The Development of a Program for the Retention of New Members in the New Jerusalem Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Abstract
This dissertation evaluates a program that was developed for the retention of new members in the New Jerusalem Seventh-day Adventist Church. One of the greatest needs of new Christians is help in establishing a meaningful relationship within the body of Christ. The church, not the new converts, is primarily responsible for the process of assimilation. Two strategies were implemented at the New Jerusalem Church: 1. A study was conducted to analyze the growth pattern of the church for the past ten years. Two groups of members were surveyed—those baptized within the past eighteen months and have left the church and those baptized during the same period and still actively involved in the church. The result of this survey laid the foundation for the implementation of the second strategy. 2. A new paradigm for membership assimilation was outlined and implemented in three phases: Phase 1. Pre-assimilation phase which was all the activities, ministries, and interactions between members and non-members prior to baptism Phase 2. Membership phase which dealt with significance of church membership, involvement, and expectations of both old and new members Phase 3. Post-assimilation phase which focuses specifically on the spiritual growth and maturity of the new converts. The church can be very meaningful in...
the assimilation process of the new converts when it is actually practicing congregational love of sharing, suffering, and discipleship. To make the project more practical an assimilation model was developed with five levels. The real purpose of the model was to take an individual through various stages of the assimilation process to the point of becoming a serviceable Christian for Christ. We must always be aware of one fact: evangelism is an incomplete process until the evangelized becomes the evangelizer. The findings from the research and the practical experience of the project suggest that the church needs to re-evaluate with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission. re-evaluate its evangelism relative to the growth and stability of the new converts. What goes on in the lives of the new converts after baptism is of equal importance as what goes on before. A knowledge of Christianity and all lifestyle changes are taught prior to baptism, but from practical assumptions, all lifestyle changes occur after baptism and church membership. The project had a great impact on the New Jerusalem Seventh-day Adventist Church. There are visible, measurable improvements such as: increased attendance, increased financial giving, and more laity involvement in outreach ministries. It is my hope that this dissertation can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the local and global church in the entire process of evangelism. It is also my hope that the results of the dissertation can be used as a resource for strengthening this vital aspect of our evangelistic efforts.

Subject Area
Church membership, Church growth--Seventh-day Adventists

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Seventh Day Adventists believe that the Sabbath begins at the end of the sixth day, which is considered Friday and lasts one day, which is Saturday. The Sabbath “protects man’s friendship with God and provides time essential for the development of that relationship.” For that reason, on the Sabbath, there can be no secular labor, including any household tasks. Members are asked to “greet the Sabbath with the tranquility of mind.” Worship services are held on the Sabbath for the church for both worship and fellowship. Other rules for the Sabbath include avoiding weddings and funerals; however, the Seventh-day Adventist Church had its roots in the Millerite movement of the 1830s to the 1840s, during the period of the Second Great Awakening, and was officially founded in 1863. Prominent figures in the early church included Hiram Edson, James Springer White (Husband to Ellen G. White), Joseph Bates, and J. N. Andrews. Over the ensuing decades the church expanded from its original base in New England to become an international organization. Significant developments such as the reviews initiated by evangelicals Donald Barnhouse and Walter Martin, in the 20th century led to its recognition a