

Complete Executive Summary

Telephone Interviews of
Seventh-day Adventist Pastors

Interview Dates:
September 17, 1998 –
November 2, 1998

*Conducted by Curtis Rittenour
Resource Development
AdventSource*

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Pastoral Interviews

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Interview Dates: **September 17 to November 2, 1998**
Number of Calls in this Report: **50**
Number of Conferences Represented: **20**

THE QUESTIONS

***Question 1.** Do you conduct annual assessments in your church, surveying members on church life and your pastoral work? If yes, how do you do it, what do you use?*

Thirty of fifty pastors say they do assessments in their church, at least occasionally. The number would probably be cut in half if the word "annual" were pressed. The most common instrument is one simply made up by the pastor (sometimes out of his files or utilizing other instruments gathered elsewhere). About a third of the pastors either utilized instruments received from the conference/union/ministerial department, or the survey was simply requested by the conference/union.

The majority of surveys were conducted on Sabbath morning with the entire congregation. The other two most frequently mentioned groups surveyed were the church board and the church elders. Occasionally pastor's mentioned surveying other specialty groups (parents of small children, Gen. Xers, etc.). Some pastors mentioned places and people from whom they received help in creating and conducting surveys. These include: professors from the theology and psychology department at a local Adventist college (PUC), a retired pastor-teacher named Victor Brown, John Maxwell's material, and information from Russell Burrill.

The three most frequently surveyed areas of the church were the worship service, the pastor's work, and a general church survey. Other areas include: special ministries in the church (Personal Ministry programs, evangelism, prayer meeting, etc.), idea collecting for sermon topics and prayer meeting topics, church friendliness, nominating committee information gathered for a database, stewardship, and the spiritual life of the members.

Some pastors praised doing surveys and stressed the value, the accountability, and the clarity it brings to church planning. Others balked at the time and effort to create and tabulate the information.

***Question 2.** What prevents you most from the task of equipping and training your members for ministry in the church?*

Busy members rated right up at the top of this list. Pastors felt members lives were too hectic, schedules too tight and conflicting to work in training. Along these same lines pastors spoke of apathy on the part of members to desire training, they sense no need. They are lukewarm, need to reclaim their first love, have an immature faith, have a consumer mentality about church, etc.

The second highest comment focused on the philosophy that pastors say many members have about church ministry, namely, "It's the pastor's job." In other words, why do we need training to do the work the pastor is paid to do? A variation on this theme is the notion among members, who think, "I'm only a volunteer."

Another cluster of comments centered on the pastors themselves. The largest grouping of statements came from those who felt too overwhelmed with all the current activities of pastoring that there simply is not enough time to even think about training members. I'm putting out fires. There are so many emergencies. Interestingly, another set of comments came from those who said, "I don't have the training to train others. It's not something I learned at seminary. I don't have the know-how."

Miscellaneous other thoughts in this section relate to tools and resources (some wanted more Adventist leadership training tools, some wanted more small group training tools, some wanted more money to buy tools, etc.). Several pastors brought up John Maxwell's resources as a superb place to find leadership training material.

***Question 3.** What does your church do that raises the "quality of life" (the new public image the NAD suggests for Adventism in North America) in your community?*

Health programs and community service centers (food and clothing banks) ranked very closely among the top responses to this question. Health programs mentioned include: Stop smoking, stress reduction, vegetarian cooking classes, CHIP, and NEWSTART programs. One church has a parish nursing program that is wanting to reach out to the community. Another pastor brings in high level specialists to conduct health lectures.

Another cluster of comments were from churches providing (or sponsoring) community events that were general and open to the public. The range of ideas varied greatly: A community Christmas choir sponsored by the church, a community picnic, a community

baby shower, etc. One group of ladies make blankets for the local sheriff's department who uses them when removing children from difficult home situations.

Some churches mentioned more formal programs to impact the community. A group of pastor's referred to the local Adventist church school that invites nonAdventists to attend. One church owns a local fire department. Another church purchased a home and after renovations created a drug rehabilitation center. Another church specifically adopts families in medical need and sponsors them.

The media was also an avenue for raising the quality of life in the community. About four pastors in this survey write columns in the local newspaper on a regular basis (one keeps the paper up to date on ADRA's work). Two others are involved in a TV ministry. Some pastors mentioned their public evangelism efforts (Net programs). And one pastor simply has members go door to door and ask people if they would like someone to pray with them. He reports a very positive response.

Question 4. What is your current, average Sabbath morning attendance? How many of these attendees would you say are actively involved in the leadership of the church? What are you doing to increase the number of people leading in ministry in your church(es)?

The average attendance in the combined totals of these 50 churches is 37 members. The average percentage of leadership mentioned in each church is 23%. It was quickly apparent that the smaller the congregation, the larger percentage of people identified as "leaders."

The most common way referred to for raising up more leaders is providing workshops and doing one on one mentoring and coaching (personal contacts to encourage members to serve as well). Training small group leaders was also frequently mentioned. In fact, one church requires its elders to be small group leaders.

Other methods mentioned to find and encourage new leaders to emerge include: Start new ministries, conduct lay Bible training, have a Youth Day and get youth involved in conducting the program, conduct surveys, visit members, encourage the nominating committee to use a good gift/person matching process, raise awareness of a need, provide a spiritual emphasis on ministry, and give opportunities to try out new ministry positions. A few pastors pressed the importance of communicating support to potential leaders, not leaving them hanging with a sense of abandonment.

A few pastors spoke of specific resources and ways to conduct leadership training. John Maxwell's materials topped the list. Also mentioned were the help of a Dr. Hursey, Floyd Bresee, spiritual gifts materials, and one church that budgets to encourage every leader to attend one seminar or event on leadership.