

Complete Executive Summary

Telephone Interviews of
Seventh-day Adventist Pastors

Interview Dates:
July 2 - August 6, 1997

*Conducted by Curtis Rittenour
Resource Development
AdventSource*

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Pastoral Interviews

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Number of Calls in this Report: **50**

Number of Conferences Represented: **19**

THE QUESTIONS

Question 1. *Does your church do “Ingathering” (or an alternative)? Do you have any suggestions for improving it?*

Of 50 pastors interviewed on this question, 33 (66%) indicated their churches “do” Ingathering. The three basic approaches are: Door to door solicitation, business solicitation, and personal donations from members. Door to door solicitation included groups going caroling, members going in 2’s, church school children going out during school hours, and individuals going out. A few pastors indicated members simply handed out brochures and/or a loaf of bread or cookies, etc. The programs being used that were mentioned included: Traditional Ingathering, ADRA Campaign, ADRA Appeal, Campaign for Community, and Consolidated Church Fund or United Church Fund. Every pastor in Canada referred to an “ADRA Campaign” as their approach. Every regional conference pastor referred to a “Consolidated Church Fund” or “United Church Fund.” An Ohio pastor commented positively on the reversion fund process in his conference that gave an incentive for raising funds that potentially came back to his church.

Negative comments made about Ingathering centered primarily around the “outdated” mode of fund raising through door to door contacts in the 1990s. One pastor commented how ludicrous it seemed to send children out at night on the streets with a can of money. A regional pastor commented that “most of my members see Ingathering as a smoke screen for the conference to raise money for themselves.” Another bemoaned the “shaming” that still takes place at pastor’s meetings toward those who don’t “reach their goal.”

Suggestions for improving Ingathering ranged from comments like “Eliminate it” to “Let’s go back to the traditional approach of Jasper Wayne and sell magazines.” The most frequently mentioned suggestion was to focus on business contacts. If raising money is a

primary goal of Ingathering, pastors say the best place to go is businesses. Several pastors request improvements in the material handed business contacts (creating a higher quality "Executive Summary" folder to hand business contacts, etc.). A few pastors suggest we learn from other organizations (United Way, Salvation Army, Christian Record). A common complaint made was, "I can't seem to motivate my members to go out." Suggestions related to this focused on year-round awareness and better methods of training members. On the topic of the local community, several pastors request "keep funds local." A few would like localized brochures with information about disaster responses that touched the local region. "People would give if we showed them how funds helped their neighbors."

Question 2. What has worked well in your church in the last year in terms of outreach and evangelism?

Two groupings of evangelism might be noted: direct and indirect. In the area of direct evangelism, Net '96, public crusades, tent crusades, and Revelation Seminars were most frequently mentioned. Others within this area included personal Bible studies, Ken Cox videos, book distribution, Discovery Bible Schools, small groups Bible studies, door to door surveys, and Sabbath morning worship services with a "guest focus".

Indirect evangelism fell primarily into two categories: formal programs and informal outreach. Programs and ministries frequently mentioned revolved around health outreach (Heartbeat '97, cooking classes, stress reduction classes) and community services (Feeding in the Park, car washes, paint houses, daycare services, an after-school Homework Center at the church). An emphasis on friendship evangelism and relational witnessing was also made by a few pastors. One pastor said, "I think it was a total waste of money to print and distribute 1,000s of Net '96 brochures when every guest who came to our meetings was the result of a personal invitation by one of my church members." Another pastor trains the greeters as a crucial part of evangelism.

A couple of interesting notes include a pastor who had 93 guests to Heartbeat '97 in a town of 17,000. Another pastor who has an intentional "quarterly evangelism cycle" moving from low key contacts to a public crusade. And yet another pastor who uses a modification of Willow Creek's "7 Step Strategy" (Live a dynamic Christian life, Share a Verbal Witness, Invite a Friend to a Seeker Event, Small Groups, Gifts, Stewardship, etc.). His church size: 187. He's very tuned into the concept of "change process."

Question 3. Have you ever received "Adventist Witness" magazine? If yes, what is your reaction? Positive/negative? Why?

Sixteen out of 50 pastors have seen Adventist Witness. A large majority of pastors said, "I don't know if I've seen it ... I get so much junk mail..." The next most frequent response focused on what they did with the magazine. The primary person the pastor

“handed it over” to is the Personal Ministries Leader. Positive comments on the magazine were “thought provoking articles”, “I’ve heard good things from my members”, “I liked it.” A negative comment was made, “Looks traditional to me.” A few suggestions came out of the interviews: “I’m not sure who the magazine is for” and “My members are asking me how I can turn everyday conversations toward spiritual things in a natural way.”

Question 4. *What kinds of resources are you as a pastor looking for (or need most) in doing ministry in your church?*

Options of general resources were given in this question. In the order of most frequently requested to least frequently requested were: Video seminars, fact sheets, printed material, computer software, live training events, and on-line computer services. All requests fell close together. Most pastors asked, “What do you mean?” and wanted examples. Video seminars were most often taken to mean ACN satellite broadcasts.

Hundreds of suggestions were made for resources in this area. The number one request was a new set of Bible studies. Ideas for the guides included a focus on science and archaeology, Christ-centered, something different than Daniel and Revelation, 1 page guides with fewer texts, and guides that are prophecy-focused).

Video comments included general suggestions for improving ACN events, complaints about cost, a desire for certain topics to be covered (almost all were practical in nature--stop smoking, parenting, finances, etc.). Though on-line computer services ranked lower, many pastors recognized this as “the future way to go” meaning they plan to get on-line. Pastors on-line were very enthusiastic about the use of the Internet. Some suggested we bail out of CompuServe and put a forum on the Internet. Most commonly requested comment by Hispanic pastors, “Please create more, low cost resources in Spanish.”

An interesting part of this section of interviewing was the “awareness” raised when asked about “fact sheets.” After giving the example of FaxPlus, dozens of pastors wanted to have the number. The recent color brochure printed on several toll free numbers were specifically sent to these pastors. Many seemed surprised at the toll-free numbers and services.

Question 5. *Have you ever called PlusLine (1-800-SDA-PLUS or 1-800-732-7587) or AdventSource? Do you know if your church leaders use Adventist PlusLine or AdventSource? If so, which ones generally use it?*

Eighteen of 50 pastors say they have called PlusLine. Twelve guessed that lay leaders have called PlusLine although most said, “I don’t know.” Many pastors had never heard of PlusLine. Thirty-one of 50 pastors say they have called AdventSource. One says he uses mail order. Twenty-three pastors guessed lay leaders have called AdventSource.

Reasons mentioned for calling in order of frequency: Pathfinders, Sabbath school, Youth ministry, Community services, Women's ministries, Connections, ACN videos, logo kit, Cross-training material.