

Pastoral Interviews
Report for Week of: 12-9-97
Number of Calls: 10
Number of Conferences: 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In this new series of questions, pastors were asked if they have heard of the alternatives to Ingathering. Six of ten pastors have. When asked what comments they are hearing from their members, most say "mixed." That is, some in the congregation favor it, others do not. One pastor from Southern California summarized it by saying his minority and white older members favor Ingathering, but the others (Boomer/Buster whites) do not. Other comments include: "We carol in one church, and give personal donations (mostly elderly) in the other church"; "I will attempt to bring Ingathering back with a low emphasis on money"; "My congregation is very positive about Campaign for Community (money staying local)"; "Members were taken back by the video, perhaps because it emphasized long-range planning, something they are not used to. So they are processing it"; "Indifferent. Most see alternatives as Ingathering with a new wrap."
2. Do pastors conduct mid-week services? Ten of 10 responded, "Yes." When asked why, most responses centered on spiritual nurture, fellowship, and personal ministry (outreach). A few pastors referred to helping members keep focused on the church's mission and a few referred to it simply being a tradition. When asked what they use for resources, most say "The Bible." Some take a book by book approach, others go through a chapter an evening, and others take a topical approach. Related to this is the use of study aids or Bible study guides (Seminars Unlimited, Discipleship series by the Methodists, Don Gray's series, Ken Cox videos, etc.). One pastor mentioned going through the book, Great Controversy. And a couple of pastors use guests (one pastor has a church next to an Adventist institution). Words used to describe the format include: Classroom, traditional, seminar, small group, discussion, Q. & A., informal, and study group. Small group could mean 6 people sitting in pews or sitting around a table.
3. Pastors were asked, "If a resource existed that would revolutionize your church, what would it change?" Four pastors used the word "vision" in their comments. A vision for the church. A vision of what it means to be Adventist. A vision for radical mission. In one sense or another, about three-fourths of the pastors spoke of participation or involvement of members in the life of the church. Some referred to the need for the congregation to recognize the changing demographics surrounding the church, some spoke of exhausted Adventist institutional workers who give half-hearted support to the local church they attend, some spoke of practically applying Russell Burrill's book – particularly in regard to helping an established Adventist church go through the change process. One spoke of change in worship, and another on the need for more personal prayer. One conversation was especially enlightening.

A pastor spoke of recently stepping out of pastoral ministry due to his frustration with his local church. He attempted to bring about change, especially over the “message (don’t change) vs. the method (do change)”. His members resisted, accused, attacked, called the conference, etc. He finally gave up and plans to temporarily attend Saddleback until he heals. He’d like to start a small group in his home. He is very “pained” and repeatedly said, “I’m an Adventist to the core. I have no problem with doctrine, it’s the methodology that needs changing...”

4. How many churches have a satellite dish? Eight of ten. (One has access to a dish at the nearby Adventist hospital.) And how many use their dishes for lay training? Four of ten. (Two of those four used the words “a little” and “some”.) When asked “why/why not?” and “how”, responses primarily centered on “I can’t get my leadership to come out.” A few pastors seemed skeptical of the value, a few simply haven’t “pushed it”, and about half had “logical” reasons (in the middle of a building program, too low on the horizon to pick up signal in Alaska, and using dish for re-broadcasting 3ABN). One church doesn’t have a dish but gets videos from another church and uses them for lay training. One pastor said, “I guess we haven’t figured out how to really use the programs for lay training yet.” (Perhaps a simple resource/card could be created for this need.) One pastor offered the suggestion of having a program on “witnessing” and “training deacons” like the “Southern Baptists” (I think focusing on greeting/parking lot/ushering type of services). He said to look at John Maxwell’s tape on this. It’s excellent.
5. Have you ever called PlusLine? Four of ten pastors said, “Yes.” Three of ten pastors say they think church leaders/members have. Two mentioned they think personal ministries leaders called. Have you ever called AdventSource? Six of ten pastors said, “Yes.” Four of ten pastors say they think church leaders/members have. Topics mentioned for calling: Youth (2), personal ministries, Pathfinders, and Sabbath school.

Pastor: LD

Conference: Southern California

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, senior pastor

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

Yes. We don’t do any of them.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes. Expectation of members. Just started with this new church. Haven’t done it for 11 years. Going through the history of the English Bible. Pews/lecture with Q. & A.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

In this particular church is in desperate need of members and money. You have a 2,000-seat auditorium with 200 attending. Members coming in would enable the congregation to reach out to the surrounding community which is Hispanic. The people would not be opposed to that ... they don't want to have Spanish spoken ... but want to reach the Spanish. Plus you have the disparity between the two cultures (conservatism in the Spanish).

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes and no. We don't but the nearby hospital does. No. I don't have a good answer, never tried it. I know Monte, known for years, nothing personal. Still recuperating from irrelevant stuff I've seen in the past. And unwilling to come out on Sunday events.

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

Yes, once. It seems to me someone once did and found it helpful. It's been awhile.

No. To my knowledge, no.

Pastor: HD

Conference: Southern California

Church(es)/Position: 1 church

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

Yes. Here in Southern California, very divided. White older timers, minorities... very supportive. Vast majority, very negative.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes. Very low attendance.

Really believe that the worship hour is not the time for intense Bible study.

Worship is more for family to reflect on broader issues of life.

Basically used the Bible with my own outlines. Daniel, Revelation. Used the stuff from Seminars Unlimited.

Smaller groups, smaller around table, when larger it was more like a presentation.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

I'm not sure the problem we are facing is a "resource problem." We have mountains of them. I think the problem is a loss of mission. I think the moment we talk about mission we end up dealing with a severe problem. Many Adventists are not committed to a changing methodology.

I distinguish between the message and the methodology. When it comes to methodology, we are trapped. I think the church is producing "nice" but not "relevant" enough to make a big impact on the secular, Anglos of Southern California. We are not reaching them. Which is why I am currently stepping out of the ministry, I can't conscientiously continue pastoring in light of members who are STUCK on methodology ... picking at anything, complaining.

I think most Adventists say "We need to reach the world for Christ" but I don't think most Adventist churches reach the community, they focus on themselves. Churches in Portland, Oregon and other places ... I have been subject to intense conflict and persecution ... nasty ... but we came to a point where we said, "Its our family, or the church." People attempted to fabricate accusations... We went through a mediation process and heard things I couldn't believe. We finally said, Enough.

We're going to be in a praying mode ... the hardest decision we've ever made. Future is uncertain. Probably going into business. Maybe start a Bible study group on weekends. Lots of people out there ready to hear the gospel. I'm committed to the message, but the method is GREATLY lacking in the church. We have a serious problem. We are currently attending Saddleback so we can be nurtured spiritually. I work at the conference so I know the churches in the conference ... but we didn't want to be bombarded. So, we finally decided to go to Saddleback ... for now (next 6 months). Right now we don't want to go back into the system (working). But, at the same time, we are dealing with lots of stuff going on. All my life in the Adventist church. Both grew up as PKs. The hassle right now is not worth it. And it's not about Adventist theology.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes. Very little. Couple times. Attendance low. I invited everyone live and we taped.

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

Couple times. I don't think so.

Yes, I think couple times.

Pastor: BP

Conference: Chesapeake

Church(es)/Position: 1 church

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

No.

Basically negative. Wish they would go ahead and do away with it.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

We have seminars. I try to have something to reach the various segments of the congregation.

Since I'm next to an institution with some creative people, they conduct a lot of seminars on a variety of things.

By the way, Monte Sahlin is the one bright star we have in the denomination when it comes to quality resources. The Baptists are outdoing us. I'm going to California to a leadership conference outside the denomination. I need current, fresh materials. You're constantly searching.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

It would change me for one thing. Get our people involved in the church. Where I am, the biggest thing I'm running into with an institution next door, I try to have lots of programs, but many members are physically exhausted. When I drive by other church parking lots and see them full ... I realize my problem.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes. Yes, it's a thing where I'd like to have more come out. I'm excited about it, but its not doing what I'd like to see it do. Some of the programs when they first came out ... I had members involved to come, to get them to plug in, anyway, I wasn't too excited about the program presented itself.

I would like to suggest ... from the standpoint of training ... ongoing witnessing training. I've been a minister for 27 years. It's been easy for me to hold Revelation Seminars, but we need to encourage them to do it one on one. It's not my gift training them. So, training in this area is needed.

Nine Facets is excellent. Doing the same thing with Bible studies, especially among the Anglos. We're losing the boat.

Training of deacons like the Southern Baptists would be helpful. From the time a person enters the parking lot to the time they leave. John Maxwell I think has an excellent video training on this. Fabulous. We don't do that. One of my deacons does a superb job, but the others simply can't see it. It's like pulling teeth.

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

No, but I've heard of it. I doubt it.
Yes. I don't know.

Pastor: DM
Conference: Chesapeake
Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

No.

It depends on the church. One is more involved than the other. One church pretty much ignores it. I'm going to bring it back in the next year, but not with a money emphasis.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes. We need prayer. That's the biggest power.

Going through a set of Bible studies to teach people how to give them (Don Gray's). Other church, I'm doing a series on Jesus and the gospels. Event by event. Harmony of the Gospels. We've been on the Sermon on the Mount. Life and teachings of Jesus.

Season of prayer. Then teaching. Then closing season of prayer. Emphasize requests. In most churches, spiritual life is so low. So, I have to start from zero. It seems like the smaller church takes less time to pump the air into them.

It seems like the institutional program and thinking work against the life of the local church. Because we have institutional goals. Like Ingathering. The focus is on money. But since we dropped Ingathering, we have alternative goals that are more spiritual.

Its frustrating to give so much tithe, and so little stays in the local church. We seem marginally benefited. There seems to be an emphasis on "you give us the money," but do the ministry. When 30% seems to go on... what about sharing more with the local church.

[We talked about Richard Fredricks, and DRCC, Grace Place... He feels like Fredrick's situation is NOT just about church policy regarding funding (which he is sympathetic toward and very frustrated about, but is also about theology. Fredricks has distinctive differences in regard to 1844, role of EGW, cross-centered living, the remnant, etc. He called this a Des Ford approach to theology.] Bureaucracy. Our churches serve the institution. That the headquarters is the main frame, and the churches are the servers. It's not true that the local church is the center of ministry. If is true, where are the funds to do it.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

Give my people a vision of what they could be in Christ.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes. No. Because my lay leaders wouldn't show up. I could get my guys to video tape it and show it Sabbath afternoon.

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

No. Don't know.

Yes. I don't know of any.

Many of those who are trying to stress new values are ditching the old values.

Pastor: GR

Conference: Chesapeake

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

No.

One church is active, does caroling. Second church is small, elderly members, usually turn in personal contributions.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes.

Prayer meeting and Bible study is important to the life of the church.

It varies. We're going through Great Controversy. Just finished a year of studying the book of Hebrews.

It's more like a study group with a lot of dialogue, give and take.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

It might change attendance. Participation in church activities. To be honest with you the only resource that can do that is the Holy Spirit.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes in one church.

No.

Mainly because the people who are the most active lay leaders are members of the GC, meaning they are very busy and gone a lot of the time. We have leadership qualities and training abilities, but they are “out” much of the time.

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

No. Possibly Personal Ministries leader.

No. Yes. Probably Personal Ministries leader, who is very active.

Pastor: SE

Conference: Chesapeake

Church(es)/Position: Youth pastor, 1,000-member church

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

No.

In this church, we hear very little because we don't do it. Personal donations.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes.

We have lots of Bible study groups to encourage Bible study and outreach.

A Disciple Bible Study from the Methodists. We also have a traditional meeting on occasion.

Small groups, and on occasion a larger gathering.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

More participation by a wider group of people.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes.

Haven't done that a lot in the past, but want to do it more.

We simply haven't gotten behind it. We have done some by recording and passing around tapes. No reflection on the program. I think I need to know more about how to use.

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

No, heard of it. I know that some of our youth leaders have the number, don't know if they've used it. I doubt it.

Yes, use that quite a bit. Yes. Coming from a youth perspective. Pathfinders use it all the time.

Pastor: GH

Conference: Southern California

Church(es)/Position: 1 church, African-American

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

Yes.

I think basically the idea of the local resourcing, being kept close, they feel very good about that. I think members feel they have more "ammunition" for getting results. So it's going quite well with our congregation.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

We have several.

For several reasons. Keeps us close. Keeps us focused on mission, goals and objectives. Fellowship. Coming together with idea sharing.

We have a midweek prayer service on Wednesday night. On Tuesday night we have a Spanish class. Then another one called "We Score" to help high school kids improve their grades. Also Pathfinders.

We're trying to ... a large segment of our members don't really know the doctrines. My philosophy is we tend to fear what we don't understand. People won't share their faith if they don't really know the doctrines. So, we're studying the doctrines of the church. We're focusing in on that. Not just know them, but how to apply them.

Classroom approach.

Every Sabbath afternoon we provide a class that really stirs up the dust. We get into deeper discussions on things that stretch people ... a little controversial. We have about 20 different ethnic.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

I think our people (my church) are thirsting for knowledge. If it is denominationally based ... one of the areas we're concerned ... a lot of stuff out there ... but something that would give members a deeper ... there's an element in our church that doesn't understand why they are Seventh-day Adventists.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

No.

We're planning to have one. We're in the midst of purchasing a beautiful facility. Hopefully by March we'll be in ... \$1.5 million, cash. One of the most exclusive areas in LA Homes in the neighborhood of \$500,000 and up.

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

Yes. I think several. Personal ministries.

No, but familiar with them. I'm sure they have. Sabbath school, youth.

Pastor: FP

Conference: Southern California

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches, Hispanic

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

Yes.

Mixed response.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes, in both churches.

Spiritual nurture. Members sometimes invite visitor.

Every month different topic. Prophecy. Marriage.

I use a variety of materials. Magazines, books. Sometimes my own things.

Majority is from others.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

I would want some change to take place, in worship. More (not liberal) happy, songs, sermon not an hour. Maybe once a month we have a Celebration Day for the visitors and on that day we try to change it.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

No.

We use tapes from another church that has a recorder.

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

No. No, it's in English, majority talk in Spanish.

No. No. See above.

Pastor: CR

Conference: Alaska

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

Yes.

We haven't entered into it this fall/winter. We just watched the video and they are a little "taken back." Nothing positive or negative. Reflections: Emphasis seemed to be on long range planning.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes, both churches.

Members desired it for service for fellowship and prayer. The other church has always done it, it's been a tradition.

In one church, we do a small group reading of the Bible – a chapter each night. Then discuss application. Prayer. Then leave. The other church has watched videos, or a guest conducts a teaching lesson.

Bible. Ken Cox videos.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

I'm concerned about how to bring about Russell Burrill's "revolutionizing" seems difficult in an established church. Every time we seek change we encounter resistance. Whatever the resource, it must address the process of change in an established church.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes.

If A.C.N. is on Galaxy 3, can't get it, too low on the sky.

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

Yes. I put it in the bulletin. Don't know if anyone has called.

Yes. I don't know.

Pastor: DK

Conference: Alaska

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches, 1 company

1. Have you heard of the alternatives to Ingathering in the North American Division (ADRA Appeal and Campaign for Community)? The new name for Ingathering is World Service Appeal. What comments do you hear your members make about these?

Yes.

Indifference. I think they've lost a vision of Ingathering so much, that alternatives are perceived as simply a new name for Ingathering.

2. Do you conduct any type of mid-week meeting? Why or why not? What are you using? What is your basic format?

Yes.

To encourage people in their spiritual life and personal ministry.

It tends to be more informal, Bible study environment. Passages of Scripture, go through.

Just the Bible. I encourage Word Study books, concordances, etc.

3. If a resource existed that would help revolutionize your church, what would it change/what would it do?

What I would want it to change is that at each individual member would be personally convicted of the need for unity and a vision. Also the need for personal prayer.

4. Do you have a satellite dish? Do you use A.C.N. for training lay leaders? If 'yes', how? If 'no', why not?

Yes. Our dish is aimed to receive 3ABN and then we re-broadcast it locally.

No, we don't, since we are rebroadcasting 3ABN.

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

I don't believe so. I'm not sure. Never heard of it.

Yes. I don't know.