messages.

The 1990s have brought tumultuous changes in what used to be a predictable way of life. What was once deemed stable and dependable has now become questionable. Love, marriage, family, religion, politics, community, government—all are in a state of transition. Like those soldier ants, our pathway has been disturbed.

A lack of confidence in leadership is common in business, education, politics, and religion. Leaders still give advice, but few people listen. Many people are making up their own rules. There is very little respect for law—any kind of law. People even choose which of God's laws they will keep, or they make up their own. A lawyer in Washington, D.C., says, "I don't need the pope, the press, or some lowly cop to tell me how to live my life."<sup>1</sup>

To confuse issues even more, the media dominate today's thought. As

Michael Levine states in his book *Guerilla PR*: "After our own families, no influence holds greater sway in shaping the text of our being than do the media that cloak us like an electronic membrane."<sup>2</sup>

The confusion of values, the dropping of restraints, and the apparent lack of direction give a mixed message from the major institutions of society. Today the Christian church faces a formidable task in clarifying and upholding the principles of faith. "In turbulent times," writes Peter Drucker, "the first task of management is to make sure of the institution's

capacity for survival, to make sure of its structural strength and soundness, of its capacity to survive a blow, to adapt to sudden change, and to avail itself of new opportunities."<sup>3</sup>

Our "team," the Adventist Church, and we the "players" need time out to share plans. We need to rethink our strategies, plan our moves carefully, and make sure we're communicating our messages clearly. We're on the right team. It's founded on God's Word. We need never question God's leading, because "the Lord has provided His church with capabilities and blessings, that they may present to the world an image of His own sufficiency, and that His church may be complete in Him, a continual representation of another, even the eternal world, of laws that are higher than earthly laws."<sup>4</sup>

It's important that as team players and leaders we communicate with each other, that we all have the same goals, and that our message is clear. "Millions of Americans have turned their back on Christian churches, because they believe it is hypocritical for churches to preach love but exhibit rancor and division regarding denominational lines . . . [and] ethnic differences. . . . They are not about to patronize an institution which appears incapable of living what it preaches. . . . Only 4 out of 10 adults say the church is relevant for today's world . . . , and few pastors feel they are part of a team of people working together to enhance the spiritual and social condition of the congregation and the world."<sup>5</sup>

"Clearly the Christian body cannot hope to have much of an impact if we respond in the same ways we have in the past. These are new challenges, demanding creative, unique responses. The solution that worked 10 or even 5 years ago will fail in the coming decade. After careful study of our options, and discerning the mind of God, we must tailor new strategies to address this new environment."<sup>6</sup>

An article in the November 25, 1993,

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issue of the *Adventist Review* described the leaders' hopes and dreams as they were discussed at the North American Division year-end meeting.

One layperson made this comment: "To revitalize the church, any dreaming and implementing must involve not just 'chiefs' but also church members throughout the process. We too have our dreams. Therefore, more than half of any task force on dreams and their implementation should be composed of church members.

"Dreams cannot be dreamed for others, nor can they be imposed from above. Let the North American Division leaders try it once again, and they'll see how we church members continue our heavy slumber—or go on nightwalking out of the church."

### Shared Vision

Maybe this "player" has touched a key point not many have considered—that of a *shared vision* where the whole team is together in making its plans and its moves. Goals and objectives must be owned by all players if the game is to be won.

"Organizations that have efficient, clear, reliable means of communication tend to be successful; those whose lines of communication are underdeveloped, imprecise, or otherwise restricted are more likely to experience stagnation or decline. . . . Articulating the vision is one of the most important types of communication. Having a true vision is of little value unless it can be communicated with clarity and consistency."<sup>7</sup>

Recognizing the need to maintain closer contact with all entities of the church, the North American Division committee, at its 1993 year-end meeting, spent time considering the rapidly developing communication technology and its implications for the church's mission.

The "information superhighway," which promises to provide the infrastructure to support a high-speed data network, makes it possible for everyone

to be linked with everyone else. It's possible that a fully interactive, multidirectional network can be a reality within the church in the next three to five years. Many pieces are already in place (see box on the previous page), providing for instant transmission of multidirectional full-motion video, videoconferencing, and instant data access. It will enable all members of the church to access information and interact on a scale as never before.

*Organizations that  
have efficient, clear,  
reliable means of  
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### Empowering People With Information

Empowering people to access information and interact will have a profound positive effect on the church organization, the ministry of every believer, and the mission of Christ.

Four goals are being suggested to lead the church to better utilize current and future technologies as communication pathways: (1) improve communication between various church organizations and entities, (2) utilize communication technology for more effective evangelistic outreach, (3) improve participation in decision-making processes, and (4) reduce travel and meeting expenses.

With the variety of technologies already in place, such as personal computers (which, according to Adventist Family Opinion, are in 26 percent of Adventist homes across North America) and videocassette recorders (in 59 per-

cent of Adventist homes), it will not be difficult to begin this process of sharing information. In the future the Seventh-day Adventist Church will have two-way access to multilayered church information that will empower church members to pick and choose the reports, helps, news, and other felt-needs programming they want.

In addition, church members and leaders will be able to communicate regarding church teachings, our mission, the use of church resources, issues affecting church life, Christian lifestyle, and major trends. Church members and leaders at all levels will also be able to participate in decision-making processes. As they become involved in the communication process, the local church will become the central focus and driving force of the denomination.

In other words, leaders and church members will—having shared their hopes and dreams, prayed together over their plans and strategies—work together on a united front to point the way to final victory under the leadership of our Master Coach, Jesus Christ.

To that end we are challenged to become knowledgeable about modern communication technologies and to make use of these new opportunities to share and be a part of today's church, a church that seeks to minister in a world spinning to destruction

<sup>1</sup> James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day America Told the Truth* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1992), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Levine, *Guerilla PR* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Drucker, *Managing in Turbulent Times* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1990), pp. 137-139.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

*Jean Thomas is the communication director for the Southwestern Union Conference and editor of the Southwestern Union Record.*





## The Adventist Information Superhighway

BY JEAN THOMAS

In the past few months a number of initiatives have been taken throughout the Adventist Church in North America to open up new opportunities to communicate. Some are still experimental; others have already begun to yield benefits.

**SDAs On-line** is a forum operated by the church on CompuServe, one of the world's largest computer-accessed information and communication systems. This week hundreds of Adventists are signing on for the first time to find:

- "libraries" where news bulletins are posted daily and one has access to such documents as a complete list of all church resource materials, a contemporary comment on this week's adult Sabbath school lesson, and the entire collection of Ellen G. White writings.

- "message boards" where they can share recipes, comments, how-to ideas, and opinions on church programs and goals.

- "conferences" where live interaction can happen; committees actually meet across tens of thousands of miles, attended by anyone who has a computer with a modem.

**Adventist Communication Network (ACN)** is a satellite linkage that brings each participating local church into live events. With a telephone anyone can ask questions and enter into the discussion. In full operation since April, ACN is providing an average of two events per month in 1994 and will go to about twice as many events in 1995. These include:

- training for local members in all kinds of ministries.
- seminars suitable to invite the community—family life, health, Bible study, and current issues addressed by the best presenters the Adventist Church has to offer.

- evangelism that enables every local church to have a major evangelist preach in their community.

- historic events such as the 150th anniversary of the Millerite message on Sabbath, October 22, when the General Conference president, Robert S. Folkenberg, will speak from William Miller's farm in New York, and the world session of the General Conference next summer from Utrecht.

- a regular time on the first Wednesday night of each month when mission stories, reports on the church in North America, ADRA documentaries, and world church news are shared.

**SDA FaxPlus** is a computer filled with basic fact sheets answering the most frequently asked questions that come into the NAD office. Dial (800) 474-4SDA, follow the simple instructions to enter your fax number and a code number, and you will instantly get a copy of the information you want. A current list of these free documents can be obtained by dialing in document number 002. SDA FaxPlus is a place on the information superhighway for

those who are not users of computers or satellite dishes; it uses simple telephone technology. Want to know the Investment projects for 1994 or what the Net '95 project is all about? Or how tithe funds are used, or the latest disaster-response bulletins? It is all here, accessible by telephone and fax.

**SDA Plusline** is a telephone help line where real people answer the phone and help you find the specific materials and information sources you need to be more effective as a pastor or local church officer. It has been operating on a test basis for more than a year in the Pacific Union Conference. An elder can dial (800) SDA PLUS and ask where to get a copy of the new *Elder's Handbook*. A Sabbath school superintendent can find out where to get a Korean language mission quarterly. The new chairperson of a committee assigned to start an inner-city project can find out about resource centers that provide training, consultants, and technical assistance. In the next few weeks SDA Plusline is opening up to all of North America as a shared project of the nine union conferences and the NAD.

**Adventist Family Opinion (AFO)** is the "Adventist Gallup poll"—a constant sampling of the needs, concerns, and viewpoints of pastors, church board members, and people in the pews. It provides a major channel for two-way communication, from the grass roots to the denomination's leaders. Coordinated by the NAD Office of Information and Research, it involves a network of skilled interviewers and researchers. Included are:

- weekly interviews with pastors, conducted by the Baby Boomer Ministries Resource Center based in Portland, Oregon.

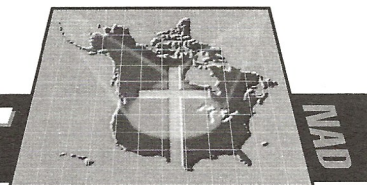
- focus groups, held in many cities, where 8 to 12 pastors or church members gather to spend two hours sharing what they see as needs and effective ways for church programs to function; the Pacific Union Church Resource Center conducts these for the NAD and other church entities across the division.

- two major surveys each year, with responses from a random sample of more than 2,000 church members, conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University.

- special studies such as Avance, which focuses on the Hispanic churches, and Valuegenesis, an in-depth look at the views of youth in grades 6 through 12.

This is just an introduction to the comprehensive information and communication system that can open up a whole new world for sharing, learning, and collaboration among Seventh-day Adventists in North America. If you would like more information on any of these services, call (800) 253-3000 anytime.

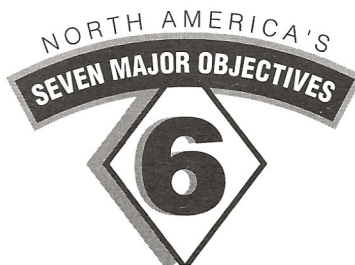




## A Revival of Christian Education

*Can we make Adventist schools even more mission-driven?*

BY WARREN MINDER



*Long-range dreams and goals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America were developed last fall when the presidents of the local and union conferences, division officers and staff, and a number of pastors and lay representatives met for a strategic planning weekend retreat.*

*Since March we've been sharing these major objectives with you in a series of articles written for these monthly NAD editions of the Adventist Review. Following is the sixth of the seven.—North American Division officers.*

A recent study<sup>1</sup> compares two groups of Adventist teenagers. It found that those attending Adventist academies are more loyal, active members of the church than those educated in public high schools.

The youth in this study who attended Adventist academies support key doctrines such as the Sabbath and the Spirit of Prophecy to a greater degree, and 97 percent of them believe that the teachings of the church are relevant to the times. They are more willing to share their faith and they hold church offices more frequently. They

are also more faithful in returning tithes.

Another study<sup>2</sup> focused on students who attend all 12 grades in an Adventist school. It concluded that those who attend their full elementary and secondary years have approximately a 50 percent greater probability of joining and remaining in the church.

So Adventist education compared to public education is successful in helping to prepare youth to be active Christians. But if we compare it to God's ideal for our schools, we may conclude that we are doing only a mediocre job and that we could improve dramatically.

The strategic plan, under development by the North American Division, to evangelize North America includes proposals aimed at improving our educational system that would help schools focus on God's ideal for Adventist education. These proposals include:

- A curriculum that provides the opportunity for service and witnessing.
- A place for new Adventists and students who are not church members to study the

**Christian Education**

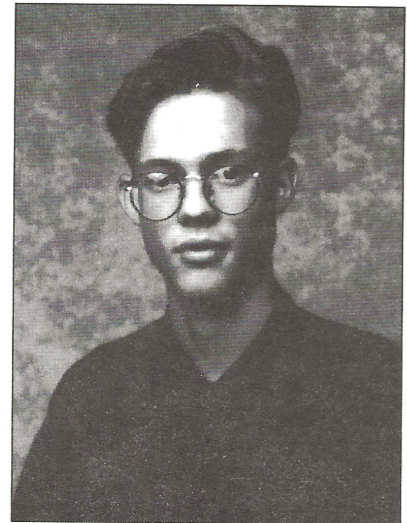
**Students will be helped to define their mission in life as it applies to their specific career, and provided significant opportunity to participate in service learning activities, including community service, church planting, and public evangelism. Each college and university in the division will perform an annual assessment of the institution's effectiveness in providing for the spiritual growth of its students.**





worldly, sinful practices, we must follow God's command to be involved with the world, and introduce it to Christ. God's plan for the training of our young people includes active service. Ellen White writes, "True education is missionary training. . . . All are alike called to be missionaries for God."<sup>4</sup>

True education involves missionary training, and our education system fails if it does not produce young people who have a missionary zeal. We need to develop doctors, lawyers, architects, administrators, computer operators,



Bible and Adventist beliefs.

■ An effective faculty and staff that will model the Christian life, lead students into a relationship with Jesus Christ, and mentor them as they grow in faith maturity.

■ An annual assessment of our educational institutions' effectiveness in providing for the spiritual needs of the students.<sup>3</sup>

These four concepts were formulated with the hope that they will help schools put into operation God's great dream for all Adventist young people, which is to prepare them, as well as the world, for the soon return of Christ. It's a dream that can be realized because our schools will have taught them to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and to live a life based on His eternal principles.

First, what about the need for a curriculum that provides opportunity for service and witnessing?

A primary goal for Adventist schools should be to produce mission-focused young people who are eager and equipped to share Jesus Christ with the world. Yet often our young people have become content to live comfortably in an Adventist subculture that has little contact with the outside world. They have not been trained or inspired to reach others with the gospel.

Although we shouldn't adopt any

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blue-collar workers—people of every occupation—who model Jesus Christ in their lives and are a living witness to His principles every day.

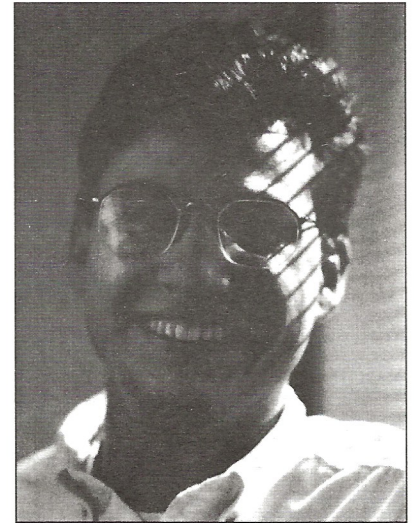
Part of preparation for a career should be how a person can forward the gospel through their chosen profession. Adventists should be able to influence the people they come in contact with, and win them for Christ. And the training for this great endeavor should take place while they are in Adventist schools.

This means that students should be working to bring people to Christ while they're still in school. Which in turn means that our curriculum should give young people time and context for service and evangelism.

I have personally seen many of my students' life goals change drastically because they spent a year as a student missionary in a foreign country or as a Taskforce worker here in North America.

How about a curriculum that offers young people service and evangelism opportunities each week? Service learning activities that would equip them to participate in such thrilling ventures as public evangelism, church planting, Bible studies, as well as various ministries of compassion in the community? How many more lives would be





changed and how many more people would be reached by the gospel.

The whole church needs to work together to plan a curriculum that will do this.

What I am advocating is not some pie-in-the-sky plan. A system can be implemented similar to the one Cindy Tutsch began at Great Lakes Academy and in the Oregon Conference, where witnessing became a part of the curriculum and a professional trainer part of the faculty. It resulted in large numbers of students experiencing revival by sharing their faith on a weekly basis, and new members joining the church.

But it's difficult to implement such a program unless we budget for it. Show me your budget and I'll show you your priorities. If the church is serious about producing mission-driven young people, that seriousness needs to be reflected in its finances.

We need teachers, equipped to train young people to spread the gospel, who are provided with budgets for outreach activities. With the millions of dollars we spend on our schools each year, the church has a right to expect that an adequate amount is allocated to training young people to reach the world with the gospel.

A related goal of Christian education should be to teach students within

our school system who are not church members about the Bible and Adventist beliefs. And newly baptized members who come into our schools later in their education need to get a grounding in Adventist doctrine and heritage.

Presently many students attend our elementary schools, academies, colleges, and universities who do not come from Adventist homes. In a few of our schools, such as Florida Hospital's College of Health Sciences, they are the majority. These students—whom the Lord has brought to us—need to learn how to prepare for Christ's second coming, just as Adventist young people do. We need Bible classes that will minister to their spiritual needs as well as count toward their academic requirements.

These students also need mentors who will connect them with good Christian friends and exert a positive spiritual influence. We need to care enough to see to it that some compatible person takes a personal interest in their welfare. Our schools must become not only places where we take care of our own, but centers where young people from any faith or background can find Christian community and learn about the gospel.

### The Key Component

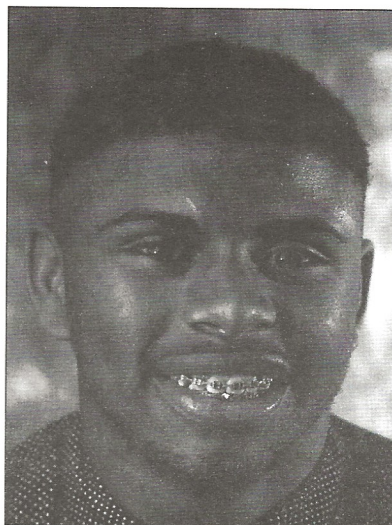
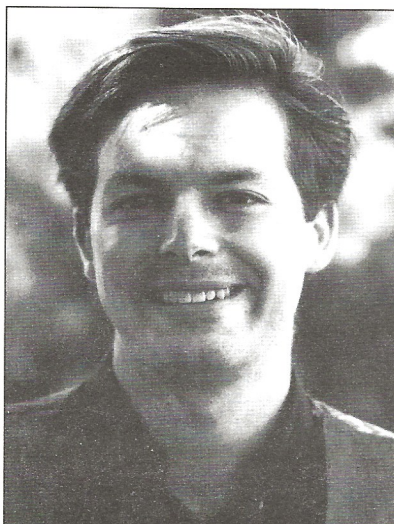
For our schools to be centers of vital Christianity means that we need a faculty and staff who model what it means to live as an Adventist today. We need teachers who bring young people to Christ and mentor students in their relationships with Him.

It's important that we hire only committed Christians who are good examples of practical Christianity. Only a Christian teacher can pass on Christian values. The spiritual qualifications of teachers are as important as, if not more important than, their academic qualifications.

Often search committees review the candidates' professional records and give little attention to their spiritual qualities. But only Christian educators who have surrendered their lives to Christ can give our young people a genuine Christian education.

When we advertise a teaching or administrative position, spiritual expectations should be mentioned along with the academic requirements. Spiritual requirements such as a genuine love and care for students, along with a desire to integrate Christian lifestyle and values into every area of the classroom, should be emphasized. Teachers who aren't committed to ideals like these would be uncomfortable in an





environment that expects it. Their influence would be counterproductive to the goals of Adventist education.

We also need to review our hiring policy regarding contract teachers who are not Adventists. Some of them may be practicing Christians, but some aren't. If they're not practicing Christians, should we allow them to participate in the process of Christian education?

At the elementary level, even part-time teachers who are not church members should never be used. Perhaps, as one moves up the ladder of education to graduate school, a Christian teacher who is not a member of the Adventist Church wouldn't greatly influence the student whose value system is firmly in place. But we should be careful at all levels.

**Making the Grade**

If we are to determine school effectiveness in reaching expected outcomes, there needs to be an annual assessment. We must ask regularly—school by school—if Adventist faculty and staff are effective in providing for the spiritual growth needs of the students. The spiritual goals set by the school and the church collectively should result in sustained spiritual growth. If not, an assessment may provide the reasons for the failure and allow administrators to develop appropriate measures for the future.

Spirituality is not always easy to evaluate, but each school should examine its general climate and ask if the climate is promoting spirituality. Examining the general climate would bring evaluation to every department, from the faculty's performance in the classroom to the cafeteria's offering at lunchtime to the deans' worship services to the recreation offered. It would also assess the rigorous academic program offered by many of our schools to see if the heavy workload that so many students complain about was leaving enough time for spiritual pursuits.

The bottom line in an assessment program is the students' attitude to Jesus Christ and the Christian life. Are they happy to read about Him in the Bible? Do they enjoy going to church to hear His word? Are they willing to participate in outreach activities? Do they exhibit the fruits of a committed life? The church and the school should work together to develop these and other spiritual growth criteria, and then assess them.

With a committed faculty and staff who are annually looking for ways to improve the school's spiritual climate, and a student body who are daily learning about the Saviour and finding new outlets to share Him with others, Adventist education can rise to new heights. A recommitment to the service

concept in education is a first step toward revitalizing our educational vision.

It can become the type of system God wants it to be, helping to produce a generation of converted young people who will eagerly anticipate and usher in Christ's return. After all, for what other reason did God raise up this church? Why did Ellen White provide so many inspired principles for Christian educators to follow? Why are we training so many teachers and operating so many schools?

The answer can only be to prepare people whose educational institutions have taught them to know and love Jesus Christ, to obey His Word, and to prepare the world for the coming of His kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Rice, "A Study of the Relationship Between Attending Seventh-day Adventist Academies 9-12 and Subsequent Commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Ph.D. diss., University of Denver, 1990).

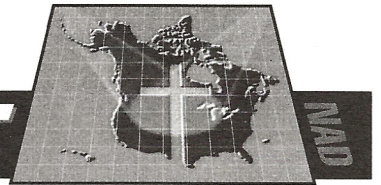
<sup>2</sup> Warren E. Minder, "A Study of the Relationship Between Church-sponsored K-12 Education and Church Membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (Ed.D. diss., Western Michigan University).

<sup>3</sup> *Review*, Feb. 24, 1994, p. 18, goal 7.

<sup>4</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 395.

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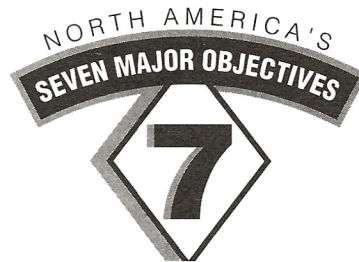




## Growing Churches in the 1990s

*How your church can experience growth—and know when it's happening.*

BY JAMES W. ZACHRISON



*Long-range dreams and goals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America were developed last fall when the presidents of the local and union conferences, division officers and staff, and a number of pastors and lay representatives met for a strategic planning weekend retreat.*

*Since March we've been sharing these major objectives with you in a series of articles written for these monthly NAD editions of the Adventist Review. Following is the seventh of the seven.—North American Division officers.*

Maybe you've experienced the feeling that something in your church is not quite right. There are baptisms, transfers in, and steady—but not outstanding—increases in tithes and offerings.

But looking around the sanctuary during Sabbath school and church, you notice the same faces you've seen for years. And some of the new members who came just a few months ago you haven't seen in weeks.

You haven't seen some of the people on your church list in years. And they live just down the street!

If you take a look at the objective in the box on this page, you will notice that it states two basic goals for your congregation. One is that it adds new members. The other is that it finds a

way to create a system—called here a “climate”—in which your congregation will lend itself to winning converts and turning them into effective, participating disciples.

There are two things to consider. First, how is this climate created and sustained? And second, how will your congregation know that it has accomplished this objective?

### Using the Right Yardstick

The usual way of measuring numerical growth in an Adventist church is by the church membership list. Church records, however, often contain names of people who have died, left the church, or long since moved away. They're not the most accurate way of measuring church growth.

This objective uses a different yardstick: actual church attendance. Sabbath attendance, because of the climate created, should be larger than the book membership.

### CHURCH GROWTH

Steps will be taken to create a climate of faithful, effective community-driven worship and outreach. There will be clear evidence of dynamic growth in the number of men and women becoming Jesus' disciples through the church. Sabbath attendance figures will be emphasized over book membership, and the net membership increase from 1993 will be doubled.



**Creating a Climate**

What is the climate you need to create, and how is it created?

Every church has its own collective personality. You can feel it when you walk in the door for the first time. Church members, however, don't usually "feel" the climate of their own church. It's too familiar. They've become immune to it through long association. To design an environment that will attract new people, churches need to go through a process of self-examination.\*

Here's the problem: When people get together in groups such as a church congregation, they inevitably spend most of their time and energy taking care of themselves. The climate of the church involuntarily—and usually unknowingly—takes on the characteristics of a stained-glass barrier new people can't get through.

Is that what the church is really supposed to be about?

**What the Church Is Really All About**

Jesus summarized the biblical mandate for the church in the Great Commission: "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matt. 28:18-20).†

That's the command. But let's look at how it is built on other Bible teachings.

Psalms 87 presents a unique picture of God's perception of the world's population and its relationship to the church. According to this psalm, everyone's heritage resides in Zion, the city of God—even nations like Egypt, Babylon, and Philistia, Israel's historic enemies. From the Lord's perspective, these are actually "born" in Zion (verse 4), and Jerusalem is considered the hometown of all humankind.

Jerusalem, in this psalm, is a symbol of your church. In God's view, the people walking around on the streets of your town were "born" in your church. They just don't know it! (You have to tell them.) God considers all of them His. He created them, and He wants to see them saved. That's what the plan of salvation is all about.

This is what Paul told the pagan philosophers in Athens: "From one man he [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

God did this so that men would seek him and . . . find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26, 27). According to Paul, God structured the entire world in a way that makes it easy for people to find Him.

Abraham, for example, was transferred from his hometown to a geographical area that put him in contact with all kinds of people coming and going along the main north-south trade routes of the ancient world. He was supposed to be a blessing to all the people groups of the earth (Gen. 12:3). His assignment was to tell anyone who would listen about the Lord and His plan of salvation.

**Strategic Outcomes:  
Goals for North America**

(March 3)  
**Spiritual Life**—*living and projecting a Christ-centered, relevant, and joyful message.*

(April 7)  
**Local Church**—*developing a mission-driven, inclusive, and accepting body.*

(May 5)  
**Leadership**—*continually evaluating, supporting, and empowering leaders.*

(June 2)  
**Denominational Structure**—*restructuring and transforming the organization, making the local church the central focus.*

(July 7)  
**Information and Communication**—*utilizing technology and improving two-way communication.*

(Aug. 4)  
**Christian Education**—*effectively providing direction and spiritual growth opportunities for students.*

▶ (In this issue)  
**Church Growth**—*creating a climate for effective worship, outreach, and dramatic growth.*

**The Focus of Jesus' Ministry**

From the very outset, Jesus' life and ministry focused on winning disciples and training them to win others. Simeon, the man who recognized Jesus as a baby in the Temple, specifically announced that Jesus would be a "light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). Jesus' role in the plan of salvation was intended to go to everyone. Simeon gave that purpose prophetic authority from the very outset.

Throughout His ministry Jesus emphasized a sending message. His words "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21) were a prominent focus of His ministry. The church may be involved in many laudable activities, but when it grows it causes headlines in heaven: "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (Luke 15:7).

The church, then, regardless of whatever else it may involve itself in, is by nature a missionary enterprise. When a church closes in on itself and spends most of its time and energy taking care of itself and its people, it loses the key element of its existence and inevitably begins to decline.

Organizing your church so that the





Great Commission becomes its central focus establishes a climate that produces growth—both numerical growth and development of disciples.

### Many Ways to Do It

Don't confuse a climate of growth with a specific method of communicating the gospel. For instance, many Adventists equate the word "growth" with evangelistic meetings. Evangelistic meetings, Bible studies, Revelation seminars, etc., are all methods of communicating the gospel. They produce numerical growth, but not necessarily disciples.

Disciples—born-again Christians and productive, participating members of

the church—are produced by the overall philosophy of ministry, sociological environment, and operational system of their church. This is a church's climate.

### How Urgent Is Soul Winning?

*So my church needs this climate. On the other hand, we are a nice group of people. We get along reasonably well. Why should we suddenly refocus attention on adding a lot of people we don't even know?*

Matthew 11:12 illustrates in a vivid way the urgency the Lord attaches to getting the message out. Here's how the verse reads in the New International Version: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of

heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."

The King James Version interprets the Greek here as a passive voice, making it sound like the kingdom itself is being persecuted: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

Other translations, however, choose the middle voice, taking a hint from the parallel passage in Luke 16:16. In this case, it is the kingdom that is taking the world by storm, and *forceful* people—that is, bold, dedicated disciples—are getting the message out.

So when it comes down to it, you can't sleep your way into the kingdom!





Ellen White put it on the line when, referring to Matthew 11:12, she said: "With the great truth we have been privileged to receive, we should, and under the Holy Spirit's power we could, become living channels of light. We could then approach the mercy seat . . . , kneel with contrite hearts, and seek the kingdom of heaven with a spiritual violence that would bring its own reward. We would take it by force, as did Jacob. Then our message would be the power of God unto salvation" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1089).

**Developing Church Growth Eyes**

In John 4:35 Jesus pointed out that though the disciples could calculate the time between the two rainy seasons in Palestine ("Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'?"), they didn't see that the fields were

*already ripe* for harvest, even before the latter rains came!

People in your community are just waiting for the good news, just like the Samaritan woman Jesus found at Jacob's well. The problem isn't a lack of people to get. The problem is the lack of harvesters to get them.

His disciples had no church growth eyes. They didn't *see* any Samaritans ready to harvest. Jesus *saw* whole villages of them. People just waiting to be *seen* also fill the city, town, or village where you live!

**What Does "Growth" Mean?**

Let's go back now to our church climate. How do you know if your church has this kind of climate? Some things are obvious. If you are losing more members than you take in, your church is not growing.

If most activity in your church is directed toward keeping the saints happy for a couple hours on Sabbath morning, your church is not growing. Consider this definition of growth: For a church to grow means consistent growth in three areas: the number of converts it wins, the spirituality of its members, and the multiplication of ministries it carries out.

This kind of church will find ways and means of attending to the needs of members, but it will not allow those activities to absorb all its time

and energy. It will be continually looking for creative ways and means of developing new and effective ministries that will enhance and advance its mission.

**This Is a Test**

Answer these questions, using a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the best).

Rate yourself:

\_\_\_ **Personal Zeal:** How dedicated are you to a growth climate in your church?

Rate your church on the following indicators of growth:

\_\_\_ **Finances:** For every \$10 received by the church, \$1 is invested in outreach.

\_\_\_ **Visitors:** Five of every 100 people in the worship service are visitors from the church's ministry area.

\_\_\_ **Sabbath School Class:** Seven of every 10 people attending worship on Sabbath morning are members of adult Sabbath school classes.

\_\_\_ **Sabbath School Attendance:** Seven of every 10 people enrolled in Sabbath school are in class on Sabbath morning.

Answering these questions will give you a pretty good idea whether or not your church has a climate for growth. Whether it does or doesn't, there's a lot we can do—together—to see that the primary focus of Christ's church is the growth of Christians.

\* Two resources are available that will help your church do this. The Shared Vision for Mission process will help your church develop a new mission for itself. Contact your local conference church ministries department for information on this system. A workbook entitled *Does Your Church Need a Doctor?* is available through the NAD Distribution Center (800-328-0525). It is a complete analysis system that your church can use.

<sup>†</sup> Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations in this article are from the New International Version.

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