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A REPRODUCIBLE CHURCH PLANTING PROCESS FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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**A Reproducible Church Planting Process for the
Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church**

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2008

The aim of this paper is to develop a reproducible church planting process for the Adventist church within Australia. It will be shown that the Adventist church started as a church planting movement. Today, however, while churches are being planted rapidly in non-first world countries, there is little in the way of church planting in secular, first world countries. It is felt that, if a reproducible process for church planting could be developed in Australia, a secular society, it might help restore church planting to the foreground of evangelism and disciple making for the church. The Adventist church could once again become a church planting movement.

Part One examines the ministry context of the paper. The Adventist's beginnings as a church planting movement will be examined, along with how it lost its church planting emphasis. The current status of church planting in Australia, along with its current challenges will be canvassed.

Part Two of the paper examines the theology that motivated the early Adventist church to mission. The church's theology, particularly regarding the Sabbath, the Holistic nature of man, and eschatological beliefs, was the fuel for the church planting method.

Part Three describes the healthy characteristics of church planting movements and the essential structural elements of the proposed church planting process. Part Four

outlines the suggested reproducible process for church planting. It also describes how this process can be implemented.

This paper concludes that it is possible to develop a church planting process that is reproducible for the Adventist context worldwide. It takes into account the message the Adventist church wants to share with the world and a method of sharing that message.

Content Reader: Dr. Robert E. Logan

Words: 297

To my wife Tracey, my soul mate, and to our princess, Jessica

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Finally, to my awesome God, thank you for your love, your grace, and your calling on my life. To you be praise and honour and glory forevermore.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AUC	Australian Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
CCCC	Central Coast Community Church
CPC	Church Planting Center
CPGMC	Church Planting and Global Mission Committee
CPPP	Church Planter Performance Profile
CRM	Church Resource Ministries
GC	General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
GM	Global Mission
NCD	Natural Church Development
NNSW	North New South Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
NZPUC	New Zealand Pacific Union Conference
PNGUM	Papua New Guinea Union Mission
SPD	South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
TPUM	Trans-Pacific Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
WA	Western Australian Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

INTRODUCTION

“The rise of Adventism took place during America’s greatest religious revival...the Second Great Awakening.”¹ The specific branch of this revival from which the Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged was the Millerite Movement.² This movement emphasized the very imminent coming of Jesus Christ. Out of Millerism, between 1844 and 1866, six denominations arose: The American Evangelical Adventist Conference, the Church of God (Oregon, Illinois), the Life and Advent Union, the Advent Christians, the Church of God (Seventh Day), and the Seventh-day Adventists.³ The group that became known as the Seventh-day Adventists “accounted for a maximum of 0.2 percent of former Millerites.”⁴

A century later, only four of these six denominations still existed. By 1990, the American Evangelical Adventist Conference and the Life and Advent Union had disappeared. The Church of God (Oregon, Illinois) numbered 5,688, the Advent

¹ George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever: And the End of the World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 21.

² *Ibid.*, 23.

³ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁴ Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 248.

Christians 27,590, and the Church of God (Seventh Day) 5,749.⁵ The Adventist church however, had over 700,000 members in the United States of America and over 7,000,000 worldwide. It would seem that the smallest of the Millerite offshoot groups had become the largest.

Adventists did not see their successes as the result of human effort. They identified “themselves as the divinely commissioned heralds for the messages of the three angels pictured in Revelation 14:6-12.”⁶

The Seventh-day Adventist Church⁷ started as a church planting movement. It believed it had the eschatological mandate to take the gospel to the world in the last days. One of the main ways it did this was through the planting of new churches. Officially organised in 1863 with approximately 3500 members,⁸ the church, in a little over 150 years, has grown to over fifteen million people.⁹

⁵ Kenneth Bedell and Alice M. Jones, eds., *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 270-277.

⁶ Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. and enl. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000), 160.

⁷ For the purpose of this paper, the terms Seventh-day Adventist, Adventist church, Adventist, and Adventism will be used interchangeably. After chapter 1, unless specifically mentioned, these words will refer to the Adventist church within Australia. The word church will also refer to the Adventist church, unless specifically mentioned.

⁸ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 146.

⁹ Elizabeth Lechleitner, “Fifteen Million Adventists, Who’s Counting?” [Information on-line] (Adventist News Network, June 20, 2007); available from <http://news.adventist.org/data/2007/05/1182373878/indeInformation onx.html.en>; Internet, (accessed June 27, 2007).

Today, however, in secular, first world countries, little growth is happening and few churches are being planted. In Australia, church planting outside first generational populations is rare, and, if it does happen, often occurs for reasons other than mission. If a reproducible process could be developed that would enable the church in Australia to reach its secular populations, it would go a long way to helping recreate the origins of the denomination as a church planting movement.

The aim of this paper is to develop a reproducible church planting process for the Adventist church to reach secular people in Australia. Although specifically concentrating on Australia, it is the contention of the author that, if successful, the process proposed in this paper could be easily adapted to most, if not all, secular countries or areas that the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide is currently trying to influence for God. There are two main reasons for believing that the proposed process for church planting will be able to be adapted throughout the worldwide Adventist church. First, the organisational structures and processes within the Adventist church are basically the same around the world. Second, the process is not so much determined by the cultural or historical factors of a region, but rather by the organisational structure of the church. It would be logical to assume that, if the process worked in Australia, it should work in many other parts of the world as well.

This focus paper will be divided into four parts. Part One will examine the ministry context. The Adventist church's beginnings as a church planting movement will be discussed. Moving from its origins as a church planting movement, this section will describe what has happened to the Adventist movement and why, in many contexts, it has

lost its church planting emphasis. The current state of church planting will be examined, particularly within the Australian context.

Part Two will examine the theology that motivated the early Adventist church to see church planting as a major part of its strategy to fulfill its mission. It will be seen that early Adventist theology served two purposes. First, it gave the church its identity, and, second, it formed the basis for its mission strategy.

Part Three will describe, in light of the Adventist theological heritage, what a healthy church planting movement might look like. It will also describe the essential elements that will be needed for church planting to once again become a major mission strategy. These elements will become the crucial parts of the church planting process proposed in this paper.

Part Four outlines the suggested reproducible process for church planting. This process builds on the church's historical roots, its theology, and the important elements needed in a church planting movement. If this process can be implemented within the Adventist church, in the context of the secular Australian, it should be possible to introduce the process to the denomination worldwide.

PART ONE:
MINISTRY CONTEXT

Part One describes the Adventist church's genesis as a church planting movement. The founders of the church were specific in the way that they felt ordained accredited pastors should minister: planting churches and training the churches they established to look after themselves and plant further churches. The Adventist church, as will be seen, developed a practical organizational structure to help facilitate church planting and the mission of the church. Church planting was a major method used to make disciples. Also to be examined, is how other denominations described the Adventist strategy and even how the media of the day acknowledged what was happening.

Some of the founders of the church warned about changing the emphasis from church planting to maintaining existing churches, and their warnings proved correct. Some of these warnings will be outlined. Part One will also examine current challenges to church planting in Australia and will look at the postmodern mindset of secular Australia and its challenge to church planting.

CHAPTER 1

ADVENTIST ORIGINS AS A CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT

The Adventist church started as a church planting movement. Adventists had few if any churches at the beginning of their movement and numbered just 0.2 percent of former Millerites. However, they grew rapidly. It is the contention of the writer that a key reason for this growth was the emphasis on church planting. Today, the church numbers over fifteen million worldwide. This chapter will describe key factors that contributed to the Adventist church's becoming a church planting movement. These include the organisational decisions that helped facilitate rapid and sustainable growth. The impact of such denominational leaders as Ellen G. White and A. G. Daniells on church planting was another. Contemporary non-Adventist observers who noted the Adventist emphasis on church planting will be acknowledged. Over time, however, Adventists, particularly in secular countries like Australia, seemed to lose this emphasis. How that happened will also be examined.

Organisational Decisions That Facilitated Church Planting

This section examines how the early Adventist emphasis on church planting was facilitated through certain organisational decisions. George Knight correctly states that

there were two methods that the early Adventists used to “gather in a people.”¹ One method was their “evangelistic” efforts, and the other was “their organisational format.”² While following chapters will examine some specific doctrinal teachings that were used in their evangelism, this chapter is focussed on how their organisational decisions “gathered in people” and maximised the impact of church planting.

While the early Adventists had a clear sense of mission, they faced serious challenges. The reality of the early Adventists was that they did not have many, if any, churches. Those who emerged from the Millerite experience had, to a large extent, been shunned by their denominations and home churches. Himes wrote as early as 1842 that “we are exceedingly blamed, censured, judged, and condemned, shut out of most pulpits.”³ Many, like Ellen White (nee Harmon) and her family, were excommunicated from their churches. They had spread the word that Jesus was coming. Some had set dates for Christ’s coming and been bitterly disappointed.⁴ Others had introduced what would become one of the founding identifiers of the Adventist church, the seventh-day

¹ George R. Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil: The Development of Adventist Church Structure* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 32.

² Ibid.

³ Joshua V. Himes and Josiah Litch, eds., “The Crisis has Come!” *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy* (Boston), August 3, 1842, 140.

⁴ The Great Disappointment is a term very familiar to Adventists. It refers to the disappointment of those who had believed that Christ would come in 1844. While many of those Millerites who became Adventists believed Christ would come in 1844, it is incorrect to state that the Adventist Church believed Christ would come in 1844. The Adventist Church was not organised until 1863.

Sabbath. They felt they had a message to share and not having access to churches would not stop them.

There were three specific organisational elements that the early Adventists introduced that helped facilitate and emphasize church planting. There was the decision to have all property and buildings owned by the corporate church. Secondly, there was the decision to have full time accredited and ordained evangelistic pastors. Thirdly, was the innovative way it was eventually decided that their full time pastors would be paid.

The early Adventists had no organisational structure.⁵ Various individuals owned the properties and printing houses. When it came to the property where people worshipped, disagreements between the owner of the building or land and the worshippers could result in the owner's throwing the believers off his property. "In Cincinnati when the owner of the lot on which the Adventist tabernacle was built became disaffected, he turned the little house dedicated to God into a vinegar factory."⁶ Ownership of the printing presses was also a challenge. *The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* was the result of a combination of two papers in November 1850. What became known as the *Review* "was probably the most effective instrument in both gathering and uniting the body of believers who would become Seventh-day Adventists in the 1860's."⁷ Still not a recognised denomination, the decision was made to have

⁵ There was a strong belief by many early Adventists that to form any type of organisation was actually to become Babylon. See Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 15-27.

⁶ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 90.

⁷ Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 32.

church buildings and printing facilities owned by the fledging group of believers in a legal association.⁸

“The justification [for organising] was not so much that God was calling for the creation of a new denomination but rather that there was no overwhelming reason not to organise, provided this would facilitate the spread of the message.”⁹ The believers had a sense of ownership, belonging, and a growing realisation of being part of something greater than themselves individually. This church planting movement started with the concept that individuals, or even small groups of people, did not own or control the resources of the church. The resources were to be owned and used by everyone in the movement as it was focussed on the common mission of the church.

The decision to have ordained and accredited pastors was taken very early in the Adventist church. The first reason that pastors became accredited was because, as Knight states, “the major problem... faced in the early 1850’s was that they had no systematic defense against impostors.”¹⁰ The accrediting of pastors was needed to defend early believers from those who claimed they were teaching Adventist truths but who were in reality teaching their own brand of truth. Some impostors, unfortunately, also had as their aim, to “fleece the saints financially.”¹¹ James White and Joseph Bates, well-known

⁸ Schwarz and Greenleaf, *Light Bearers*, 90-92.

⁹ Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 46.

¹⁰ Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 36.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

and respected Adventist pastors, issued accreditation cards to help in this situation.¹² Ordinations also helped. By 1853, travelling evangelistic preachers were regularly ordained.

Having accredited, ordained pastors was one issue; the second was their role. It is important to note that, in the early Adventist church, there were no pastors assigned to specific congregations.¹³ “For the first fifty or sixty years of its history the Adventist church existed without ‘settled pastors’ over churches.”¹⁴

The pastor’s role was to evangelize and plant churches. Those who wanted to become pastors knew that their role was evangelism and church planting. “In the summer of 1854, ... Adventists first began to use large tents in which to hold meetings. It was rare in those days to see tents used for such a purpose; consequently crowds of people came to the tent.”¹⁵ This provided evangelistic training for those who wanted to enter ministry. As A. W. Spalding, states, “A young man aiming at ministry... was taken into company with an evangelist and acted as his tent master... Here then, were developed a new team... to go forth in due time and train others.”¹⁶ When these meetings were finished, a church was often established and elders and deacons appointed to run

¹² John N. Loughborough, *The Church: Its Organization, Order and Discipline* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1907), 101.

¹³ Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 37.

¹⁴ Russell Burrill, *Rekindling a Lost Passion: Recreating a Church Planting Movement* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1999), 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁶ Arthur Whitefield Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists*, vol. 3 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962), 245, 247.

them.¹⁷ Pastors would then move on to run another tent meeting and start another church.

James White was very emphatic when he talked about the role of pastors and how they should be trained.

In no way can a preacher so well prove himself as in entering new fields. There he can see the fruits of his labours. And if he be successful in raising up churches, and establishing them, so that they bear good fruits, he gives to his brethren the best proofs that he is sent of the Lord.¹⁸

James White also explained what a person should do if he wanted to enter the ministry.

Let such ministers first be suitably instructed by those of experience in the message, then let them go out into new fields, trusting God for help and success. And when they shall have raised up churches, and shall have properly instructed them, then those churches will support them. If they cannot raise up churches and friends to sustain them, then certainly the cause of truth has no need of them, and they have made a sad mistake when they thought that God called them to teach the third angel's message.¹⁹

These accredited ordained clergy, fulfilling their role as evangelists and church planters, were part time itinerants. The success and perceived importance of their role was such that the early Adventists determined that their pastors should pursue their calling full time. How to finance these pastors proved a problem. Often, the very churches they had established did not know where the pastors were, as they had moved on to start a new church.

¹⁷ To see a discussion of the role of elders and deacons in the early Adventist church see especially, Loughborough, *The Church*, 103, 127-129.

¹⁸ James White, "Go Ye into All the World and Preach the Gospel," *Review and Herald* 19, no. 20 (April 15, 1862): 156.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

This is where the third innovative organisational element introduced by the early Adventist church contributed to church planting.²⁰ A tithing system was adopted by the new denomination in 1876. The proposal was that it was the duty of all members “under ordinary circumstances, to devote one-tenth of all their income from whatever source, to the cause of God.”²¹ Adventists have, from that time, delineated between free will offerings and tithe. Free will offerings could go to any project chosen by the giver, while all tithe went to the local conference to pay for pastors.²² The innovation that impacted church planting was that all tithes would go not to the local church, but to the local conference.

Churches sent their tithe to the conference to support the clergy who were raising up new churches, not to support local pastors. In their view, local churches did not need a pastor. Instead, all the tithe could be available to support a church planting movement, for that was what they saw themselves to be... Evangelism and church planting were the top priority of the early Adventist church.”²³

²⁰ The first attempt to provide remuneration to the itinerant pastors was developed in 1859 and called Systematic Benevolence or “Sister Betsey.” This system, developed by J. N. Andrews, encouraged men to contribute five to twenty-five cents per week and women two to ten cents per week. In addition, churches would be assessed one to five cents per week for each \$100 worth of property. There was initial excitement with this approach but it did not take people too long, to discover the approach was inadequate, cumbersome, and did not have any biblical foundation.

²¹ James White, ed., “Special Session of the General Conference.” *The Advent Review and Sabbath and Herald* (Battle Creek, MI), April 6, 1876.

²² The structure of the Adventist Church at this time was quite simple. It had three levels: local churches, Conferences comprising the local churches in a designated area, and a General Conference comprising all the Conferences. Later, another level called Unions made up of a number of Conferences was added and Divisions above them, representing the General Conference in a particular region. This means that today, there are five levels of administration in the Adventist church.

²³ Burrill, *Rekindling a Lost Passion*, 50-51.

As the local church often did not know the whereabouts of their pastor, the practice of sending tithe to the local conference was established. The local conference was the one place where people would know where the pastor was. The tithing system mentioned above was devised to support full-time pastors who were not at a local church, but spreading the gospel through evangelism and church planting.

The early Adventist church had, as part of its emerging organisational structure, at least three elements that facilitated their evangelism and church planting. Its decision to collectively own all property and buildings meant for the small group coming out of the Millerite Movement a sense of belonging and collective mission. The decision to have accredited and ordained paid clergy had a number of benefits. There was protection from interlopers and impostors. There was also the ability to focus the pastor's role on evangelism and church planting full-time. Funding the early pastors through tithe paid via the local conference, not just the local church, meant that the pastors could continue being itinerant, and gave conferences strategic input into church planting. As churches were planted, tithing went up. This meant more pastors could be paid and sent to areas that were not yet being evangelised.

Ellen G. White's Emphasis on Church Planting

Why are the views of a single person important in our discussion on the "Adventist Origins as a Church Planting Movement?" The reason is the enormous impact this woman had, and still has on the Adventist church.

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) has undoubtedly been the most influential Seventh-day Adventist in the history of the church. Her personal presence and

her writings did much to shape and guide Adventism during her seven decades of prophetic ministry. Since her death in 1915 her counsel and insights have continued to direct the denomination.²⁴

Her emphasis on church planting gives weight to the assertion that mission and church planting were a high priority in the early Adventist church. As will be seen, Ellen White emphasised the fact that pastors should be planting churches, and other church members should be planting churches as well.

Ellen White had definite beliefs on both who should be involved in starting churches and what the purpose of those churches should be. Her statement, “upon all who believe God has placed the burden of raising up churches,”²⁵ indicates that she expected all Christians to be involved in “raising up churches.” The purpose of these churches was also important. The raising up of churches was not to be the goal in itself. Ellen White stated that these churches were to be raised up “for the express purpose of educating men and women to use their entrusted capabilities for the benefit of the world... Gladly and generously they are to use the means in their possession for the advancement of righteousness and truth.”²⁶ Mission was to be the goal; church planting was a means to reach that goal.

²⁴ George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), 13.

²⁵ Ellen G. White, “Medical Missionary Work,” *Manuscript 32*, 1901, 7. Note: originals of all letters, manuscripts, and General Conference Bulletins are stored at the Ellen G. White estate in Washington, DC. Copies are available at E. G. White Centers around the world. The author holds photocopies of the documents referenced in this paper.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Ellen White believed that church members should be thinking seriously about their place in church planting, both for the sake of mission and their own spiritual growth.

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers.²⁷

Many of the members of our large churches are doing comparatively nothing. They might accomplish a good work if, instead of crowding together, they would scatter into places that have not yet been entered by the truth. Trees that are planted too thickly do not flourish. They are transplanted by the gardener, that they may have room to grow and not become dwarfed and sickly. The same rule would work well for our large churches. Many of the members are dying spiritually for want of this very work. They are becoming sickly and inefficient. Transplanted, they would have room to grow strong and vigorous.²⁸

The rationale here for planting churches is the spiritual health of people in large existing churches that Ellen White says are “doing comparatively nothing,” and “dying spiritually.” However, she believed that if they moved and started new churches, they would have room to “grow strong and vigorous.”

Ellen White also advocated that church families and individual members should strategically move to areas where they could extend their mission.

Close around us are cities and towns in which no efforts are made to save souls. Why should not families who know the truth settle in these cities and villages, to set up there the standard of Christ, working in humility, not in their

²⁷ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 21-22.

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 244.

own way, but in God's way, to bring the light before those who have no knowledge of it.²⁹

Missionary families are needed to settle in the waste places. Let farmers, financiers, builders and those who are skilled in various arts and crafts, go to neglected fields, to improve the land, to establish industries, to prepare humble homes for themselves, and to help their neighbours.³⁰

God calls for Christian families to go into communities that are in darkness and error, and work wisely and perseveringly for the Master. To answer this call requires much self-sacrifice... Where are those who are willing to do this for the sake of telling others of the Saviour?³¹

The lay members of our churches can accomplish a work which, as yet, they have scarcely begun. None should move into new places merely for the sake of worldly advantage; but where there is opening to obtain a livelihood, let families that are well grounded in the truth enter, one or two families in a place, to work as missionaries.³²

Questions were obviously raised about how the missionary work of starting new churches would be financed. Ellen White addressed such concerns by looking to the harvest. "I saw workmen building houses of worship. Those newly come to the faith were helping with willing hands, and those who had means were assisting with their means."³³ She also noted that the priority of church finances should be church planting. "My dear brethren and sisters, all the money we have is the Lord's.... Let not the work of

²⁹ Ellen G. White, "Missionary Work," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 68, no. 38 (September 29, 1891): 593; quoted in Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, n.d.), 521.

³⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), 194.

³¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 33.

³² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 8, 245.

³³ Ellen G. White, *The Daily Bulletin of the General Conference* (Worcester, MA) March 2 1899, 129.

establishing memorials for God in many places be made difficult and burdensome because the necessary means is withheld.”³⁴ Church planting was a theme that Ellen White often referred to and repeated. It was something that she believed was important for the Adventist church to do as part of its mission, not only in North America, but also to the world.

“New churches must be established, new congregations organised. At this time, there should be representatives of present truth in every city and in the remote parts of the earth. The whole earth is to be illuminated with the glory of God’s truth.”³⁵ “The people who bear His sign are to establish churches and institutions as memorials to Him.”³⁶ “The world is our field of missionary toil... In all countries and cities the gospel is to be proclaimed... Churches are to be organised, and plans laid for work to be done by the members of the newly-organised churches.”³⁷

Ellen White realised that multiple churches also might be needed to effectively reach all people. “In every city where the truth is proclaimed, churches are to be raised up. In some large cities there must be churches in various parts of the city.”³⁸

³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 132-133.

³⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, 24.

³⁶ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 7, 105.

³⁷ Ellen G. White, “Letter 86, June 11, 1902.”

³⁸ Ellen G. White, “Letter 168, Dec 1, 1909.”

It must also be emphasised how Ellen White saw the role of the pastors, or as she sometimes referred to them, ministers, in the area of church planting and developing local churches.

Our ministers are not to spend their time labouring for those who have already accepted the truth. With Christ's love burning in their hearts, they are to go forth to win sinners to the Saviour. Beside all waters they are to sow the seeds of truth. Place after place is to be visited; church after church is to be raised up. Those who take their stand for the truth are to be organized into churches, and then the minister is to pass on to other equally important fields.³⁹

When a pastor started a new church, he had a responsibility to the local church before he moved on. "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."⁴⁰ Pastors were to train the people so that church members could run the local church. Ellen White used an interesting metaphor of a pastor being a foreman of a group of workers, to illustrate how a church should be organised to allow the pastor to do his proper work.

In some respects the pastor occupies a position similar to that of the foreman of a gang of labouring men or the captain of a ship's crew. They are expected to see that the men over whom they are set, do the work assigned to them correctly and promptly, and only in case of emergency are they to execute in detail.

The owner of a large mill once found his superintendent in a wheel-pit, making some simple repairs, while a half-dozen workmen in the line were standing by, idly looking on. The proprietor, after learning the facts, so as to be sure that no injustice was done, called the foreman to his office and handed him his discharge with full pay. In surprise the foreman asked for an explanation. It was given in these words: "I employed you to keep six men at work. I found the six idle, and you doing the work of but one. Your work could have been done just as well by any one of the six. I cannot afford to pay the wages of seven for you to teach the six how to be idle.

³⁹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 7, 19-20.

⁴⁰ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 7, 19.

This incident may be applicable in some cases, and in others not. But many pastors fail in not knowing how, or in not trying, to get the full membership of the church actively engaged in the various departments of church work. If pastors would give more attention to getting and keeping their flock actively engaged at work, they would accomplish more good, have more time for study and religious visiting, and also avoid many causes of friction.⁴¹

There was one more aspect of church planting that Ellen White wrote about. As new churches were started and church members became active, they were to see the church from a position of church planting. “As churches are established, it should be set before them that it is even from among them that men must be taken to carry the truth to others, and raise new churches.”⁴²

Ellen White had a clear emphasis on church planting in her writings. She saw church planting as important in achieving the mission of the church. All church members were to be involved in starting new churches and were to strategically choose where they were to live and work, to more effectively reach people. Church finances needed to prioritise church planting and were to come from the harvest and the churches themselves. Pastors were to start new churches and train the members to work effectively to fulfill the mission of the church, and, from these new churches, other churches were to be established.

⁴¹ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instructions for All Who Are “Laborers Together with God,”* rev. and enl. (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 197, 198.

⁴² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 205.

A. G. Daniells' Emphasis on Church Planting

A. G. Daniells was president of the General Conference for twenty-two years.⁴³

A contemporary of Ellen White, he was a champion of church planting. Immediately prior to becoming president of the world church, he served in Australia as the church's leader there for eight years. He first arrived in Australia in 1892, seven years after the church was first established there and when there were only seven churches. When he left in 1900, there were thirty-three churches, an increase under his leadership of twenty-six in eight years. After becoming General Conference president, he watched as the church in Australia continued to grow from 33 churches to 122 by 1920.⁴⁴

Daniells had no doubt about the importance of church planting and its impact on the growth of the Adventist church. Pastors were to plant churches, and churches were to multiply. Speaking at a pastors' meeting in Los Angeles in 1912, he talked to them about their mission in the church. He spoke of sitting on a committee that was considering whether they would ordain a certain young man to full-time gospel ministry.

“Brethren, what is the record of this young man? Has he brought in a company or church this year?” – “No.” “Did he bring in any last year?” – “No.” “Has he raised up a good square church?” – “No.” “What do you want to ordain him for? Why are you going to establish him in this thing for all time to come when so far you have not any real fruit of his labor?” I said: “I sha'l (sic) object. I do not think it is right.”⁴⁵

⁴³ The General Conference President is leader of the Adventist Church worldwide.

⁴⁴ Figures taken by comparing *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1892), 65, with Adventist Statistical Reports for 1900 and 1920, <http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=11&SortBy=2&ShowDateOrder=True> (accessed April 23, 2008)

⁴⁵ A. G. Daniells, “The Church and Ministry,” address before the Los Angeles, California Ministerial Institute (Riversdale, Jamaica: The Watchman Press, 1912), 24.

The criteria Daniells considered important when ordaining an individual is enlightening. Because he had not planted a church, the young man was not ordained. To Daniells, the “fruit” of a person wanting to be ordained was planting a church. If a person did not bear this fruit, he should not be ordained. The reality is, that if Daniells’ criteria for ordination was a requisite today, there would be very few people ordained to gospel ministry in Australia or anywhere else in the Western World. Daniells went further, however. In the same presentation to the pastors in California, he stated that a

man that had been over twenty years in the ministry... had never presented one church to the conference for acceptance in the entire time. The brethren said, in considering the case, “We do not believe this man is called to this work,” and they relieved him... Something must be done with cases like this kind. They must bring some fruit. They must bring some churches to the cause of God. The man who gives evidence before his ordination must continue to give the evidence while he draws support.⁴⁶

Daniells is stating that, if someone wants to be ordained to ministry, that person “must bring some churches to the cause of God.” The next point is also important. Once they have been ordained, they “must continue to give the evidence.” Church planting was evidence of one’s fruit prior to ordination, and it was also the fruit after ordination. People were sacked, even after twenty years, for not planting churches.

How Non-Adventist Observers Acknowledged the Adventist Emphasis on Church Planting

Although the Adventist church was not officially started until 1863, by 1886, non-Adventists were starting to notice the growth of the church. This was only forty-two years since the Great Disappointment. The *Plain Dealer*, for example, a newspaper in

⁴⁶ Daniells, “The Church and Ministry.”

Wabash, Indiana, interviewed Elder Star, a prominent Adventist, about the reasons the Adventist church was growing so quickly. This is the report:

THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS

Some Facts and Figures Gathered
From Elder Star – How they
have grown in Forty
Years – and What They Believe

Any great religious movement which affects a considerable number of people is of interest to the general public and the facts concerning such a work, the people, their customs and their manner of working, form a part of the history of the times. As the Seventh Day Adventists (sic) are rapidly coming into notice as a rising, aggressive religious denomination, a Plain Dealer reporter has obtained the following facts concerning them... They are certainly interesting to thinking people.

“By what means have you carried forward your work so rapidly?” “Well, in the first place,” replied the Elder, “we have no settled pastors. Our churches are taught largely to take care of themselves, while nearly all of our ministers work as evangelists in new fields. In the winter they go out into the churches, halls or school houses and raise up believers. In the summer we use tents, pitching them in the cities and villages where we teach the people these doctrines.”⁴⁷

The emphasis on church planting by the early Adventist church is clearly evident. The first reason Star gives to the reporter for their rapid growth is the fact that Adventist ministers were not settled over churches, but doing evangelism in new areas. Also, the local congregations looked after themselves because they had been trained to do so.

It was not only newspapers that noticed the emphasis on church planting by the early Adventists. The Seventh-day Baptists also were wondering why the Adventists were growing and what contributed to their growth. They picked up the same basic facts

⁴⁷ *Wabash (Indiana) Plain Dealer*, October 1, 1886, 5.

the newspaper had. They wrote in 1908, “All Seventh-day Adventist clergymen are missionaries – not located pastors – and are busy preaching, teaching, and organizing churches the world over.”⁴⁸

Adventists had an emphasis on church planting, and it was evidenced by the role pursued by their paid clergy and the members of individual churches. It was an emphasis that both the secular press and other denominations observed and acknowledged.

How Adventists Lost Their Emphasis on Church Planting

It is the contention of this paper that Adventists lost their emphasis on church planting owing to two particular factors. First, they started settling pastors over churches, and those pastors, as a result, stopped being itinerant evangelists starting new churches.

Secondly, those settled pastors became shepherds. That meant that the church members no longer were trained to run their local church and concentrate on mission. Rather, they became spectators, as the pastors did the ministry of the local church. They became consumers instead of deliverers.

Settling Pastors Over Churches

There does not seem to be any indication of any particular decision that resulted in the early Adventist church turning away from its church planting roots, and the role of pastors as itinerant evangelists planting churches. What does become evident is that there was a gradual push for pastors to settle over existing churches. A. G. Daniells in 1912,

⁴⁸ *Seventh-day Baptist Sabbath Recorder*, December 28, 1908. Reported in *Review and Herald* of January 14, 1909.

while reiterating the role of pastors and the local churches in church planting, warned about what he could see happening if those roles were changed.

We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent. In some of the very large churches we have elected pastors; but as a rule we have held ourselves ready for field service, evangelical work, and our brethren and sisters have held themselves ready to maintain their church services and carry forward their church work without settled pastors. And I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination; for when we cease our forward movement work, and begin to settle over our churches, to stay by them, and do their thinking and their praying and their work that is to be done, then our churches will begin to weaken, and to lose their life and spirit, and become paralyzed and fossilized, and our work will be on a retreat.⁴⁹

Ellen White also warned about settling pastors over churches. “Churches are to be planted,”⁵⁰ she stated, but she was also adamant that “there should not be a call to have settled pastors over our churches.”⁵¹ “I knew that ministers labouring with those who know the truth, tending them like sick sheep, should be out in the field, planting the standard of truth in new places.”⁵²

One of the best-loved pastors in the Adventist church was H. M. S. Richards Sr. Writing in 1958, he recalled his experience growing up in the Adventist church. “When I was baptized, and later became a young preacher, we looked upon churches that had to have settled pastors over every flock as being decadent.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Daniells, *The Church and Ministry*, 25.

⁵⁰ Ellen G. White, “The Work in Greater New York,” *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, January 8, 1902.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Ellen G. White, “Give the Medical Missionary Work Its Place,” *Manuscript 150*, 1901, 5.

⁵³ H. M. S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1958), 156.

Richards was recalling the reality of what it was like for him growing up. What prompted him to recall these sentiments was reading an editorial from Francis Wilcox, editor of the *Review and Herald* in 1925. According to Richards' recollection, Wilcox, under the heading "Danger of a Diverted Ministry," wrote about the "unfortunate growing tendency in our denomination toward settled pastorates."⁵⁴ By the time of Richards, in the 1940s and 1950s, pastors settling over churches was a normal occurrence. Burrell puts it succinctly when he says,

During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, cries were made to have settled pastors over the churches, but Ellen White and Daniells were firmly against it. With their demise, nothing could stem the tide. Pastors were quickly placed over churches throughout North America. The result was a rapid drop in church planting and a slowing of the evangelistic advance of the church.⁵⁵

While agreeing with Burrell about the reality of what happened with church planting, it does seem that there were voices, other than Ellen White and Daniells, bemoaning the fact that there was a trend to settling pastors over churches.

Pastors as Shepherds Rather Than Planters

It has been shown that pastors in the early Adventist church were initially itinerant evangelists starting new churches, training the church members, and then moving on to plant new churches. As Richards states,

Most of our preachers were out on the firing line, holding meetings, winning men to Christ, and raising up new churches. Then every few months

⁵⁴ Richards wrote that he was quoting from Francis McLellan Wilcox, "Danger of a Diverted Ministry," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 102, no. 21, May 21, 1925. This was incorrect. He was actually quoting from Wilcox, but in an editorial two weeks later entitled "Standing by the Preacher," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 102, no. 23, June 4, 1925.

⁵⁵ Burrill, *Rekindling a Lost Passion*, 55.

they would come around and visit the churches that had already been established. This seemed to be, according to our view of it, the plan of the apostolic church.⁵⁶

Church planting could still have been an emphasis for the early Adventist church, even with pastors settling over churches. As has been demonstrated, it was not only the pastors who emphasised church planting; it was also the members of the local churches. Even with pastors settling over churches, if church members had continued to be trained to plant churches and to run the churches, church planting could still have been an effective emphasis of the Adventist church.

Unfortunately, the evidence seems to indicate that with the pastors settling over the churches came a corresponding shift of the church members to seeing the pastors as shepherds rather than planters. The quote by Wilcox regarding the “unfortunate tendency in the denomination today toward settled pastors”⁵⁷ goes on to state that the time of settled pastors was “being occupied in labor for men and women who should be towers of strength instead of subjects of labor.”⁵⁸ He challenges the churches to “learn to be self-supporting, self-reliant, and self-helping,”⁵⁹ and finally, to “go out into needy places and do a great work for Him.”⁶⁰ These words seemed to fall on deaf ears.

⁵⁶ Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 156.

⁵⁷ Wilcox, “Standing by the Preacher.”

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Ellen White had not been quiet on this topic either. She saw the link between pastors hovering over churches and the church members not being trained to plant churches.

What is the matter? The ministers are hovering over churches, which know the truth, while thousands are perishing out of Christ. If the proper instruction were given, if the proper methods were followed, every church member would do his work as a member of the body. He would do Christian missionary work. But the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach to them. They should be taught to bring a faithful tithe to God, that He may strengthen and bless them. They should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them. They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again.⁶¹

Church planting in the Adventist church was influenced markedly by the change in the role of pastors from itinerant evangelist church planters to pastors settling over local churches. It was also influenced by the pastors hovering over the churches becoming shepherds, rather than equipping the church members to look after themselves and plant churches.

The Current State of Church Planting In Australia

The rate of growth in the number of churches planted in Australia that occurred while A. G. Daniells was president of the church there (1892-1900) and while he served as President of the world church (1901-1922) was quite rapid. The following table shows this growth in the number of churches in Australia and the church membership (see Fig 1). The table also shows the growth of the church from that time in around thirty-year increments. It will be noted that, apart from the first thirty years, the fastest rate of

⁶¹ Ellen G. White, "Give the Medical Missionary Work Its Place," *Manuscript 150*.

church planting was from 1950 to 1980, which also corresponded to the largest increase in church membership.

The growth in the number of churches in Australia has remained static between the years 1999 and 2006. There were 410 churches in Australia in 1999 and seven years later, at the end of 2006, there were still 410 churches. However, in the same period there has been an increase in membership from 50,095 to 52,771, an increase of 2,676.⁶²

Date	Churches	Increase In Churches	Membership	Increase In Membership
2006	410	47	52,771	11,784
1980	363	137	40,987	21,288
1950	226	104	19,699	13,711
1920	122	116	5,988	5,543
1890	6		445	

Figure 1. History of Church Planting in Australia.

Conclusion

The Adventist church started as a church planting movement. Organisational decisions such as ownership of property, accrediting pastors with the specific role of

⁶² All figures for the statistics mentioned in this chapter were found by the author from the official Annual Statistical Reports. These reports are published every year and are available on the Internet. Statistics available are from 1899 till the present at <http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=11&SortBy=2&ShowDateOrder=True> (accessed April 23, 2008).

being itinerant evangelistic church planters, and centralizing the payment of tithes to further free up pastors to plant churches contributed to the Adventist church's rapid growth. The public media, along with other denominations, recorded the process and the rapid growth of the Adventists through church planting. Key individuals such as Ellen G. White and A. G. Daniells tried to keep the focus of the church on church planting. The emphasis on pastors planting churches and the local churches looking after themselves and also planting churches, continued for the first seventy years of the church's existence.

The decline in the emphasis on church planting happened particularly after the deaths of Ellen White and Daniells and other key pioneers. The decline happened gradually as the pastor's primary role changed from that of itinerant evangelistic church planter to shepherd over local churches. The local church members, failing to look after themselves and plant churches, continued the declining emphasis on church planting. Rather than being producers of healthy growing churches that planted further churches, and had no need of pastors, they became consumers, needing pastors to both feed, and look after their personal needs.

The current state of church planting in Australia over the past few years indicates that church planting in Australia has reached a crisis point. There are signs, however, that this is changing. Between the years 2005 and 2008, over thirty church planting initiatives have started in Australia.⁶³ Some of the reasons this may have happened will be explained in subsequent chapters.

⁶³ The author personally contacted leaders in most of the Conferences in Australia to get these figures.

CHAPTER 2

CURRENT CHALLENGES TO CHURCH PLANTING IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH

Today, in Australia as in North America, church planting faces a number of challenges. By and large, Adventists no longer have a culture of church planting. In 1996, a conference to discuss the viability of church planting in the Adventist Church was conducted in North America. While this event may historically be looked upon as the beginning of church planting's once again becoming a significant part of Adventist mission, it highlighted an area of concern. Called SEEDS, this conference could not find an expert in church planting within the Adventist church with experience in secular first world countries. The church had moved so far from its roots as a movement that experts from outside the church had to be brought in to re-educate Adventist leaders on the importance of church planting.

Dr. Robert Logan, a church planting consultant, was brought in to conduct the first two sessions of this conference. After startling the participants at the conference with his initial question asking who among them were believers, he demonstrated a knowledge of the history and context of the Adventist church by quoting Ellen White. "Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches."¹ He stressed the fact that the church needed to go back to its roots as a church planting movement if it wanted

¹ Ellen G. White, "Medical Missionary Work." *Manuscript 32*, 1901, 7.

to recapture its emphasis on church planting and achieve its God given mission. While his comments were accurate and welcome, it was embarrassing to some that the Adventist church had to bring in an outside expert to remind the church of its own origins.

Although there are encouraging signs that some are starting to rediscover the origins of the Adventist church as a church planting movement, the church still faces serious challenges if it is to again be such a movement. Besides the general culture of the Adventist church, which does not see church planting as mainstream, there are other challenges to church planting. How to control church plants, how to start them or even close them, the unhealthy nature of some church plants, and the fear of congregationalism² are a few of the challenges facing the church if church planting is to succeed in the future. Some see church planting as a way of moving liberal tendencies into the church. Others see church planting as being unsustainable financially within the secular first world context. Added to this is the reality that there is very little in the way of a consistent process for church planting currently available. That is the particular issue this paper seeks to address.

The Current View of the Role of Clergy and Laity

Students graduating from Avondale College, the only theological training seminary for Adventist pastors in Australia, had their first class in church planting at the

² By congregationalism, we mean the form of *ecclesia* whereby churches operate more or less independently of denominational control. Congregationalism, as a denomination, is not the subject of this paper.

undergraduate level in 2006 and again in 2007. These classes consisted of five sessions each and were conducted by the author. The year 2006 saw the first MA Class in church planting, conducted by Pastor Peter Roennfeldt, an experienced church planting practitioner, who had recently returned from ten years working in Europe. Students graduating from Avondale College have the expectation that they will be going into existing churches and not church planting.

After graduating, students who receive placement in ministry typically undergo a two-year internship and, unless it is felt the interns need more development, they are then usually ordained after three or four more years of work in ministry. To be asked to do an extra year internship is not common, but it does happen. In 2003, a student who graduated went to do his internship at a church plant. This in itself was unusual, but at the end of his internship, he was told he had to do another year of internship at a “normal” or more established church.³ Church planting is still regarded by some as being on the periphery of ministry rather than as central to evangelism and ministry.

As mentioned, pastors are not trained to plant churches. Their training at Avondale College is done with the expectation that they will primarily be pastoring established churches. Besides what has been mentioned above, there is no training at the College on how to plant a brand new church.

³ The student, Brad Melville, has now completed his internship and remains in an established church.

Individual churches can approach the local Conference about who their pastor will be. The churches expect a pastor and believe it is their right to have one. While there are many wonderful lay people⁴ doing amazing things in ministry, there is little expectation that a church should look after itself and that pastors should be released to plant churches. Frankly, it would be unfair to the churches if this were done. The members, by and large, have not been trained to do ministry and run the church. They are not choosing to move from home to plant churches themselves, as happened at the beginning of the Adventist church in America. Most would have little idea how to do this, or even realize that it is something they could or should be doing. Pastors, on the other hand, also have little or no training in starting new churches. Current serving pastors have learnt more about bringing change and revitalization to an existing church than how to plant new churches. Pastors, it could be said, enter full time ministry with the expectation that they will pastor established churches.

The Challenge of Church Planting to Adventist Denominational Control

A major challenge today to church planting in Australia is that it is seen by some as a direct challenge to denominational organizational structure and control. This paper has mentioned a few organizational initiatives that the early Adventist church established that facilitated church planting. However, the entire organizational structure of the church impacts church planting. While the development of the formal organisational

⁴ The author is aware of the biblical meaning of *laos* or laity. Laity refers to every member of the church with no distinction between paid members e.g. clergy and unpaid church members. This term is being used as it is the one Adventists are most familiar with when talking about unpaid church members.

structure of the Adventist church is not the purpose of this paper, it is the intention of the writer to describe briefly the basis for its organization, as it impacts the advancement or hindrance of church planting.⁵

Around 1901-1909, as the Adventist church came to grips with its continued growth, A. T. Jones argued for a congregational form of church governance while A. G. Daniells argued for a more centralized form of governance.⁶

Jones attempted to define a congregational church structure that arose from his interpretation of the New testament [sic] references to the local church. He understood the nature of the church in terms of the headship of Christ in the church. Structures were authenticated by their expression of that headship.⁷

It was Daniells' approach that was accepted by the church. As Barry Oliver rightly explains, Daniells' approach "gave priority to the realization of the missionary mandate of the church and ... was able to accommodate the universal perspectives of the sense of mission."⁸ The important point to notice here is that Daniells

subordinated theological consideration of the nature of the church to his commitment to the evangelization of the world.... His was an overwhelming functional view of the church. Structures arose in the context of the need to perform the assigned task. Structures were the servant of the task. They were not the result of systematic theological reflection regarding the nature of the church.⁹

⁵ For an understanding of how the denomination developed its organizational structure, see Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present, and Future*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989).

⁶ For a discussion on the debate on early Adventist organization see, Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 118-131.

⁷ Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure*, 233.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Daniells, as has been recorded, was a strong advocate of church planting as a means to facilitate mission. He also wanted the entire structure of the church to facilitate mission. The first Adventist organizational moves, such as the church's owning property and buildings, were put in place to protect the church by giving it control, as well as helping it achieve the mission of the church. The denominational structures, formalized around 1910, were also put in place to facilitate mission.

The question that can be asked is whether the organization today still facilitates mission, or whether it is used to protect the status quo of the church. Control and mission seem to still be important factors, but has the emphasis on control and mission changed? Over time, issues surrounding supporting the organization seem to have become blurred with fulfilling the mission of the church. Supporting the organization itself is seen by some as fulfilling, or at least supporting, the mission of the church. Knight, in a 1998 presentation to the Annual General Conference Council entitled, "Adventist Congregationalism: Wake-Up Call or Death Knell?" discussed this challenge. Of his original manuscript, Knight stated,

I had written that no other church in the world had so many administrative levels to support. The editors, seeking to be helpful, added the words "excepting the Roman Catholic." I objected to the change and pencilled in "including the Roman Catholic." That branch has only two levels above the local church, whereas Adventism has four."¹⁰

Each local church has significant controls over it by the local Conference and the higher administrative levels, but the local church currently decides most things regarding its operation. However, although it may have input into who its pastor might be, the local

¹⁰ Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil*, 167.

Conference ultimately appoints and removes the local church's pastor. The local church does not own, as mentioned, the property it worships in nor does it keep its tithe.

The majority of church offerings also are not controlled by the local church. Each church gives a minimum of two offerings a week. The first, called the Sabbath School offering, goes to support world mission and is sent to the General Conference via the local Conference. The second offering is taken during the church service. While varying slightly between Conferences, of the fifty-two church offerings taken up each year, around half are sent directly to the local Conference for various projects ranging from youth ministry to the Bible Society. This means, in reality, the combination of the two offerings results in 104 offerings each year going to the Conference or other entities. All the tithe goes to the Conference. Of the 104 offerings collected, the local church keeps approximately twenty-five, plus money that they may have received via application from the local Conference. With these few offerings, they run their local mission, ministries, and evangelism. The pastors, as from the beginning of the Adventist church, are still paid from tithe by the local Conference.

A challenge for denominational leaders is whether, when church plants are started, they agree to be part of the above-mentioned structure. Will church planters believe that the structure that was originally designed for mission is still an effective way for their church plants to grow? Will church plants feel that the mission emphasis of church structure is outweighed by the control emphasis of church structure? Will church administrators support church planting if they feel that some church plants might challenge current denominational structures?

The Challenge of Congregationalism

The author of this paper has been involved over the last two years in bringing together the Conference leadership¹¹ in Australia and New Zealand for training and resourcing in church planting. Of the nine Conferences in Australia, seven of them came together five time times during 2005 and 2006. Each Conference sent a team, including its president and other key leaders, both from the paid ministry and church members. The two Conferences that did not come together were the smallest ones.

The fact that these Conference leaders came together, even when the author was told a number of times that the leaders would not attend, testified that there seems to be a growing interest in church planting, and maybe even a desire to see it as an effective form of evangelism. The overriding concern expressed to the author on numerous occasions by these leaders was that church plants might become congregational. They were concerned that church plants might decide to incorporate, keep tithe for themselves, own their own property, and appoint their own pastors. The denomination, therefore, would have little or no control over them, and it was felt that the overall mission of the denomination would suffer. Some church leaders fear that brand new expressions of church have a far higher chance of going congregational than established ones. This has resulted in some church leaders' actively speaking against church planting.

The debate over a congregational style of government versus a centralised was decided around 1910, as typified in the argument between Jones and Daniells. The

¹¹ There are nine conferences in Australia. They are in charge of the church for Australia under the umbrella of the Australian Union Conference (AUC). The South Pacific Division (SPD) oversees the Unions and Missions of the South Pacific.

mission of the worldwide Adventist church would be seriously impacted if the churches at the lower levels of organization ceased to support the higher levels of organization. If resources ceased to flow up, and stayed at the local level, there could be no worldwide co-ordination of mission as currently occurs. The structure currently existing would collapse if local churches went congregational. For church planting to again become a core part of the Adventist mission, the perception that there would be a likely trend towards congregationalism and independence of new plants needs to be addressed.

The Challenge of How to Start and Close Churches

If church planting were to become again a major force in mission within the Adventist Church, many new churches would need to be started. There would probably be a number of church plants that would fail and that would need to be closed.¹² In the Adventist Church Manual, there is a chapter entitled “Organizing, Uniting and Dissolving Churches,”¹³ which gives procedures for starting and closing churches. There are formalities involved in electing church officers, filling various positions, and performing other necessary duties before a church can be organized into the sisterhood of churches. The question arises, “At what point does a church plant becomes an official church”?

¹² The failure rate of church plants has been rumoured to be as high as 80-90 percent. The source for such figures is hard to find. It is gratifying that Ed Stetzer and Phillip Conner have been able to challenge this urban myth and show that the survivability of church plants is much higher than that. They found that 99 percent of church plants survive their first year, and after four years 68 percent are still operating. Ed Stetzer and Phillip Connor, *Church Plant Survivability and Health Study* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, 2007), 13.

¹³ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 17th ed., rev. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005) 209-214.

There is a category of church called a “company.” The church manual states, that when “a number of isolated believers reside in proximity to one another, a company of believers may be organized for fellowship and worship with the objective of growing into an organized church.”¹⁴ This level of pre-church has all major officers appointed by the local Conference after consulting with the baptised members of the company. The local leadership team is actually the Conference Executive Committee. The company does not have the authority to discipline its members; this can only be done by the Conference Executive Committee.¹⁵

Some believe that all church plants should go through the company stage. To become a company, a church planter who endeavours to build a team for planting a church, and who is often an independent type of individual, would have to realize that the team he or she is developing will have no real authority, as the leadership of the company resides at the Conference. Developing the team that is becoming a church plant means guarding closely the direction and personnel who make up that team. Some people may be asked to leave or change their behaviour for the plant to succeed. A church plant will have to accept that the leadership and discipline needed to start a church plant will be given up to the Conference on becoming a company. Will church plants and church planters be willing to do that? Maybe they would prefer to skip the company stage and go straight to official church status if that were possible.

¹⁴ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Finally, there is the challenge of closing church plants that do not succeed. According to the church manual there are two reasons for which a church can be disbanded or closed. The first reason is through the loss of members. The second is the need for serious church discipline, perhaps a result of false doctrine. If there is a loss of members resulting in the perceived non-viability of a church, the Conference can recommend to the local church that the church disband. Also, if there is a need for discipline, the local Conference can recommend to the local church that the church disband. If, in the case of discipline, the local church refuses the recommendation, then the local Conference can take the matter to a special Session meeting of the combined local churches and, in that Session, the local church can be disbanded.¹⁶ What is interesting is that, in the case of the non-viability of a church due to lack of numbers, the local Conference can only recommend to the local church that it disband. The local church can refuse to disband and the local Conference cannot force it to do so.¹⁷

A challenge to church planting is that local Conferences do not want a large group of small failed church plants in their Conference that they are unable to close. Even the process of starting churches is such that some Conferences may find it difficult to facilitate a large number of new churches, especially with the confusion as to how these churches might officially be recognized as churches.

¹⁶ *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 212, 213.

¹⁷ Various Conferences have different ways to try to compel the local church to close that are not included in the Manual. Methods used include withholding staff and funding. Technically, however, they cannot close a church because of lack of numbers.

The Challenge of Church Planting to Adventist Orthodoxy

It is a strange reality that a church denomination that started as a church planting movement now has members who actually see church planting as a challenge to Adventist orthodoxy. The argument goes something like this: “The methods used to promote the gospel are never program-neutral. They either rightly represent the gospel as it is in Jesus or misrepresent it.”¹⁸ Richard O’Ffill, the author of the above statement, goes on to state that the terms church planting and church growth “carry with them an inherent danger – they are doctrinally benign, neutral (in other words, generic).”¹⁹ He then states that Sunday-keeping church planters often plant churches where the “creed and doctrines of each new church are wholly left up to those who will comprise its membership. Surveys of these new, nondenominational community churches reveal that they are by and large [sic] doctrinally generic. And with good reason.”²⁰

Church planting is seen by some as a new innovation that has been taken from people who are not Adventists and adapted to Adventism. When Adventists use these methods, the argument goes, they may seem on the surface neutral but they actually have the effect of watering down the Adventist message.

O’Ffill and others of like mind are very good at linking the fear of compromise and loss of Adventist identity with methods of evangelism such as church planting and reaching unchurched people. O’Ffill says, “The word *unchurched* as used by pastors of

¹⁸ Richard W. O’Ffill, *Lord, Save My Church: Tackling the Tough Issues* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007), 108.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 108-109.

other faiths is a code word that means, ‘we won’t steal members from each other’s churches.’”²¹ In one step he has accused those who want to plant churches to reach unchurched people of pandering to other “faiths,” and then he casts aspersions on their motivation regarding unique Adventist doctrines. To suggest that church planters might cease to present these doctrines to people just because they attend another denomination is, to many Adventists, a serious negative emotional argument.

Church planting started out as orthodox Adventism. It was designed to be a means to convey another orthodoxy, church doctrine, to a world that it was felt needed to hear these teachings. One orthodoxy involving the method of proclamation is now being seen by some as a threat to the other orthodoxy, the message.

The challenge to church planting is not just in what is being stated about church planting being a perceived threat to Adventist orthodoxy. It is also in where these challenges are coming from. The quotes given above were all published via Adventist denominational publishing houses; in this particular case, the Pacific Press Publishing Association. The book, *Lord, Save My Church*, published by the Pacific Press Publishing Association and quoted above, was advertised prominently throughout North America, Australia, and New Zealand via denominational papers. These denominational papers were distributed to every Adventist in those countries, and the book advertised prominently in catalogue inserts. In addition, the book was advertised in Adventist Book Centers throughout the world.

²¹ O’Ffill, *Lord, Save My Church*. 111.

Whenever church planting is attacked by leaders in the Adventist church via official publishing houses, and such attacks are then sent to large portions of the Adventist church, rediscovering church planting as an innovative return to Adventist roots will prove difficult. It is easy to understand why the average Adventist might believe that the official church is anti-church planting. While such attacks continue, church planting will likely be seen as an attack on Adventist orthodoxy.

The Challenge of the Financial Sustainability of Church Planting

The Adventist church has progressed a long way from when the decision was first made to pay tithe to the local Conference who would then be responsible for paying the church planting pastor. The primary destination of the tithe for pastors in the field today is not for pastors planting churches, but for pastors caring for existing churches. Today, to start a new church, many Conference Presidents feel they must find a new budget to pay for a pastor who is to start the church. Even if a person volunteers to start a church, there are now in Australia significant legal constraints compelling organizations with volunteers to pay them for anything above fifteen hours per week of volunteer labour.

Many church members, as well as denominational leaders, feel that, if a church is to be started, it should be a pastor who does it. They forget that, at the beginning of the Adventist movement, it was both pastors and unpaid church members who started churches. As long as it is believed that only paid pastors can plant churches, church planting is not likely to become a movement within the Adventist church.

Some people believe that all churches should own their church buildings. To achieve this would make it almost impossible for churches to be started in most major cities because of the cost of land and buildings. It needs to be remembered that the early Adventist church did not have buildings or land. This did not stop them from planting churches in people's homes or meeting halls.

The result of this situation is that, for a new church to start, in most cases a new budget must be found and money obtained for buildings. This means that very few Conferences feel that they can plant many new churches. Some cannot even plant one. Some Conferences may well feel that, if an extra budget becomes available, it may need to be used to employ a pastor in an already established church.

Some believe a massive influx of church plants would be unsustainable financially on the church system because of the factors above. As long as church planters have to be fully employed by the Conference, or wages have to be paid by the Conference, or church buildings must be supplied, church finances will continue to be seen as an impediment for a church-planting movement to develop again within Adventism.

The Challenge of the Unhealthy Nature of Some Church Plants within Adventism

There have been a number of church plants in Australia over the last ten to fifteen years that have not been healthy ones. The two main concerns that have typified these plants are ones that have been raised before. Low numbers attending some church plants, along with the expectation that they will receive paid pastoral support, have created

problems between the plants and the Conferences. Because it has been hard to close these plants once they became churches, some Conferences have become very hesitant to start more new churches.

The other main concern is of church plants deciding to go independent. The prime example used to demonstrate this concern is the South Side Community Church situated in South-Queensland. Ken Houliston, an Adventist pastor, planted this church with the blessing of the President of the South Queensland Conference. Over time, Houliston started negotiating with the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists to incorporate sections of the church so that it could obtain government funding for social projects. Versions of what happened vary, but the result was that the South Queensland Conference, under the administration subsequent to the one that originally invited Houliston to plant the church, gave Houliston and the church plant the opportunity to stay within the denomination and abide within its guidelines or leave the denomination. Houliston decided to go independent.

This example is given to highlight a number of issues. Firstly, because there was no process for planting churches in Australia, Houliston basically had to start the church without a proper process in place. He was supported quite strongly in the initial stages both financially and by leaders at various levels of church administration. This support lessened over time and eventually seemed to disappear as denominational leaders and situations changed. Without an acknowledged process for starting and receiving ongoing support, Houliston made many decisions by himself. His was never officially a church, so the Conference could close him down denominationally whenever they chose. The

detractors of church planting were able to point to this occurrence and argue that church plants tend to go independent and ignore the structures of the church. Whether that was true in this case is irrelevant. The perception was there, and the result has been further negative feeling towards church planting.

Conclusion

There are a number of challenges facing church planting in Australia. There is continued misunderstanding as to the roles of professional clergy and the laity. Pastors are not trained to plant churches, and laity also are not trained to either run churches by themselves or to plant churches. The challenge to denominational control is exemplified by the concern of congregationalism to the mission of the church. Confusion as to how to start churches and close those that fail is an inhibitor to leaders who may wish to advance the mission of the church by starting new churches. The perception of what is needed to plant churches in a financially sustainable way means that many Conferences do not want to start churches unless financially they can support a full time budget. As long as it is believed that only paid pastors can plant churches and that all churches need to own their own land and church buildings, church planting will never become a movement within the Adventist church.

There is also the current impression that some church plants have remained small, others have drained resources, and some have also gone independent. When fears are realised, then change is difficult. Having a church planting process that takes into account

the concerns mentioned above may be an important part of a process to bring about the change needed to restore church planting as an innovative return to Adventist roots.

CHAPTER 3

THE AUSTRALIAN SECULAR CONTEXT

Ed Stetzer believes that to plant churches that make a real difference in any society one must plant missional churches. “Establishing a missional church means that you plant a church that’s part of the culture you’re seeking to reach.”¹ The cultural context for the proposed church planting process in this paper is Australia. To be authentic and to give the process the best chance of success, the social context in which the churches will be planted must be taken into account. The social context of Australia is primarily secular. Secularism may be defined as “a neutral attitude, especially of the State, local government and public services, in matters relating to religion; non religious rather than anti-religious.”²

This chapter examines the secular context in Australia from a number of viewpoints. First is the impact of the first European settlement in Australia, particularly the convict fleets, on the country’s secular emphasis. Concentration will be placed on the attitude of these early founders to religion, authority, and institutions. Second is the post-modern mindset of Australia and its attitude to the Christian church.

¹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches: Planting a Church That’s Biblically Sound and Reaching People in Culture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 1.

² This definition comes from the “International Humanist and Ethical Union: The World Union of Humanist Organizations.” One can find the definition and an outline of this organization’s role at <http://www.iheu.org/glossary/term/252> (accessed April 15, 2008).

Early European Settlement's Impact on Australia's Secular Emphasis

The first settlers to Australia did not come by choice. The Americas had been lost to the British, and they wanted to find a part of the world, far from England, to which they could transport their convicts. Governor Arthur Phillip arrived with the first group of convicts in Botany Bay on January 26, 1788. Hans Mol points out that there “was no religious ceremony to mark the occasion.”³ The British flag was raised, and the military conducted a ceremony, but the chaplain, Johnson, was ignored. Bonswick observed: “The baptism of the place was performed in libations of liquor and success to the settlement was duly honoured in the flowing bowl.”⁴ One can contrast this with what happened when the Pilgrims landed in America at Plymouth in 1620. Here there was a church covenant, the Mayflower Compact, and much praying along with Bible readings. There was no flag.

The root of the decline of religious observance was set deep in Australia's history. Much of the apathy and resentment towards religion, institutions, and authority can be seen right from the beginning of colonisation. Although there was no religious ceremony to announce the new nation, Arthur Phillip was ordered to “enforce a due observance of religion and good order among the inhabitants of the new settlement and that you do take such steps for the due celebration of publick [sic] worship.”⁵ Johnson, the first chaplain,

³ Hans Mol, *Religion in Australia: A Sociological Investigation* (Melbourne, Victoria: Thomas Nelson, 1971), 1.

⁴ James Bonswick, *Australia's First Preacher: The Rev. Richard Johnson* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1898), 71.

⁵ Jean Woolmington, ed., *Religion in Early Australia: The Problem of Church and State* (Sydney: Cassell, 1976), 1.

ministered in the best way he could. His appointment had been influenced by a small group of parliamentarians led by William Wilberforce,⁶ the man credited with abolishing slavery in the British Empire. Although Johnson regarded the convicts as “my fellow creatures,”⁷ he was placed in an impossible position. In Great Britain in the eighteenth century, there were legal ties between church and state. This meant in practical terms that, while Johnson was appointed to look after the spiritual welfare of the new colony, he was also in charge of social order. He had to administer the punishment to convicts who had caused social and legal infractions within the colony. Therefore, Johnson had little success with the convicts as he was seen as part of the establishment and acted as magistrate as well as minister.

Convicts, wretched creatures thousands of kilometres from home, many with no hope of ever returning to their loved ones, were compelled to go to church and, for even minor offences, could be punished by whipping or loss of privileges. Not only did they have to sit through church services, but the very person who preached to them was often the one who whipped them. The “Irish convict minority was given no Catholic priests...[but] were expected to attend compulsory Anglican worship, a further recipe for alienation from religion.”⁸ While social order was important, and attending worship was compulsory for the convicts, the church was not important enough to have a church

⁶ Roger C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: A History*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

⁷ Neil K. Macintosh, *Richard Johnson: Chaplain to the Colony of New South Wales, His Life and Times 1755-1827* (Sydney: Pilgrim International, 1978), 54.

⁸ Thompson, *Religion in Australia*, 3.

building. When given a choice, many of the establishment did not attend church. Johnson wrote to Phillip in 1792 "... we are wholly exposed to the weather....On this account, sir, it cannot be wondered that persons, whether of higher or lower rank, come so seldom and so reluctantly to public worship."⁹ In 1793, a year later, a Spanish expedition arrived in the colony and was surprised that there was no church building. They stated that "it would be the first building constructed in a Spanish settlement."¹⁰

How would convicts react to a church building when finally built? Johnson finally built the first church building in Sydney from his own funds, but soon after it mysteriously burnt down.¹¹

Worship attendance in Australia has always been low. In 1840, Judge Burton estimated that, of a total population of about 102,000 in New South Wales, only 11,000 Protestants attended church.¹² As about 28 percent of the population was Catholic at the time, it can be estimated that average attendance by Protestants was around 15 percent. Catholic attendance seems to have been worse. In 1838, there were 21,898 Catholics in N.S.W., of which only about 2,880 or approximately 13 percent went to church regularly.¹³

⁹ A. L. McLeod, ed., *The Pattern of Australian Culture* (Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 1963), 6.

¹⁰ A. T. Thompson, *Australia and the Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889), 18.

¹¹ "Church-going in Australia," *Current Affairs Bulletin* 22, no. 4 (June 16, 1958): 54.

¹² William Westbrooke Burton, *The State of Religion and Education in N.S.W.* (London: Cross, Simpkin and Marshall, 1840), 270.

¹³ Patrick, O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia* (Melbourne, Victoria: Nelson, 1968), 52.

During the early years of European settlement, “Christianity was largely rejected by convicts and by other working-class Australians.”¹⁴ Individuals who were unable to choose and yet were forced to worship by a church institution and by the state, quickly became suspicious of religion, institutions, and authority.

The Postmodern Mindset of Australians

Postmodernism is not a single philosophy with a common focus. It holds several tenets. It is “antifoundational, antitotalizing and demystifying.”¹⁵ It is antifoundational:

in that it resolutely refuses to posit any one premise as the privileged and unassailable starting point for establishing claims to truth. It is antitotalizing because postmodern discourse suggests that any theory that claims to account for everything is suppressing counterexamples.... Postmodernism is also demystifying: it attends to claims that certain assumptions are “natural” and tries to show that these are in fact ideological projections.¹⁶

Postmodernism has found a ready soil in Australia. The idea that there is no one right truth, but many truths, based on what an individual chooses to believe, gives a rational basis for an individual to live life as he or she pleases. This is not saying that people have actually worked through this process of thinking. What it is saying is that Australians, to a large extent, live their lives based on their own personal truth.

Australians pride themselves on their “laid back” attitude. The saying, “She’ll be right mate,” verbalises that few problems are worth worrying about and everything will turn out right; there is no need to get stressed. There is a laconic sense of humour that is

¹⁴ Thompson, *Religion in Australia*. 11.

¹⁵ A. K. M. Adams, *What Is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

indicative of the Australian psyche. Hugh Mackay, regarded by many as Australia's pre-eminent social commentator, reflects this laconic humour by starting his book *Advance Australia ... Where? How We've Changed, Why We've Changed and What Will Happen Next*¹⁷ by stating about Australia, "Nice looking place you've got here."¹⁸

It surprises some people, but Australians are proud of their convict heritage. Today, people tracing their lineage are disappointed if they cannot find a convict relative somewhere in their family tree. The culture of mateship (friendship) is something Australians cling to. One looks out for mates, defends mates, and does not "dob" (tell the authorities) if a mate does something wrong. In school, if children are asked by a teacher who was responsible for some prank or misdemeanour, the teacher will often hear the children whispering amongst themselves, "Don't dob."

Extending from the time of the convict settlements, there is a basic scepticism relating to religion, authority, and institutions. "Live and let live" could well be the catch-cry of many Australians. If institutions, religions, or any authority, such as governments, keep out of the way of the average Australian, then he or she will be happy.

The "tall poppy" syndrome is strong in Australia. If a person is rich or powerful, he or she has to be careful not to forget this. Australians do not like people thinking that they are superior to others. Political leaders will often be approached in the street by

¹⁷ Hugh Mackay, *Advance Australia ... Where? How We've Changed, Why We've Changed and What Will Happen Next* (Sydney, NSW: Hachette, 2007).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

people who say, “Hi” and who feel free to tell the politicians what they like or dislike about their policies.

The egalitarian nature of Australians means that security of political figures, while sometimes present, is not a serious concern. Most people know where the former Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard, used to walk every day while in office. He would be accompanied by a few security people, but individuals were free to approach him and say hello. I was spending the holiday Christmas 2007 on Lord Howe Island, the family home of my wife Tracey. While sitting in a local café, I noticed that another former Prime Minister of Australia, Bob Hawke, and his wife were sitting at the next table. There was no security at all; people were free to come and talk with him, but he was basically ignored. This attitude and approach to authority would not be possible in many countries.

Postmodernism has reinforced the secular mindset of Australia that was first developed at the beginning of European settlement in Australia. Australia is a country that, although starting as a convict settlement, has had a rich growth through migration. Mackay states that, “we are world champions at creating a harmonious society from a blend of people who, over the years, have come here from every imaginable birthplace.”¹⁹

Australians have enjoyed for a long time the three gods of the surf, the sand, and the sun. Personal pleasure and materialism have been placed into the mix of egalitarianism and scepticism of all authority, religion, and institutions. Lifestyle has

¹⁹ Mackay, *Advance Australia*, 159.

gotten faster and faster, and working to gain materialistic profit has become pandemic.

Mackay has described the situation this way:

The “empty feed” – filling yourself up but not getting enough nutrition – is not just a food issue: it’s a metaphor for many of the things we do in a consumerist, materialistic society where even so-called simple pleasures often come in a sophisticated, packaged and branded form. We run harder and harder until the need to de-stress overwhelms us and, if we’re affluent enough, we retreat to a health farm for a concentrated burst of relaxation – like having a swift inhalation of expensive rose essence instead of taking time to smell, let alone grow, the roses themselves. Or we decide the perfect unwind will be a beach holiday, then choose a resort where we’ll first need a new wardrobe to keep up with the style of the place and a subsequent strategy for paying off the credit card.²⁰

Mackay has identified a growing restlessness, a yearning for something more in the Australian postmodern world.

There is a heightened interest among young Australians in what they are calling “spirituality.”... Like their parents,... most young Australians are not drawn to formal religion: for them, the meaning of life is more likely to be found in love and friendship than in religious dogma. The spirituality they are exploring is usually based on a secular, humanistic approach to questions about values and ethics.²¹

Today’s Australian has a postmodern world view that sits comfortably with his or her heritage. At the same time, there is a growing sense for the need of something more – a spiritual journey. The question is, “Will this journey, seeking something more, lead them to the Christian church and, in the context of this paper, the Adventist church?”

²⁰ Mackay, *Advance Australia*, 281.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

The Attitude of Australians to the Church.

As has been noted, from the earliest settlement in Australia, there has been a neutral or even negative attitude amongst many Australians to the Christian church. This originally had been primarily based on the attitude of the early convicts towards authority and institutions, of which they saw the church as a part. It was noted that the attendance rate of worship attendance in those early years was around 12 to 15 percent. There is a big difference between those identifying themselves with a Christian denomination and those actually attending church. The first settlers were either Catholic or Protestant, but very few attended church. In Australia, the proportion of people claiming to identify with a Christian denomination has dropped from 71 percent in the 1996 Australian census to 68 percent in 2001.²² Weekly worship attendance, according to 2001 estimates, stood at only 8.8 percent of the Australian population.²³

There are a number of interesting and disturbing assumptions that can be made regarding the attitude of Australians to church. While the number of people claiming to identify with a Christian church has dropped from the time of the first settlers, it is still over 60 percent of the population. What is disturbing is that, although the number identifying with a Christian church is 62 percent, only 8.8 percent actually attend church each week. People are still identifying with Christianity, but it is not translating to church attendance. This seems to indicate a postmodern mindset that sees little

²² John Bellamy and Keith Castle, "2001 Church Attendance Estimates, NCLS Occasional Paper 3, National Church Life Survey, February 2004, 9.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

connection between belief and practice. People might have beliefs but are not allowing that to affect their behaviour.

The Australian people seem to have a serious problem with the Christian church. The Christian denominations, I would suggest, are seen by many Australians as part of the institutional life that they have long rejected. Highly structured organizations that are seen as authoritarian hold little appeal for most Australians. What is more disturbing is that, as has already been noted, the Adventist church is probably the most structured denomination of all.²⁴

Australia is a secular postmodern country. Proud of its heritage of apathy and having a healthy disrespect for authority, organised religion, and institutions, it is still on a “spiritual journey.” Many people, particularly young people, are searching for something more to life. Unfortunately, they are not looking at organised, institutional churches like Adventism for the answers.

For church planting to succeed in Australia the process must be such that it is not seen as being hindered in any way by denominational structure or culture. The churches will have to be missional, fitting into the culture and being part of the culture. If the church planting process to be outlined is not simple, if it is seen as part of a denominational system that is about control and structure, if it is seen as just maintaining the church institution for institution’s sake, and if it does not produce missional churches, then Adventist church planting will not work in the Australian context.

²⁴ See chapter 2, footnote 10.

Conclusion

Part One of this paper examined the ministry context of church planting in the Adventist Church. The church's beginning as a church planting movement has been discussed. The whole movement was organised around mission, and church planting was a major method used by the church to grow. Moving from its origins as a church planting movement, this section described what happened and the reasons it lost its church planting emphasis. The changing role of clergy and laity saw the emphasis of the church move from mission to maintenance. From planting churches, clergy and laity moved to looking after established churches.

Current challenges to church planting have been discussed. Issues of denominational control of church planting and perceived threats to Adventist orthodoxy have been addressed. Financial concerns and how to sustain such a church planting movement were canvassed.

The current state of church planting in Australia has been outlined, showing that, in the last few years, church planting has stalled within Australia. Finally, this section has looked at the Australian context and seen that, from the earliest days of European settlement through to the current cultural context, the church has faced challenges. For church planting to succeed within the Adventist church, church planting will have to be missional and, as far as possible, not be perceived by the Australian culture as just another institution.

PART TWO

THE THEOLOGY OF THE ADVENTIST CHURCH THAT WAS COMBINED WITH CHURCH PLANTING

The early Adventist church had the evangelistic method for growth: church planting. However, method without message would not sustain healthy growth. Along with the method of church planting, the Adventists had a blend of theological teaching that gave substance to the method.

After the Millerite movement and the Great Disappointment of 1844, as already noted, a number of denominations evolved. It has also been noted that, after Christ did not return in 1844, many former adherents of the Millerite movement lost their faith in Christ completely. The development of a rationale for what happened in 1844 and what the future might hold for the early Adventists was essential if this group was to have a viable future. The rationale for their existence involved much prayer, soul searching, and both historical and biblical study.

Part Two of this focus paper will look at three particular doctrinal positions that the early Adventist church developed that enabled them to answer the questions about what they had experienced and also gave them a reason for their existence, both present and future. They began to see themselves as a unique group of people standing at the end

of time with a special message to tell to the world. The message gave them the authority to do what they were doing. The method was the means by which they spread their message.

The three specific doctrines examined here are the seventh day Sabbath, the holistic nature of humans, and the Adventist understanding of eschatology. It is important to note that it was not only the distinct theological positions that were developed that gave substance to the method; it was also how those teachings, particularly the Sabbath and eschatology, blended together that made the message unique.

The message outlined in Part Two was seen by Adventists to be particularly relevant to those living just before Jesus Christ came again. It is the contention of the author that this message, combined with church planting, does much to explain the growth of Adventism around the world. Early Adventists believed that they were living in the time just prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. As such their message, they believed, was one the world needed to hear.

CHAPTER 4

THE SABBATH

The name “Seventh-day Adventist” stated within itself two of the most important teachings that Adventists believed and still believe the world needs to hear today. These teachings are the seventh day Sabbath and the Second Coming of Christ. The first teaching and the one discussed in this chapter, is the Sabbath.¹ The seventh day Sabbath, to Adventists, is a gracious gift that was given by God to the first humans and, through them, to all future humanity. Instituted at creation, the seventh day is described as the time God “finished” his work. “On the seventh day he rested,” then he “blessed the seventh day,” and “made it holy” (Gen 2:2-3).² It is interesting that, before sin entered the world, God blessed and made time holy. God here does not “bless” or make “holy” an object or a person, but God blesses and makes time holy. Adventists have always believed that what God makes holy and blesses, stays that way unless God himself removes the blessing and removes its sacredness. They also maintain, as will be discussed in this chapter, that humans should be very careful in changing what God has blessed and made holy. This chapter will describe the evolution of the doctrine of the

¹ When the Sabbath is referred to in this paper, unless otherwise stated, it always refers to the Seventh-day Sabbath or Saturday and not Sunday, the first day of the week.

² All Scripture quotations will be taken from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

Sabbath in Adventism, how they saw themselves as restoring the meaning of the Sabbath, and the role the Sabbath has in Adventism's eschatology.

The Development of the Sabbath Doctrine in Adventism

An interest in the Sabbath arose amongst some in the Millerite movement before the Great Disappointment in 1844. As early as 1841, one finds interest in the Sabbath arising in Millerite literature. James A. Begg wrote that, besides his intense interest in the belief of Christ's soon coming, he also had to "work on the continued obligation of the *Seventh Day*, as the Christian Sabbath."³ The main group, however, behind promoting the Sabbath were the Seventh-day Baptists.⁴ A Seventh-day Baptist by the name of Rachael Oaks became interested in the Advent message presented by the Millerites. She shared her beliefs with the Millerite congregation she attended in Washington, New Hampshire, and several of the congregation became Sabbath observers.

Knight believes that it is "quite probable that the Washington congregation influenced a Free Baptist Millerite preacher named Thomas M. Preble to accept the importance of the Sabbath in the summer of 1844."⁵ Preble wrote a number of articles on the Sabbath, and, in April 1845, Joseph Bates became convinced of the Sabbath through

³ J. A. Begg, "Letter from Scotland," *Signs of the Times*, April 1, 1841, 3.

⁴ P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 136.

⁵ George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 67.

those articles.⁶ Bates in turn tried to convince Ellen Harmon (White) the first time they met in 1846, but she was at first not convinced of its importance.⁷ Later that same year, Ellen White and her new husband James White both read Bates's book *The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign*.⁸ As a result they too started observing and teaching about the Sabbath.

Bates travelled to New York, probably in the autumn of 1846, where he talked to Crosier, Hahn, and Edson, three other leaders in the fledgling Advent movement. Edson and Hahn accepted the teaching he explained to them and Crosier seemed favourable to the teaching. By the end of 1846, a core nucleus of those who would become the Adventist church were keeping and teaching about the Sabbath. Bates's influence in promoting the Sabbath cannot be underestimated.

His personal witness was impressive, but it was his writings that probably achieved even more in guiding the group of people scattered and confused after the 1844 disappointment to come together on this teaching that has become so central to Adventism. During 1846 and 1849, Bates published a series of small books and articles on the Sabbath.

⁶ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 67.

⁷ Ellen, G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1915), 95.

⁸ Joseph Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign, from the Beginning, to the Entering into the Gates of the Holy City, According to the Commandment*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (New Bedford, MA: by the author, 1847). The full title for the book is much longer and shows the emphasis that Bates and others would put on the Sabbath. It is an eternal sign as evidenced by the commandments and particularly important for the last days. This emphasis will be enlarged on later in the paper.

While Bates was explaining the Sabbath to Crosier, Hahn, and Edson, they were also explaining their discoveries about what had happened in 1844 and the heavenly Sanctuary. These topics will be discussed further, but it is important to note that Bates's writings integrating the Sabbath with the second coming of Christ and the heavenly sanctuary were crucial to the message of early Adventism. "His development of that integrated package in essence formed the platform for what would become the core of Seventh-day Adventist theology."⁹

The Sabbath Restored

"The group that became Seventh-day Adventists gradually developed a biblical rationale for the contemporary emphasis on this day of worship by associating the Sabbath with the idea of a restoration of all biblical principles before Christ's return."¹⁰ Originally, the Sabbath was defended by early Adventists by using the arguments of the Seventh-day Baptists. This argument stated, that the Ten Commandments are still valid and binding on Christians today, including the fourth which said that "the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God" (Exod 20:10). The Seventh-day Baptists also believed that the Sabbath was, and is, an everlasting sign between God and His people.¹¹

When it came to who bore the responsibility for changing the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, this was attributed by the Seventh-day Baptists and then Adventists

⁹ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 68.

¹⁰ Damsteegt, *Foundations*, 136.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

to the Roman Catholic Church. Using the traditional historicist interpretation¹² Preble could say, “Thus we see Daniel 7:25 fulfilled, the ‘little horn’ changing the ‘times and laws.’ Therefore, it appears to me that all who keep the first day of the week for ‘*the Sabbath,*’ are *Pope’s Sunday Keepers!!* and God’s SABBATH BREAKERS!!!”¹³

“The first ones to associate the Sabbath with the Advent experience were Preble and Bates.”¹⁴ This association between the Sabbath and the Advent experience will be explained more fully later in this paper. The reality is, however, that the early Adventists were able to see themselves as called by God, to help restore one of his important truths. They were also, as will be shown, able to link this restoration to their experience of the Great Disappointment and their future as a movement of God.

The Sabbath in Adventist Eschatology

The chapter on Adventist eschatology will outline the importance of eschatology and how much it influences and continues to influence the message of Adventism today. Within the broad parameters of Adventist eschatology, the Sabbath plays an important part.

¹² Froom demonstrates that the understanding of Rome as the power spoken of in Daniel 7 was one held by many from the Early Fathers, and the Reformers until the present day. See especially Le Roy, Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, vol. 4 (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 908, 911, 913, 916, 920.

¹³ Thomas M. Preble, *According to the Commandment*, a tract, showing that the seventh day should be observed as the Sabbath, instead of the first day (Nashua, NH: by the author, 1845), 10.

¹⁴ P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 138.

In summary, it can be said that, to Adventists, Revelation 12-14 is their reason for existence. Revelation 12 outlines for them the history of the Christian church up to the last verse, verse 17. “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (KJV) Adventists see this verse as saying that in the last days, there will be a group of people who are considered the “Remnant”; these people will be identified as those keeping the commandments of God. Early Adventists, coming out of the Great Disappointment of 1844 and believing that they were living in the last days, understood they should keep the commandments of God if they wanted to be part of this group, the “Remnant.” The Sabbath then, as one of the Ten Commandments and neglected by the vast majority of Christendom, became important to them. They felt that they had restored the seventh-day Sabbath to its rightful place.

Led by Bates, “Adventism’s first theologian,”¹⁵ Revelation 14 and the Three Angels Messages began to be understood as also talking about the Sabbath being restored by a group of people just before Christ comes again. Revelation 14:12 speaks of those “who obey God’s commandments.” Bates used this context to outline the importance of the Adventist movement. Here was a group of people who, just before Christ came, would be holding onto a belief in and keeping all ten of God’s commandments. He heightened the importance and the cost of keeping the truths of the message by stating that “there will be a mighty struggle about the restoring and keeping [of] the seventh day

¹⁵ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 71.

Sabbath, that will test every living soul.”¹⁶ He believed God’s people would be “persecuted for keeping the commandments.”¹⁷

The Sabbath, then, was seen as something special. The adherents would be part of spreading and restoring a great truth of God and, in so doing, be part of the last group of people who would be faithful to God just before Christ returned. Added to this was the hint of danger, the threat of persecution for these same believers. This Sabbath message became a great unifying teaching for a group of people who came to see themselves as called by God to stand for him and take their place in history just before Christ came again. It became an important part of the message they felt called to share with the world.

¹⁶ Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath*, 60.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

CHAPTER 5

THE HOLISTIC NATURE OF HUMANS

The understanding that the early Adventists developed regarding the holistic nature of humans evolved into at least three distinct teachings that impacted the message of the church. First was their understanding that humanity is inherently mortal rather than being inherently immortal. This impacted their teaching of what happens when a person dies. Secondly, their study of the holistic nature of humanity led them to stress physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual health. Thirdly, this teaching led them to the logical development of hospitals and an extensive educational emphasis.

Human Nature, Mortal or Immortal?

“Most Christians throughout history have believed, following Greek philosophy, that people are born immortal.”¹ This belief describes human beings as being made up of two essential elements: the body and the spirit, or soul. The belief is that, when a person dies, his or her spirit or soul goes either to heaven to be with God or to hell where it burns for eternity. Either way, there is a part of humanity that does not die. This teaching states that humanity is dualistic, made up of the physical (the body) and spiritual (the spirit or soul).

¹ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 72.

A smaller group of Christians have continued what they see as the holistic Hebrew understanding of the nature of humanity. They held that humans did not have innate immortality, but that God “alone is immortal” (1 Tim 6:16). Immortality, to their understanding of Scripture, was to be given to humans by God at his second coming. This would be when “the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality” (1 Tim 6:16).

It was amongst this second group of Christians that Adventists very early on counted themselves. The Adventist understanding of the holistic nature of humanity came from two separate sources. One was through the teaching of a Methodist minister George Storrs. He was convinced by 1840 that the only way a person received immortality was through Jesus Christ. In 1841 Storrs published, anonymously as it turned out, *An Inquiry: Are the Souls of the Wicked Immortal? In Three Letters*.² The next year, under his own name, he published an expanded version entitled *An Inquiry: Are the Souls of the Wicked Immortal? In Six Sermons*.³ The first minister in the Millerite movement who accepted what Storrs was teaching was Charles Fitch in January 1844.⁴

The second source for the early Adventist understanding of the nature of humans was the Christian Connexion. This group had as its desire to go back to what they saw as the teachings of the Bible and not what they believed had been brought into the church:

² Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 72.

³ George Storrs, *An Inquiry: Are The Souls of the Wicked Immortal? In Six Sermons*, 23rd ed. (New York: By the Author, 1842.) Note that it was the twenty-third edition.

⁴ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 73.

viz Greek thinking, and other traditions of man. James White and Joseph Bates both brought the two teachings of conditionalism and annihilationism from the Christian Connexion. Conditionalism is the belief that people are not born immortal but are given immortality as a gift from Jesus Christ if they have faith in him. Annihilationism is the belief that, since people do not possess of themselves innate immortality, the wicked will not burn forever in hell because they are immortal, but will instead be destroyed by the fires of hell because they are mortal.

Ellen White was a Methodist and so had been taught the traditional teaching of humanity's innate immortality. A revised understanding of this belief came through her mother, who had contact with the Christian Connexion. Ellen White seemed almost relieved when she wrote;

My mind had often been disturbed by its efforts to reconcile the immediate reward or punishment of the dead with the undoubted fact of a future resurrection and judgment. If at death the soul entered upon eternal happiness or misery, where was the need of a resurrection of the poor moldering body? But this new and beautiful faith taught me the reason why inspired writers had dwelt so much upon the resurrection of the body; it was because the entire being was slumbering in the grave.⁵

The early Adventists looked to the past to see whether what they were beginning to believe and teach could be supported throughout history. They understood themselves to be restoring and renewing lost teachings of the Bible, not just inventing new teachings. They thought that, if they were correct, then they would see evidence down through the ages of men and women who kept to the teachings of Scripture, even if they were in the minority. Adventists have always believed that, "truth is not, and never has been,

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 49-50.

established by human majorities.”⁶ As they studied, they saw that “the line of adherents to this great Biblical truth (the holistic nature of humanity) has been more constant, stronger, and more illustrious than most of us have been aware.”⁷ Because the early Adventists were such a small part of what had been the Millerite movement, they identified very much with small groups, individuals from the past who stood for truth against the prevailing views of the time.

By 1847 the group who became the Adventist church had as one of their key beliefs that humans are not created immortal. They believed that they were granted immortality through faith in Christ alone. Further, they believed that, when they died, they rested in the grave until Christ came, and then they would become immortal.

This teaching formed an important part of the Adventist message. It made the early Adventists feel that they were part of a movement restoring yet another truth that they believed the world needed to know.

The teaching about the nature of humanity had other important implications for the Adventist church and its message past that of an understanding of what happens when a person dies. It also impacted the church’s understanding of health and education.

⁶ Editorial Committee, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 567.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 568. The list of men and women who historically understood humanity’s nature to be mortal and not immortal is quite extensive and intriguing. It seems that, down through the ages, there have always been people who have adhered to this teaching. For further reading, giving names and quotations of people such as William Tyndale; John Frith, associate of Tyndale; George Wishart, friend of Latimer and tutor of John Knox and John Milton, see *Ibid.*, 567-609. See also the recent book by Bryan W. Ball, *The Soul Sleepers: Christian Mortalism from Wycliffe to Priestly* (Cambridge: James Clark & Co, 2008).

Implications of Holistic Living

Adventists saw serious implications in which view of human nature one believed. The Greek understanding of human nature, as already mentioned, was dualistic, separating a person into two separate parts, the physical body and the spirit or soul. This has led throughout history to various beliefs regarding the importance of the body as opposed to the spirit or soul. The body was seen at best as irrelevant and at worst as sinful. The spirit inside the body, on the other hand, was seen as spiritual and holy. Often the body and spirit were seen as having little relationship with each other. Things of the body were seen as secular while the things of the spirit were seen as sacred.⁸

Early Adventists believed that the Hebrew understanding of what constituted a human being was holistic as opposed to the Greek dualism. They believed that, rather than being separate, the elements that make up a person work together and that each part influences the other in a holistic way. In Genesis 2:7, it stated that “the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground (his body) and breathed into his nostrils the breath (Hebrew: *ruach*, spirit or wind) of life and the man became a living being (Hebrew: *nephesh*, soul).” The soul had not previously existed, but came into existence with the creation of the first man, Adam. “This basic idea of ‘soul’ being the individual rather than a constituent *part* of the individual seems to underlie the various occurrences of

⁸ For further reading on the development of such thinking in the Platonic, and Neo-Platonic philosophies see James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 9 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1953), 310-315.

nephesh. It is therefore more accurate to say that a certain person is a soul than to say he has a soul”⁹

With the understanding that the body and spirit together constitute a person or soul, Adventists quickly began to realise that what a person did physically would impact that person spiritually. They believed that one aspect of a person’s life would impact every other aspect of a person’s life.

The early Adventists started asking what the practical implications of this view of humanity might be. If physical health was important, then what people ate and how they lived their lives impacted not only their health but their spiritual lives as well. The early Adventists started health food companies along with hospitals and health sanitariums. The mind was seen by early Adventists as an area of supreme importance. Young people needed to be taught how to think and reason and not just to memorize. Ellen White declared that youth should “be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts.”¹⁰ As a result, Adventists started an education system along with publishing houses to reinforce these and other ideas.

In 2005, the Adventist church worldwide had 6,966 schools. This made the Adventist church the largest private school system in the world outside the Catholic Church. Added to that would be the 106 colleges and universities operated by the church. The church also had thirty food companies and 167 hospitals and sanitariums. In

⁹ Editorial Committee, *Questions on Doctrine*, 513.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 17.

addition, there were also 449 clinics and dispensaries scattered around the world, with sixty-five publishing houses.¹¹

The institutions mentioned above are the practical outflowing of Adventist biblical understanding of the nature of humanity and its need of redemption. They did not just want to teach these beliefs; they wanted to live them and give others the opportunity to live them as well.

¹¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 2007* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2007), 4.

CHAPTER 6

ADVENTIST ESCHATOLOGY AS MOTIVATION FOR MISSION

The most important challenge for those who went through the Great Disappointment of 1844 was one of identity. Who were they? Had they believed in Christ's second coming in vain? What had happened in 1844, and what had gone wrong so that Jesus had not come? What were they to do now? Did they have a future?

It was out of this journey for identity and meaning that the Seventh-day Adventist church evolved. The search for and the finding of identity and meaning happened quickly. As Knight states, only four years after 1844, "By early 1848 the Sabbatarian Adventist leaders, through both extensive and intensive Bible study, had come to basic agreement on at least four points of doctrine."¹ These four points of doctrine were, first, the Sabbath and its importance to Christians in the end times; second, the holistic nature of humanity, with the understanding that immortality is not inherent but can only come as a gift through Jesus Christ; third, the belief in a personal, visible, and audible, premillennial second coming of Jesus Christ; and, fourth, the two-phase ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.²

¹ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 74.

² Ibid.

In this chapter, the means by which an Adventist eschatological theology developed will be surveyed, along with how the four doctrines mentioned above were moulded together and focussed into a message that gave the evolving church its identity.

The Development of an Adventist Eschatology

The certain belief in the minds of thousands of people that Christ was coming to earth on October 22, 1844, influenced every aspect of their lives. “Crops were left unharvested; potatoes undug. Shops were closed; workers resigned from their posts. Nothing was important except that Christ was coming in a few days.”³ The failure of the predicted and much anticipated event had a devastating effect on those expecting Christ’s coming. The survivors of this catastrophe of faith can be divided into a number of groups.

The first and the largest group lost faith in Jesus altogether. Embarrassed by the ridiculing crowds, taunted with such phrases as “What! Haven’t you gone up yet?”⁴ and being confused about how the Bible could predict such an event and be wrong, they deserted their faith.

The remaining believers who continued to study their Bibles in search of answers can be divided into two broad groups with further divisions within them. These two groups disagreed over what had happened in 1844. The first and largest group, under the

³ Schwarz, *Light Bearers*, 49.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

leadership of Joshua V. Himes, became known as the “open door”⁵ Adventists because they believed people still needed to be reached after 1844 and that the door to salvation was still open. They were also united in their belief that nothing had happened in 1844. They were not sure why. Maybe, the prophetic time was wrong; maybe their interpretation was wrong. Whatever the reason, nothing had happened in 1844. They organized themselves into a distinct Adventist body at the Albany Conference, New York, in April 1845. Himes believed that no prophecy had been fulfilled in 1844 and that Christians still had a message to share to the world of Christ’s soon coming. He said, “We are now satisfied that the authorities on which we based our calculations cannot be depended upon for definite time.” He further stated, “We are near the end, . . . we have no knowledge of a fixed date or definite time, but do most fully believe that we should watch and wait for the coming of Christ, as an event that may take place at any hour.”⁶

At the Albany Conference, the attenders were determined to purge the movement from excesses and new theories. They then “reaffirmed traditional Millerite teachings minus the time element” and passed resolutions “directly condemning footwashing . . . and indirectly the seventh-day Sabbath.”⁷ This resulted in a strengthening of the divide between this group and the one described below.

⁵ The phrase open door and closed door comes from the phrase in Matthew 25:10,11 where the Bridegroom comes and the door is shut. Five virgins plead for the door to be open but their opportunity has been lost and the door remains shut.

⁶ Joshua Himes, *Midnight Cry* (New York: n.p., 1845), 150.

⁷ Schwarz, *Light Bearers*, 54.

The second group and the smallest, could be called the “shut door” believers who were united in their belief that the door of salvation had been closed after 1844 to all those who had not accepted the Millerite message of Christ’s second coming.⁸ This second group could be further divided into two smaller groups. One group, the “spiritualizers,” offered a spiritual rationale for what had happened in 1844. They believed that the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 predicting the cleansing of the Sanctuary or the second coming of Christ was accurate and had actually happened. Christ had come back to earth but in a spiritual, not physical manner. He now lived in a spiritual way within the hearts of believers. This group gradually disappeared following fanaticism and charismatic extremism.⁹

The smallest group of “shut door” believers was the one that the Seventh-day Adventist church evolved from. Keeping clear of the “spiritualizers,” with their “spiritual” coming of Christ, they believed that the time prophecy of Daniel 8:14 had been fulfilled in 1844. They believed the time element was right, but that the explanation of the prophecy was wrong.

The Millerite movement had been galvanised around Daniel 8:14 which stated, “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (KJV).

⁸ Two Adventist editors, Apollos Hale editor of the *Advent Herald* and Joseph Turner of *The Hope of Israel*, in January 1845 were probably the first to advance the “shut door” theory.

⁹ Examples of fanaticism included “spiritual wifery.” Since Jesus had come spiritually and since they were therefore in heaven, they believed there should be no marrying or giving in marriage. They used Christ’s statement in Luke 14:26 that a man should hate his father and mother, wife and children as a rationale for deserting their families and forming new “spiritual” unions, devoid of sex with new partners. Another bizarre belief practiced by some, was that, since Christ had come, they had now passed into Christ’s Sabbath of one thousand years and should not do any secular work of any kind.

The Millerites came to believe that the “cleansing of the Sanctuary” meant the cleansing of the earth. This cleansing was when those on the earth would be judged, at the Second Coming of Christ.

The second element of the Millerite prophetic understanding was that a day in Bible prophecy represented a literal year. With this understanding, they searched for a starting date for the twenty-three-hundred-day prophecy and found the answer in Daniel 9:23-25. Here the angel Gabriel came to Daniel and told him that the start of the vision would be “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (Dan 9:23-25).¹⁰ Taking this commandment “to restore and to build Jerusalem,” to be the decree issued by Artaxerxes in 457 BC they calculated that the cleansing of the Sanctuary, or the Second Coming of Christ would be twenty-three hundred days or years from that date, namely, 1844.¹¹ To find the date of October 22 in 1844, the Millerites had asked themselves when the earthly Sanctuary was cleansed in the Jewish calendar. The yearly Jewish Day of Atonement, which was when the earthly Sanctuary was cleansed, fell on October 22 in 1844.

The early founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, many of whom came out of the Millerite movement, agreed with the original prophetic time line of the Millerites. “To them it seemed that the majority party under Himes had abandoned the

¹⁰ The Millerites considered the time prophecy of Daniel 9 to be the starting point and to be confirming the 2300 day or year prophecy of Daniel 8.

¹¹ For an understanding of the rationalization for using Artaxerxes 457 BC date as the starting of this time prophecy, see Seigfried H. Horn and Lynn Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra 7* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953). For a fuller description of how Adventists understand the 2300-day prophecy see Editorial Committee, *Questions on Doctrine*, 244-337.

Adventist message by rejecting the validity of the 1844 movement and that the spiritualizers had denied the integrity of the Bible by spiritualising its plainest statements.”¹²

Prior to the 1844 Great Disappointment, Joseph Litch had expressed his doubts about what the event actually would be. In May 1844, he wrote, “It has not been proved that the cleansing of the sanctuary, which was to take place at the end of the 2300 days, was the coming of Christ or the purification of the earth.”¹³ After 1844, an explanation of what had happened in 1844 developed quickly.

In February 7, 1846, Owen R. L. Crosier wrote an article of what he and others like Hiram Edison and Dr. F. B. Hahn had discovered in their search for a meaning for 1844. The relevant outcome of this study can be summarised as follows. First, the Jewish sanctuary system was a complete and visual outline of the plan of salvation. It was a pattern of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 8:1-5). Second, as the Israelite priests had a two-part ministry in the earthly sanctuary, represented by the two parts of the sanctuary, the Holy and Most Holy places, so Christ had a two-part or two-phase ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. The first phase of Christ’s priestly ministry occurred at his ascension after his resurrection and occurred in the Holy Place. The second phase of his ministry commenced on October 22, 1844, when Christ moved from the Holy Place into the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary. Third, the first phase of Christ’s ministry involved the forgiveness of sins for every believer and was guaranteed at the cross. The second

¹² Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 58.

¹³ Joseph Litch, *Advent Shield and Review* (Boston), May 1844, 75.

phase of his ministry, begun in 1844, involved the blotting out of sins and the cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven. It involved, therefore, a pre-Advent judgment of all those claiming to be followers of Christ. Fourth, Christ's second premillennial coming would not happen until this second phase of ministry was completed.¹⁴

This, then, gave the fledging movement a reason for what they had experienced. Their prophetic time line concerning 1844 was correct. They had not studied, prayed, and given their lives to something that was in vain. Christ had not come in October as they had so greatly desired, but he had instead started a new phase of his priestly ministry in heaven.

The "shut door," teaching would gradually disappear from amongst these Adventists. This change came about through both practical and theological realisations. The door to probation it had been believed was to be shut because every individual on earth would have chosen for or against Christ prior to his coming in 1844. Once early Adventists realised that he had not come but that he had in reality entered a new phase of ministry, the theological rationale for the teaching was removed. On a more practical level, people who had never been part of the Millerite Movement were being saved. What does one do with new people coming to faith? Over the next few years, the "shut door" theory disappeared.

¹⁴ Owen R. L. Crosier, "The Law of Moses," *Day Star*, Extra, 1846.

The Three Angels' Messages

The development of an Adventist eschatology up to this point had given them a reason for their past experience; it was their development of an understanding of the three angels' messages in Revelation 14:6-12 that would give them a message and a mission for the future.

By 1848 "Adventists were beginning to see the prophetic importance of the three angels for their mission."¹⁵ They started with the first angel's message and then developed a theology in regard to the second and third angels' messages. Finally, they were able to put the three angels' messages together into a coherent whole that they believed was their mandated message to the world.

The first angel's message of Revelation 14 speaks of the gospel going to all the world at the time when "the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:6-7). The Adventists took it to mean that this message was started with the Millerite preaching of the Second Advent.¹⁶ The message was to be especially emphasised at the end of time when God's judgment, as part of his second phase ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, was to start. The preaching was to be that Christ was coming soon and his pre-Advent judgement had started.¹⁷

¹⁵ Knight, *A Search for Identity*, 75.

¹⁶ James White, *Present Truth* (Oswego, NY, April 1850), 65-68.

¹⁷ Uriah Smith, "The Cleansing of the Sanctuary," *Review and Herald*, October 2, 1855, 52-53.

The second angel's message of Revelation 14:8 warns that Babylon has fallen. The Millerites had equated Babylon with the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁸ They also included Protestant churches whom they saw as divisive and full of dissension.¹⁹ To the Adventists, as they developed their understanding of the second angel's message, all denominations who rejected God's warning about judgement and Christ's soon coming were part of Babylon. As James White stated, "We unhesitatingly apply the Babylon of the Apocalypse to all corrupt Christianity."²⁰

What is important to notice is that one of the reasons parts of Christianity were regarded by Adventists as being corrupt was that they had intermingled the truths of the Bible, with traditions and pagan beliefs. Those truths corrupted included the ones Adventists believed they were restoring to their rightful place: the Sabbath, the non-immortality of the soul, and Christ's soon return after the pre-Advent ministry or judgement in heaven, for examples.

The third angel's message was believed to be God's last day call of mercy to the world. Revelation 14:9-11 speaks of what will happen to those who reject God's messages and "calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus" (Rev 14:12).

The saints are described in this verse as obeying the commandments of God. Adventists considered that, since they were restoring one of the Ten Commandments, the

¹⁸ William Miller, "Miller's Lectures – No. 1." *Signs of the Times*, July 1849, 49-51.

¹⁹ Editorial, "Second Advent Conference," *Signs of the Times*, July 15, 1841.

²⁰ James White, *Review and Herald*, March 10, 1859, 122.

fourth, which commands the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, they were in fact part of this group of saints, described in verse 12. How, the early Adventists thought, could people who call themselves Christians, fail to keep all the Ten Commandments when the saints right before Christ's second coming are described as doing so?

Adventists believed and still believe that this call to keep all the commandments of God is a message the world needs to know about.

Putting the Message Together

Today the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a package of theological and lifestyle beliefs that they believe is even more relevant than when it was first developed in the infancy of the movement. While having much in common with other Christian churches, its distinctives set it apart. Adventists believe that they are called to make disciples according to the gospel commission in Matthew 28, in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.

The three angels' messages have within them the following truths relevant for today. The first is from Revelation 14:6. The gospel is to be preached to every part of the world. This then tells what is the overriding message and the extent of the mission for the Adventist church: the gospel to all the world. The second is from Revelation 14:7. The gospel is to be given especially in the time of judgment. This means the gospel is particularly relevant to those living from the time of the Millerite movement. The text also includes a call to "Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water." This is almost a direct quote from the Sabbath commandment, the

fourth commandment in Exodus 20:11, which commands people to remember the one who “made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.” The second angel’s message, then, has within it a call for a return to Sabbath worship. The third is from Revelation 14:8. The second angel announces that Babylon is fallen. All the religions of the world that have changed or watered down the teachings of the word of God, either through tradition or by being influenced by paganism, have fallen.

Adventists see the teachings that they were discovering as a reversal of this trend. Their teaching of the holistic nature of man with its implications that all aspects of life are important had been reaffirmed. Personal health, education, social development, and helping those in need were all things the church felt called to spread to the world.

Their belief that immortality is a gift from God, and is not intrinsic to humanity, has certain consequences. Since immortality is given at Christ’s second coming (1 Cor 15:51-54), then those who have died are not currently burning in hell or living in heaven. Those in Christ are waiting in their graves for the gift of immortality when Christ returns. Ellen White, in speaking of this, said that, because spiritualists believed in life after death before Christ’s second coming, and because most Christians believed the same thing, the time would come when “the Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism.”²¹ Adventists feel protected because of their beliefs, if this happens.

²¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1888), 588.

The fourth truth, coming from Revelation 14:9-12, contains the third angel's message. The gospel, including what has been mentioned before, is to be one of mercy and given just before Christ's second coming. For those who reject God's call, there will be times of calamity. God's people, called his "saints," however, will be patiently enduring, remaining faithful to Jesus, and keeping God's commandments.

Today, Adventists feel called to spread this message to the whole world, to every part of the world. One of Ellen White's most famous quotations encapsulates the Adventist feeling about their theology, their past, their message, and their future:

In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, ...I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.²²

It is the author's contention that the basic message of the early Adventists is probably even more relevant to today than when they first started preaching and living it. The second coming of Christ is even closer today than ever before, so his call to receive the free gift of salvation before he comes is even more important.

When it comes to holistic Christianity, there seems to be a call now, particularly in the emerging church, for holistic theology and practice. Adventism has the opportunity with its holistic theology and practice to make a valuable contribution to the emerging church movement.

The Australian postmodern society sees the issue of holistic living gaining in importance. If one is to be holistic, there are implications in the areas of community,

²² Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 196.

handling the environment, and matters of justice and mercy. At a personal level, how one treats the body physically, emotionally, and spiritually in order to get holistic balance and health is important. Into this desire for holistic health and living comes the Sabbath. The Sabbath speaks to those who are living a life out of balance. For people who are workaholics, relationally challenged, and in need of rest and balance, the Sabbath calls humans to remember who created them, and that they are not their own gods. The Sabbath calls all to rest in the one who first created everything and who can by his blood recreate them. The Sabbath calls a society that needs rest and balance to rest in Christ, both physically and spiritually. The Sabbath calls society to stop on his day, the seventh day Sabbath, and allow Him to put balance back into their lives. A call by the Adventist church to keep the Sabbath is a call for allegiance to God as Creator and Saviour. It is also a call to holistic living, so that in Christ people can live the holistic life he designed for all.

This then is the theology and message of the Adventist church. It gave the smallest group of people who came out of the Millerite movement a sense of identity. It then gave them a mission. They believe today that they are still being called in these last days of earth's history, before Christ's coming, to tell a special message. That message is why they exist, and their mission to the world is the gospel commission in the context of the three angels' messages.

PART THREE

THE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS THAT FORM THE BASIS FOR THE PROPOSED CHURCH PLANTING PROCESS

Part three of this paper outlines the important elements that form the basis for the church planting process to be outlined. Issues such as how denominational structures will impact the church planting process and how the Centre that will oversee the process fits within this structure will be examined. The role of the Church Planting Centre (CPC) and its director will be explained. Discussion will also be given to the general characteristics of what constitutes a church planting movement and what the essential elements for the proposed church planting process will include. Finally, this part briefly mentions how church finance will be used in the church planting process.

CHAPTER 7

ROLE OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION'S CHURCH PLANTING CENTRE

The CPC is a recent innovation of the South Pacific Division (SPD), having been set up in 2004. Three people were the drivers behind this initiative: the SPD's President, Pastor Laurie Evans in particular; the President of the North New South Wales Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (NNSW), Pastor John Lang; and the author. The SPD includes Australia and its territories, New Zealand and its territories, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Pitcairn Island, American Samoa, Western Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, the other islands of the South Pacific, and such additional territory as may from time to time be allotted to this Division by the General Conference.¹

The CPC has been set up to have input into the more secular parts of the Division, particularly Australia and New Zealand. It also includes some of the secular island territories, such as New Caledonia and American Samoa.

This chapter will examine how the CPC fits within the organisational structure of the Adventist church. It will also examine the particular role and influence the Centre has

¹ *South Pacific Division Working Policy 2007* (Wahroonga, NSW: Division Publishing, 2007), 1.

for facilitating both church planting throughout the Division, and the church planting process proposed in this paper.

Where the Church Planting Centre Fits within the Organisational Structure of the Adventist Church

Within the areas of the SPD in which the CPC operates, there are four levels of church administration. Each level of administration has checks and balances that insure that no level can operate without accountability. The church structure, as will be shown, also helps the church keep focussed on mission.

The individual Adventist member would belong to a local church. The local church holds the membership of the member, encourages him or her in individual growth in Christ through worship, teaching, accountability, gift-oriented ministry, and evangelistic mission. Every member of the church has a right to attend and participate in all church business meetings, which is the highest local church authority. Operating under the authority of the business meeting that traditionally meets quarterly would be the church board. This board is made up of the elders and key ministry leaders. The stated objective of the board is “the spiritual nurture of the church and the work of planning and fostering evangelism in all of its phases.”² Committees would operate the various ministries of the church under the authority of the board. The pastor is the chairperson of both the business meeting and the church board unless he or she chooses another chairperson.

² *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, Rev 2005, 17th ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 90.

The local church does not own its own property or buildings. As has been mentioned, this organisational policy was instituted to help protect the members and facilitate the mission of the church. Although the church may be consulted, it does not hire or fire its pastors. Pastors are appointed and removed as deemed appropriate by the local Conference.

A Conference is a collection or sisterhood of churches. Every three years, representatives of every church are invited to come together at a local Session or Constituency Meeting.³ This is the occasion when the chief Conference officers are elected, reports from the past three years are given and discussed, and future decisions are made. The attendees of the Conference Session will include, besides the church membership, Conference officers and personnel, representatives from the Australian Union Conference (AUC), and representatives from the SPD. The Union President will chair the nominating committee of the Conference. The NNSW Conference of which the author is a part and in which the CPC is situated had seventy-nine churches and companies⁴ at the end of 2006, and 10,523 members. Only the Conference in Session can officially vote to allow a new church to become part of the sisterhood of churches or, in extreme circumstances, to disband a church.

³ Technically, the term between Sessions can be changed because each local Conference in Session can vote to change the term length of Conference when fresh elections are held. As an example, the NNSW Conference voted in the 2006 Session to extend from three years to four the NNSW Conference term in office.

⁴ The term Company as used within the Adventist church means a collection of believers who as yet have not formed into a church. They are a Company usually because they have not the numbers to be considered a church. Another reason they are a Company is that they may be on probation to see if they are willing to be part of the sisterhood of churches as an Adventist church.

During the term of office, the Conference is led by the Conference President and senior officers who are a part of an Executive Committee that the Conference President chairs. The Executive Committee, voted by the Session, is made up of a mixture of church members from the local churches, and denominational employees – pastors and Conference personnel. There are currently nine Conferences in Australia.⁵

While maintaining administrative oversight of the churches, most Conferences also run facilities such as a school system⁶ and a retirement village system. The primary role of the Conference regarding local churches is to provide resources, pastoral personnel, and overall leadership in its mission for the sisterhood of churches.

The AUC is the administrative level of the nine Conferences in Australia. Every five years, the AUC Session is held. This is when the chief officers are elected, reports from the past five years are given and discussed, and future decisions are made. Delegates to this session are chosen primarily by the Conferences and are made up of local church members, church employees, as well as Conference and Union leaders. There will also be representatives from the SPD, and the SPD President or his designate will chair the AUC Nominating Committee.

The AUC's primary role is to provide overall leadership, along with administrative and resource help to the Conferences. It also has a number of Union

⁵ They are Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria, South New South Wales, Greater Sydney, North New South Wales, South Queensland, Northern Australia, and Western Australia.

⁶ Smaller Conferences such as Tasmania have a school system, but it is run from a larger Conference, in this case Victoria.

Institutions and oversees the Australian Adventist education system. In 2006, there were 491 churches and companies in the AUC with a membership of 52,771.⁷

The SPD provides the overall leadership for the Adventist church within the South Pacific. It is comprised of two Unions: the AUC and the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference (NZPUC), and two Union Missions: the Papua New Guinea Union Mission (PNGUM) and the Trans- Pacific Union Mission (TPUM). Session delegates are primarily chosen through the Unions and Missions. They include all the representations mentioned above plus SPD officers and personnel. Since the SPD is part of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC), which is the combination of all the Divisions around the world, the GC president or his designate chairs the Division Nominating Committee.⁸

In providing the overall leadership for the church in the South Pacific, the SPD provides direction, resources, and administrative assistance, particularly to the Unions and Missions. It also runs a number of institutions, including hospitals, a university, and colleges. It owns and operates the Sanitarium Health Food Company, which has the number one selling breakfast cereal within both Australia and New Zealand. In 2006, the Adventist church within the South Pacific had a membership of 390,425 with 5,017 churches and companies.⁹

⁷ “Annual Membership for the Year 2006,” in “South Pacific Division, Statistical Report,” Sidney, 2006.

⁸ The General Conference president is always a man. All other positions are open to women.

⁹ “Annual Membership for the Year 2006.”

If a local member needs individual help or has a mission idea, then that person can go to the local church for help or assistance. If the local congregation does not have the resources to help, then the individual can harness the resources of the local Conference, or Union or Division. In reality, through this system, the resources of the world church right through to the GC could be harnessed. This system allows the church, through its various levels of leadership, to respond to perceived needs around the world, both within the church and with the society of which it is a part. If there is a natural disaster, for example, anywhere in the world, the church through its Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) can normally respond within twenty-four hours. As will have been noticed, the vast majority of members within the SPD do not reside in Australia. The Australian Adventist membership of 52,771 is dwarfed by the church membership in Papua New Guinea and the surrounding Islands of 234,520 members.¹⁰ Through the Adventist organisational system, resources can be allocated from one area of the church to another where, for example, the mission of the church is being advanced or there is need.

There are other implications for this system. Members moving from one church to another, between Conferences, Unions, or Divisions, can be welcomed into membership anywhere in the world. A member requests a transfer from the church clerk at the church he or she is now attending, and it is sent to the member's home church. If the individual was a member in good and regular standing, then the transfer approval is

¹⁰ "Annual Membership for the Year 2006."

sent back to the new church. As previously noted, this process protects both the member and the church from those who would cause dissent and disunity to the church's mission.

It is not possible for church leaders or ministries to move amongst the different levels of administration without approval from the appropriate level of administration. It is difficult, for example, for a Conference to impose its ideas on a local church. The SPD cannot come into a local Conference and implement its ideas or wishes without the approval of the appropriate Union and Conference. Leverage, of course, is possible, and that usually occurs by offering money through budgets and allocations. Church policy can also aid in cross-administrative initiatives.

The CPC is a Division Centre based at the Central Coast Community Church (CCCC) within the NSW Conference. It then fits at two levels of church administration: the Division and the Conference. The author of this paper is the Director of the CPC half time and is paid by and reports to the SPD for that half of his ministry. He is also the pastor of the CCCC, a church he planted. This means he is paid by and reports to the NSW Conference for that half of his ministry.

At the SPD, the CPC is under the authority of the SPD Church Planting and Global Mission Committee (CPGMC).¹¹ The CPC, as part of the SPD, can request to enter and be a part of different areas of the church. The Centre has no authority to impose its mission or will onto any level of the church without prior approval and the will of those responsible for those areas. The Centre can offer resources and training. It can offer finances and coaching, but it cannot impose itself. In reality, this means that there

¹¹ See Appendix for the "Terms of Reference" of this committee.

are certain Conferences that are embracing church planting and the work of the Centre and other Conferences who are not so inclined.

The director also has to be aware that he has responsibilities to the local church and is under the authority of the NNSW Conference. Time away from his church and Conference may help the Centre and church planting, but his absences may also do damage to his local church. The CCCC was growing above the two hundred barrier in 2004 when the Centre was established but has declined in attendance from 2005. Attendance went down to a little over one hundred. It was only toward the end of 2007 that the attendance numbers started to go up again. It is still not back in regular attendance to its level when the Centre was originally started.

The Role of the Church Planting Centre in Implementing the Proposed Church Planting Process

The author of this paper, as director of the CPC in consultation with various administrative representatives at all levels of church administration, developed the church planting process described in this paper. It is his belief that, because of this consultation and the involvement of the various levels of administration in its implementation, the process has every chance of working well and efficiently.

For the church planting process to succeed, every level of church administration needs to be involved whenever the process impacts an area of their responsibility. A local Conference can decide to plant a church in their territory and does not need approval from any higher administrative body to do so. If, however, funding is required and requested, then other levels may become involved.

There are two particular funds available for church planting in the SPD. First is Global Mission (GM), which is mandated to help plant churches in new and unentered areas. The second is the CPC, which has in its original terms of reference the purpose to “facilitate a sustainable church planting initiative that will multiply Seventh-day Adventist churches in the South Pacific Division that meet the needs of the community while remaining true to the unique message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”¹² Most Global Mission funding, until recently, had been in the Pacific Island fields with some notable exceptions.¹³

In late 2007, the two committees, GM and CPC, were combined to oversee all SPD funding requests for church plants. The new committee is called the Church Planting Global Mission Committee or CPGMC. There are stricter controls on applications for money through GM than through the CPC. The way the system is now established, all requests for church planting funding will go to the one committee. If the requests meet GM guidelines, then funding will be given through them. If the request does not meet the guidelines, the same committee can use CPC funds.

The CPC role is to keep promoting church planting and to oversee the church planting process throughout the secular parts of the SPD. Funding, either from GM or the CPC in the secular areas of the SPD is conditional on the various entities following the same church planting process.

¹² “SPD Church Planting Terms of Reference,” March 23, 2004.

¹³ A major church planting initiative in Sydney, for example, has cost over one million dollars to date.

The CPC, from an organisational perspective, has the role of seeing that the church planting process works and is available to all levels of the denomination. It helps the various levels of administration understand the process, gives access to the process, and encourages the process to develop. The advantage the CPC has is that, being at the SPD level, it is available to every level below.

As of January 2008, the CPC had over \$800,000 in its budget, which, along with the GM funds, makes church planting an initiative financially attractive to Conferences and local churches. The funding encourages those applying for the funds to move through the church planting process. The CPC is there to help facilitate the movement through the process for whatever entity wants to be involved in church planting.

As mentioned, the CPC as a Division initiative cannot go into a local Conference to initiate church planting. It can only help a local Conference by invitation. That invitation comes from the Conference via the Union to the CPC. The funding encourages the local Conference to make that invitation. Apart from the funding, the expertise of the CPC in helping Conferences plant churches is also beginning to be seen. The use of this expertise is also part of the church planting process.

Most leaders at each level of the Adventist church want to see church planting succeed in their areas. Some have not been sure how to do this and are appreciative of any help they can receive. What they do not want is for anyone to try to impose his or her will on them without their approval. The CPC has been able to develop a process so that all levels, where appropriate, are consulted, and approval has been given before the church planting proceeds. This augurs well for the long-term survivability and

multiplication of the process to be outlined. The process is not a threat to anyone and gives ownership and input into all appropriate levels of the Adventist organization.

The Adventist organisational structure was not designed because of any particular understanding of theology. It was organised primarily on functionality and mission.¹⁴

The church planting process takes advantage of that structure. From the level of the SPD and through the CPC it can influence every level of church administration. It can use the resources of the SPD to impact the smallest church or consult with a Union or Mission. It can also involve leaders at all these levels being resourced and empowered to plant churches. How this works in reality will be described in the chapter outlining the implementation of the church planting process.

¹⁴ Barry Oliver in his seminal doctoral dissertation makes this point clear. Barry David Oliver, "SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present, and Future" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1989).

CHAPTER 8

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCH MULTIPLICATION MOVEMENTS

It is one thing to plant churches one by one, growth by addition. It is another proposition altogether to multiply churches through an ever-increasing, reproducible, and sustainable movement. Most denominations or mission groups are able to add churches as personnel and resources become available. What we are seeking to achieve within the Adventist church is to restart the movement that reflects the denomination's origins. The Adventist church, if it is to be the movement it believes God called it to be, must get back to its origins when the local pastor planted a number of churches and when the local church had a number of daughter churches.

This chapter surveys some of the characteristics that have been identified as typical of church planting movements. These characteristics will be summarised, and then their importance to the church planting process will be examined.

General Characteristics of Church Multiplication Movements

David Garrison, in his booklet *Church Planting Movements*, has identified ten characteristics that identify successful past church planting movements.¹ These can be summarised as follows.

¹ Garrison describes and analyses several movements, and outlines what he sees as universal characteristics. His booklet *Church Planting Movements* may be downloaded at <http://www.imb.org/CPM/> (accessed April 16, 2008).

First is prayer. This is particularly important in the life of the church planter. He or she must have a vibrant, intense, and constant spiritual life. The planter's prayer life must be seen as the source of his or her power. Second is abundant gospel sowing, intentional evangelism that is widespread and constant. Third is intentional church planting. In every movement that Garrison studied, someone implemented a deliberate strategy of church planting. Fourth is scriptural authority. The role of Scripture is essential. No movement has ever succeeded long-term that did not hold in high regard the authority of Scripture for life practice and doctrine. Fifth is local leadership. Missionaries may be the first step in planting churches, but indigenous leaders have to be mentored and released to multiply the impact of the movement. The movement will not succeed if reliance is placed on the missionary. Sixth is lay leadership. Since laity literally means any church member, Garrison is using it in a particular way. He is saying that church planting movements are driven by laity who are not seminary trained, professional pastors, but such movements are typically led by bi-vocational men and women. Seventh is churches as cell or house churches. Church buildings do exist, but they are few when compared to small, reproducible home or cell churches. Eighth is churches planting churches. In most movements, the first churches were planted by missionaries, and even some second or third churches. However, the church planting only became a movement when churches that had been planted started planting further churches. Ninth is rapid reproduction. Church multiplication movements are categorised by the fact that there is rapid reproduction. The illustration used in this paper was that of a church paying their tithe to the Conference. This was because the local church did not

know where the pastor was. Churches were being planted so fast that his wage was sent to the Conference, who did know where he was working. Tenth is healthy churches. To plant healthy churches a church itself should be healthy. If unhealthy DNA is spread, then the daughter churches will also be unhealthy and eventually die

Steve Addison from Church Resource Ministries (CRM) in Australia has identified five characteristics of church planting movements.² According to him, the first characteristic is white-hot faith. Addison is referring to the faith that comes out of a personal encounter with God, and, through this continued encounter, the planter is given a passion for God and a heart for people. Addison's second characteristic is commitment to a cause. Passionate people, according to Addison, ignore the gap between reality and ideas. They believe in what they are doing for God and refuse to allow anything or anyone to stop them. The third characteristic is contagious relationships. Through relationships, a supernatural message of Salvation is given, lives are transformed, and the gospel spreads like wildfire through relational networks. "The cycle begins as new converts are quickly deployed in ministry." Fourth is rapid mobilisation. The issue is not growth through addition but through multiplication. Church members are empowered to start churches without waiting for professional clergy. The fifth characteristic is dynamic methods. Any religious organization is hard to change. Even movements that start using innovative and dynamic methods to reach people face the danger of losing the vision of mission in the face of the reality of maintenance. There is always the tendency to hold

² These characteristics can be found in an article written on Steve Addison's Blog, "When the Church Goes to the Dogs," entry posted April 2, 2005, <http://www.steveaddison.net/2005/04/02/when-the-church-goes-to-the-dogs.html> (accessed April 16, 2008).

what one has rather than reach for more. Church planting movements are categorised by the desire to use any means available to spread the gospel.

Bob Logan has been at the forefront of church planting in the USA and around the world for many years. His book *Be Fruitful and Multiply*³ outlines the process that is needed to facilitate what he calls a church multiplication movement. This is the process the author of this paper has used for the Adventist church. One of the resources offered by Logan is the web-based “Cultivating a Church Multiplication Movements Network” or “C2M2.”⁴ In this Network resource, Logan identifies five essential elements of church multiplication movements.⁵ Logan’s first element is a passionate commitment to reach lost people. A God-given love for lost people is essential in any successful church planting movement. The belief that people are going to Christless graves unless they know about Christ’s love drives successful movements. The second element is comprehensive prayer strategies to catalyze and empower healthy church development and multiplication movements. Prayer to Logan is essential not only to the planter and his team but as part of the overall strategy of the movement, at every stage of its development. His third element is culturally relevant methods, so that more and more people are experiencing the transforming power of the gospel. Methods that are relevant

³ Robert E. Logan, *Be Fruitful and Multiply: Embracing God’s Heart for Church Multiplication* (St Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2006).

⁴ The resources for this Network can be downloaded from the CoachNet website at www.coachnet.org. Individuals can join the Network for \$195 US by emailing www.coachnet.org (accessed April 16, 2008).

⁵ Robert E. Logan, “Cultivating Church Multiplication Movements,” www.coachnet.org (accessed April 16, 2008).

in one area of the world may not be relevant in another. The methods used to reach and mobilize people for ministry have two keys elements. They need to be relevant, and they need to fit the culture of the people group experiencing the transforming power of the gospel. The fourth element is leadership development systems that raise up an increasing number of leaders for cultivating and multiplying healthy churches. Logan's approach to church multiplication is a systems-based approach. Logan maintains that "the number one limiting factor in reaching the harvest is leadership."⁶ Rather than recruiting leaders as they are found, one by one, we should be developing new leaders simultaneously as part of any church multiplication process.⁷ Logan's fifth element is reproducible processes for cultivating and multiplying healthy, multiplying churches. No movement, according to Logan, will be sustainable in the long term unless the process of planting healthy churches is sustainable and reproducible.

If one were to take the characteristics of church planting movements as described above, they could fit into a number of broad categories. The first category is spirituality. Logan and Garrison⁸ talk about the importance of prayer, not only to the planter, but also the planting team. Addison talks about white-hot faith that is needed to sustain the planters and their teams.⁹ Garrison also mentions that the role of Scripture is important.

⁶ Logan, *Be Fruitful*, 33.

⁷ Logan sees a sharp distinction between the "recruiting," and "developing" of leaders. See especially, *Ibid.*, 97.

⁸ Logan, "Cultivating Church Multiplication Movements," and Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*.

⁹ Addison, "When the Church Goes to the Dogs."

Successful church planting has always been associated with people who have a high regard for Scripture.¹⁰

The second category is passionate commitment to reach lost people. Logan stresses the importance of believing that church planters must see their mission as a life and death issue. Addison talks about a commitment to a cause and the importance of contagious relationships between the planters and new converts. The new converts, Logan and Addison agree, must reach their network of friends quickly. Garrison uses the term “abundant sowing of the gospel.”¹¹

The third category is leadership development systems. These are needed to fuel a church planting movement. Leaders must be recruited, developed, and released quickly. These leaders should primarily be found in the harvest and should, if possible, come from the culture of those being reached.

The fourth category is reproducible processes. For rapid sustainable growth, reproducible systems are essential. An emphasis on healthy churches reproducing healthy churches is a mark of a healthy church planting movement. If the churches planted do not move on to plant other churches, the movement will only grow by addition. The process outlined in this paper must be sustainable and reproducible if there is to be any chance that it can produce a long-lasting movement.

¹⁰ Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*.

¹¹ Addison, “When the Church Goes to the Dogs.” and Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, chapter 3, <http://www.imb.org/CPM/Chapter3.htm> (accessed April 16, 2008).

Fifth, culturally relevant methods are needed. A process can stay the same, but particular methods may work in one area of the world and not another. Music, as a simple example, is not the same the world round. It needs to be music that is identifiable and related to the culture being reached.

Passionate spirituality is mentioned by the writers above, and a high view of Scripture is stressed. It can be assumed that the life-changing gospel is to be preached to all. The Adventist church believes, however, that they have a particular message as part of the gospel that the world needs to hear. This means that, while agreeing with a high view of Scripture and the importance of prayer and an active growing relationship with Christ, the Adventists, in addition, believe they have a relevant message to give to the world prior to Christ's second coming. It is this unique gospel message that makes church planting relevant to Adventists. It has been demonstrated already that Adventists developed church planting as a means of making disciples. The message was essential to their growth. All the other denominations who started at the same time as Adventists taught the gospel, but they did not have the message Adventists' advocated.

For church planting to again be the method Adventists use to reach people, it must not be done in a way that would make them lose their message. The message must be seen as an essential part of the method.

How the Relevant Characteristics Will Be Used in the Proposed Church Planting Process

While no one can make someone else spiritual (characteristic one), one can do everything possible to ensure that people see the importance of it and are given the tools

they need to have a spiritual life. An active prayer life, a love of Scripture, and a love of the message that is to be shared with the world will be integral to the church planting process. These will help identify those who have an active walk with God and help those who do not to gain such a walk.

In assessing the church planter and his or her spouse, there will be specific questions that go to the heart of their walk with God and their relationship with the church. In all recruiting and developing of potential leaders, the spiritual life will need to be modelled, practiced, and stressed. All aspects of the process will have prayer as an essential and central part. This will be the same for leadership farm settings, team training, and the coaching elements of the process. At the administrative level, where decisions are made regarding the future of various plants, prayer will be the basis for such decisions. The message of Adventism will be part of this spiritual development.

The second characteristic, the passionate commitment to reach lost people, requires that motivation be very important in the proposed church planting process. All that is possible will be done at all stages in the church planting process to see that the motivation for planting is mission focussed. The need to see lost people in the kingdom of God and growing as his disciples is the mission of this church planting process. Unfortunately, other motivations often destroy healthy opportunities for planting churches. Power and control are sometimes motivations for planting churches. In some cases, people who do not like having others in authority over them start a church so that they can have people under their authority. It would be interesting if research could be

done on how many become interested in church planting because of power issues, not mission issues.

Church splits are another cause of people's wanting to plant a church. Individuals are angry at the pastor, their home church's worship style, or other matters and see church planting as a way of escaping conflict or having their own way. The core issues of the conflict, if not addressed, will usually manifest themselves in the new plant.

Mission must be the motivation for church planting. The planter's passion for lost people must be foremost, not the planter's individual emotional or relational issues. In all the essential areas of the church planting process, motivation for mission will be examined. The facilitators and trainers will observe potential planters and see if any unhealthy motivation reveals itself in the leadership farms, during the assessment, team training, project development, and coaching opportunities. At the same time, healthy motivation for planting churches will be stressed and modelled. This will take the form of practical training, giving those wanting to plant churches opportunities to mingle with those in their communities who do not know God. Prayer and Bible study will be focussed on seeing God's heart for lost people.

The third characteristic involves leadership development systems. While this is actually one of the key components of the proposed church planting process and as such will be elaborated on further, it must be stressed that this characteristic is one in which the Adventist church has strengths that, in the opinion of the author, have as yet not been fully utilised. The Adventist church has many areas that can be developed as leadership feeders for potential church planters.

The fourth characteristic is reproducible process. The process to be outlined is reproducible in that anyone can be a part of the process and that it fits within the denominational structural systems. It is also a process that can reproduce quite rapidly, as it does not depend on paid professionals doing the planting nor does it depend on buildings or finances. Pastors or other paid professionals, buildings, and finances can of course be involved in the process, but they do not have to be if the participants in the process do not want, or need them.

In the fifth characteristic, the use of culturally relevant methods, the church planting process to be outlined allows for different methods and models to be used. In the leadership farm systems, the need for using relevant methods is often an attractional element for potential planters. Young people, for example, are often attracted to the idea that they might be able to come up with new and relevant methods that are culturally aligned with the ones they want to reach, namely their own. This creativity will be encouraged and developed through the farm systems. Different methods will be discussed, and, if possible, experimented with both in the farm systems and church plant planning sessions.

The general characteristics of a church planting movement are a part of the church planting process that is the focus of this paper. They need to be in the process at every stage. They form the character or DNA of the process. An addition to those characteristics is the unique message that Adventists see as their special reason for existence. Could it be that people might be attracted to a message that is seen as

particularly relevant to today's humanity? If so, this message needs to be given in a culturally relevant way and become the core of any Adventist church planting movement.

CHAPTER 9

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED CHURCH PLANTING PROCESS

There are a number of essential elements that are needed to form a framework around the proposed church planting process. Without these elements, the church planting process will not be sustainable, let alone able to multiply in its effectiveness or its ability to be reproducible. The essential elements for the process include a leadership farm system, an assessment process, church plant team development, ongoing coaching, and church planter support. Finally, as this process is intended to be reproducible, one of the elements needs to be an evaluation of the process and the church plants started.

Leadership Farm Systems

The ability to identify, recruit, and develop leaders is imperative if church planting is to be a sustainable and a multiplying movement within the Adventist church in Australia.¹ The two keys to a farm system are recruiting potential leaders and developing them.²

Within the Adventist church, there are already systems for the recruitment and development of leaders that could easily be utilised for a church planting process. There is an active youth department at every level of administration. The youth department has

¹ Farm system is a church planting term borrowed from the natural world that means a process for reproducing.

² Logan, *Be Fruitful*, 97.

strong leadership farms. Pathfinders, like Scouts, is an outdoor-based ministry designed to give young people life and leadership skills. While concentrating on personal development, Pathfinders gives young people between the ages of ten and fifteen leadership opportunities. Young people, particularly in camping situations and community projects, learn teamwork and leadership skills. Leadership opportunities under trained coaches and mentors are available at all age levels. Once young people finish Pathfinders at age fifteen, they can stay on as leaders in their Pathfinder club if so desired. Ongoing training is mandatory for all leaders in Pathfinders. There is no reason that church planting could not be encouraged in Pathfinders as an area of leadership and mission a young person may aspire to.

The Adventist church has a long history of camping-based ministry that has also been used to train and develop young people in leadership and life skills. Every Conference has summer camps where young people come together in age-based groups for a week at a time. Young people are encouraged to bring their unchurched friends to such camps where, in a loving and culturally relevant way, they can be introduced to Christ. The leaders of this ministry are usually young people who have come up through the camping program and have been given a new opportunity to develop their leadership skills. The author, for example, over a number of years when younger, was the activities director, boys director, and a counsellor to those children with behavioural problems at such camps. He was also a counsellor at various blind camps leading blind children in outdoor activities, such as water skiing and body surfing.

This camp-based program involved training young people in leadership. There is no reason church planting cannot be seen as another exciting adventure for young people eager to continue leading people towards a relationship with God and further developing their own leadership skills.

Other existing farm systems include the elementary/high school system and Avondale College. At the start of 2007, there were fifty-five schools within Australia with an enrolment of 10,478,³ and Avondale College had an enrolment of 1,275.⁴ Most of these schools have chaplains who, along with the teaching staff, could be utilised to help identify potential church planters. Some of the staff or chaplains could themselves become church planters.

Churches offer another ready-made church farm system. In healthy churches, leaders are growing and multiplying ministries. These are people who need to be identified and recruited as potential church planters. Christian professional groups and various para-church groups supportive of the church could also form a basis for recruiting potential planters.

The church planting process needs to take advantage of the existing farm systems that are within the church. In addition, short-term fishing pool events could be created. These are one day events where potential leaders are targeted as well as a general invitation being given to all who may be interested in a new evangelistic strategy, namely

³ Peter Cameron, Associate Chief Financial Officer of the Australian Union Conference, in interview with the author, April 8, 2008. Cameron is responsible for the statistical reporting of the Adventist School system in Australia.

⁴ Gwen Wilkinson, Academic Registrar of Avondale College, in interview with the author, April 10, 2008.

church planting. A vision for church planting will be cast, along with what church planting might involve, emphasising the need to reach people who matter to God.

The responsibility for initially emphasising these farm systems and their usefulness in recruiting potential church planters will fall on the CPC. As the existing farm systems add the focus on church planting to their strategies and as the fishing pool events develop, then the Union and individual Conferences will take on the responsibility of sustaining this farm system.

When it comes to the continued development of church leaders in the farming system, the same process will be undertaken. Currently leaders are developed in the areas mentioned above. These will continue but will add the basics of church planting. Once an individual becomes a church planter, the continued leadership development will take on a coaching component, which will be explained shortly, as will other support processes that will aid church planters in their mission.

Assessment of the Church Planter

The importance of assessing church planters should not be underestimated. The best time to get rid of an inappropriate church planter is before that person plants a church. Logan has pointed out that “about 70% of the fatal mistakes made in church planting occur during the conception and prenatal phases.”⁵ One of the fatal mistakes is not properly assessing church planters.

⁵ Robert Logan. Class lecture notes from lecture manual, “Church Planting 1: Introduction to Starting and Birthing New Congregations” (Fuller Theological Seminary, October 16-27, 2000), 23. The terms “conception” and “prenatal,” while biological terms, apply in church planting to the time prior to the first public worship service of a church plant.

For the church planting process to succeed, assessors will need to be found and trained. The implementation of the process must include the training of future assessors and not only the initial assessors.⁶ Assessors will need to have continued support and evaluation to keep effective. Once an assessor is trained, he or she will be placed in the process at step 3.

The potential planter who is being assessed should optimally be part of a small group wanting to start a new church. Once an assessment is successfully made, the initial planting group can then continue to plan and process their church planting proposal.

Church Planting Team Development

As part of the proposed church planting process, the development of a healthy church planting team is important. This is a structural matter that impacts the framework of the process. The initial church planting team can be quite small and will grow into the core church planting team. Part of the process will include a period of time for each team to be able to come together in a spiritual context and develop its church planting proposal. This will need to be done under the guidance of church planting facilitators. Currently there are a number of individuals who can facilitate such a process. These people are either church planters themselves or have skills in facilitation and healthy church growth.

⁶ See chapter 10 for the full outline of the process. Figure 2 in chapter 10 is a diagram of the steps.

More details of what will happen during church planting team development will be explained as the process is described. This structural element is carried out at step 4, primarily during the Church Planting Team Training Seminar.

Coaching

Coaching is also an essential element of the church planting process. Logan claims, “Without individual leaders being empowered and guided through coaching, continued multiplication will not happen.”⁷

Coaches will need to firstly trained and resourced. They are then placed into the church planting process at step 4 when the planting teams first come together for training and equipping at the Church Planting Training Seminar. Ongoing training will need to occur to keep the coaches continually equipped and resourced and also so that coaches see themselves as an important part of the church planting process. Coaching farms will need to be established to ensure that, as church planting multiplies, there are always coaches available to meet the increased need.

Coaches will also serve as a conduit between the planters and the local Conference. Reports of the coaching experience will be a valuable tool in keeping the Conference informed as to the progress of the plant and will allow the planters to receive the support and encouragement offered by the Conference. Ongoing goals and milestones that might need to be agreed on by the planters and Conference can usually be processed through the coaching process.

⁷ Logan, *Be Fruitful*, 137.

Ongoing Church Planting Support

An essential element to the church planting process is that of ongoing support. This support is for both the church planter and his or her team. Once a plant is on the way and the initial assessment and planting proposal has been completed, some church planters are left on their own to sink or swim. To give the church plant the best chance to succeed, the church planting process intends for ongoing support to be available to all involved in the church plant.

The primary type of support will be an assigned coach. The coach will be trained, equipped, and matched with the planter and team. The coach will not merely be appointed, but will spend time with the teams at the church planting training seminar and will only be appointed to an individual planter and team after both coach and planter feel comfortable with the match.

A second form of church planting support will be yearly support times for the church planting teams. These will consist of two- or three-day retreats, not on a weekend when a church service might be conducted, but during the week. The retreats will bring together various church planting teams at different stages of their plants. Retreats will have peers and experts who are familiar with the challenges the teams may be facing and will mainly focus on the planters themselves, encouraging them and helping resolve any challenges they may have. The Conference will make sure that key leaders from the Conference are at these retreats to support the teams and give any help that the Conference can so that the church planters and their teams feel valued and part of the larger church planting movement.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential element of the church planting process. By evaluating church planters, church plants, and the church planting process itself, the process and future church plants will have an increased chance of being successful and able to reproduce throughout the Adventist denomination. Evaluation helps discover the strengths and weaknesses of the plants and process. If strengths and weaknesses are discovered early enough, it gives opportunity for the strengths discovered to be further enhanced and the weaknesses dealt with before serious trouble ensues. If left too long before evaluation occurs, then the weaknesses in the plants or process may reach the place where they cannot be fixed and the plant and/or the process collapses.

The initial evaluation of church plants happens primarily through the assessment process, the church planting team seminar. The ongoing evaluation happens through the coaches assigned to each church plant and the contract agreed on between the church planting team, the coach, and the Conference. This contract, agreed on at the church planting seminar, has regular goals and dates by which they will be achieved in the life of the church plant. While being flexible, these goals help the Conference and the plant to agree on what criteria a church plant needs to meet in order for decisions to be made regarding ceasing or continuing. The Conference has no desire to have a multitude of failed church plants limping along draining the resources of the planters and Conference over many years.

The church planting process itself will be evaluated in several ways. Firstly, the CPGMC will evaluate the effectiveness of the process on a yearly basis. Suggestions for

improvement will continually be sought. Secondly, participants at every step of the process will be asked to fill out evaluation forms. These will be collated by the Conferences and CPC. It will be these reports that the CPGMC will use as the basis for their continual evaluation.

The essential elements outlined in this chapter, along with the characteristics of church multiplication movements of chapter 8, form the ongoing structure of the church planting process described in the next chapter. Without this structure, the process would have no long-term viability and would be unable to reproduce successfully throughout the denomination. With the structure in place the process should work.

PART FOUR

PROPOSED PROCESS FOR CHURCH PLANTING

Part Four contains the heart of this paper. It outlines the seven steps of the church planting process. These steps allow anyone whom God calls to be involved in church planting. Following on from the description of what constitutes a church planting movement, this process will be placed within the essential elements that make up the structure of the church planting process. The process outlined takes into account the leadership structures of the church, the individual needs of each conference, and the desire of people who want to be involved in church planting.

Part Four also describes how this process will be implemented. It is no good having a theoretical process; the process must also be able to be put into practice. The implementation of the process will be when the essential elements of the structure are put into place. How this will happen in a reproducible and sustainable way will be described in Part Four.

CHAPTER 10

SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR CHURCH PLANTING

The church planting process that is the focus of this paper takes into account the different levels of accountability and structure within the Adventist church. It also takes into account the different starting points for an initiative to plant churches. Individuals may decide that they would like to plant a church; churches may make the same decision; or a Conference may decide to institute church planting as part of its strategic planning. Additionally, groups may be discovered who are already meeting, and drawing them into a healthy church planting process will be a priority. This process caters for all the above.

Outlining the Process

Step 1: The Applicant/s

There are at least five different entry points into the church planting process. Each has a different background, but all can be optimally utilized to achieve the best chance of success. If an individual church member, pastor, church, group, or Conference decides that they would like to plant a church, they can apply to their Conference, which is step 2, for approval and support. See Figure 2 for the flow chart that shows visually the process described below.

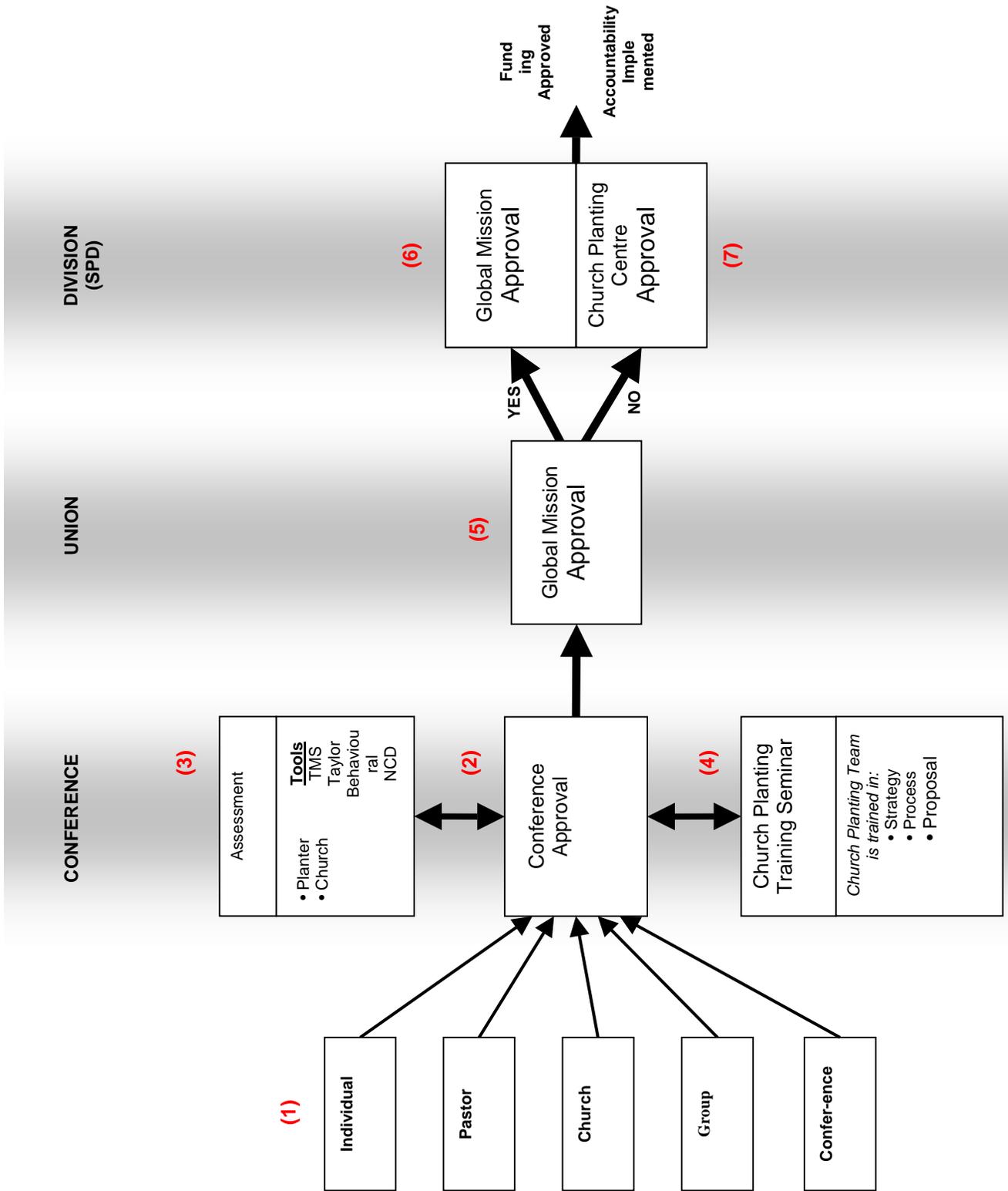


Figure 2. The church planting process. Red numbers indicate the steps.

For *individuals*, whether they are in leadership in a church, new converts, or wondering if they are called by God to plant a church, all individual members of the church can now approach their local Conference and express their interest in church planting. Regarding *pastors*, most pastors are currently employed to pastor existing churches. There are also significant numbers of pastors who are in various levels of administrative leadership. Any of these pastors can now apply to a Conference if they feel they would like to plant a church. Healthy *churches* planting healthy churches is the healthiest form of church planting. This area of church planting is one that will be encouraged and stressed. As healthy churches are identified by a local Conference, they will be encouraged to look at church planting. However, any church, through this process, can now approach the Conference with the desire to plant a daughter church.

A phenomenon that is being noticed within the Adventist church throughout Australia is the appearance of people who are meeting together in small groups and then, as they grow, wondering if they are a church. Some of these *groups* then approach a Conference as to what they should do. At the last meeting of the NNSW Conference Church planting committee, it was noticed that there were five such groups that had been discovered in the last six months. Some of these groups do not approach the Conference; rather the Conference needs to come alongside these groups in more of a coaching role and see how they can be helped in their development.

Whether an individual, pastor, church, or group, there is now an opportunity for each to approach the Conference with the desire to plant a church. What the discovery of groups already operating has highlighted is the need to actually come alongside people and challenge them with the vision of church planting. With a group already operating, they may not need to fulfil all the steps for church planting; they may, for example, already have an identifiable leader and team. What they may need is coaching and motivation to be part of the Adventist church planting process. It is important to approach such groups and various individuals who have the potential to plant churches and not force them to fit within a preconceived mould. The church planting process needs to be adaptable if it is going to include all who have the God-given ability to plant a church.

Lastly, a *Conference* can see as part of its strategic plan the need to plant a church in a given area to reach a particular target group that is not being reached. The Conference may utilise some of the people from the above list who have approached them to plant a church, or they can bring in someone else from outside the Conference to do so. The NNSW Conference, for example, is planning to plant another church in Newcastle, the largest city in the Conference. While utilising people who are interested in planting a church, they could well bring in another planter from elsewhere, run an evangelistic campaign, and start a church as part of their strategic plan.

Step 2: The Conference

It must be said that the key administrative level of the church planting process is the local Conference. It has the ability to facilitate the church planting process or to hinder or even ignore church planting. If it chooses to hinder or ignore church planting, it will be very difficult for Adventist church planting to occur within that Conference. Any church planting that does occur within such a Conference will rarely be an Adventist church plant.

At step two of the process, an approach is made by one of the entities described in step one. The Conference is then able to let the applicants know of the process they would recommend if a perceived church plant is to succeed. This initial approach to the Conference is primarily to allow the potential church planters and the Conference to begin a healthy relationship. The Conference is able to encourage the potential church planters and to show the clear steps that can be followed immediately by those wishing to proceed with church planting. The potential planters will see the Conference as being proactive and encouraging to their endeavours.

What will be made clear in any approach to the Conference is that approval for a potential church plant is dependent on the successful completion of the church planting process and final approval by the Conference. The potential church plant must fit within the overall strategic vision of the Conference. If the Conference gives its initial approval, the applicant/s proceed to step 3.

Step 3: The Assessment

This step involves the assessment of the applicant/s wishing to plant. The assessment of the church planting applicant/s will take several forms. The most important part of this process is the selection interview.¹ The selection interview is conducted with the individual church planter and, if applicable, the planter's spouse. This assessment is conducted by trained Conference personnel. The assessment, in the case of a church wanting to plant another church, would include taking a healthy Natural Church Development (NCD)² report as well as the selection interview of the proposed church planter.

Where a group is already in existence, sensitivity needs to be given if asking the leader/s to take part in such an interview process. They may have already gone past this step, and the church planting process needs to take this into account. It may be that the selection interview's thirteen characteristics needed in the life of a church planter can be

¹ The tool that is used for assessment is Charles R. Ridley, Robert E. Logan, and Helena Gerstenberg, *Training for Selection Interviewing* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1998). The selection interview examines thirteen qualities found in the Church Planter Performance Profile (CPPP). These thirteen qualities are selected from the larger list of 48 dimensions contained in the CPPP. The CPPP is the result of a job analysis study conducted in 1984 and subsequent field testing. Although all of the 48 qualities are important, these thirteen qualities are considered critical, if not essential. Since the 1984 study, these dimensions have been used with a very high degree of success in selecting and predicting effective church planters. There are many different approaches to selecting and assessing church planters. The author has chosen the Ridley, Logan, and Gerstenberg model for a specific reason. While attending the 2007 National New Church Conference in Florida with 1800-plus in attendance, the author assessed the church plant assessments, programs, and processes being promoted. He noticed that over 90% of the assessment packages had the Ridley, Logan, and Gerstenberg model as their foundational tool. He also found that over 50% of the assessing tools being promoted had this model as the major part of the church planting assessment process. It was decided that, instead of "reinventing the wheel," it would be easier and simpler to use this existing tool.

² The Adventist Church in Australia uses NCD as a measure of church health. It is the primary resource used to help develop church health in Australia. All Conferences use this resource. See Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996).

discussed by the group. This way, the established group could see if they believe that, as individuals and as a group, they are fulfilling these characteristics or if some changes need to be made. Such groups may not be at the stage to complete an NCD profile. The Conference will make a judgment, based on the recommendation of the assessors, as to whether the applicant should move to step 4.

Step 4: Church Planting Team Training Seminar

The church planting applicant/s will need to successfully complete the Church Planting Team Training Seminar. Those completing the seminar will be the potential church planter and his or her church planting team.³ This seminar will be run by local Conferences with assistance, as needed, by the relevant Union and CPC. Some Conferences will be able to run their own seminars with little outside assistance; others may well ask for the Union or CPC to run them.

Prior to attending the seminar, the potential church planting team will conduct a preliminary demographic study of the proposed area. They will also conduct a preliminary evangelistic survey of the area in an attempt to start developing an idea of the physical, social, and spiritual needs of the area. This information will help as the team develops its evangelistic strategy. Spiritually, the team will be encouraged to prayerfully read through the book of Acts and organise prayer partners to pray for them during the

³ The church planting team is the initial group of around 5 or 6 who will form the backbone of the future plant. They are a smaller group than the core group who will be encouraged to join the church planting team before its official launch. The larger the core group (30+), the more likely the success of the church plant.

seminar. These prayer partners could well form the basis for ongoing prayer support for the church plant.

The three- to four-day seminar will be conducted in an atmosphere of prayer, worship, and time in God's Word. This seminar will also demonstrate how the church plant will fit within the local Conference's strategic plan. Foundational in this seminar will be an emphasis on how best to plant a healthy Adventist church. This means an understanding of Adventist history as a church planting movement and its unique message.

Strategically speaking, the aim of the time together is to end with a strategic proposal that can be taken to the Conference for its final approval and support. Since ongoing coaching of the planter and church plant is essential, a trained church planting coach will be recommended at this stage. Coaches will be in attendance at this seminar and will be matched with church planters and their teams. The coach will then be part of developing the church planting team's proposal.

The seminar will work through the basic outline as found in *The Church Planter's Toolkit*.⁴ Such areas as core values, mission statement, and forming a biblical mandate will be included. Potential models for church plants will be examined in the context of

⁴ Robert, E. Logan and Steve Ogne, *Church Planters Toolkit* (Wheaton, IL: ChurchSmart, 1991), 3:1-28, 4:1-22. Other resources have also been used, specifically Peter Roennfeldt's Manual. See Peter Roennfeldt, *Church Planting: Planting New Churches for Unchurched People*, 2006 rev. (Melbourne: Self Published, 2006). The CPC will develop their own manual for the Adventist church as time progresses, but, at the moment, the elements as outlined in the Toolkit are basically the ones being used. Most people interested in church planting are given access to the Toolkit to help guide them in their church planting journey.

the preliminary demographic and community evangelistic surveys conducted prior to the seminar. The model that seems to be best suited to the DNA of the church planting team and their intended target group will be decided on and prayed over.

From a strategic point of view, the evangelistic, ministry, and discipleship processes will be developed. Planning milestones will be outlined and added to the proposal. The completed proposal will include the planned spiritual support of the planters.

In the case of a group already in existence joining this process, then the seminar can help clarify for them their desire to be part of the Adventist movement with the privileges and responsibilities that it entails. It also helps focus their direction and mission.

The completed church planting proposal goes to the Conference for final approval. If approval is given, and there is no request for funding from the denomination, then the plant can proceed with regular reports from the planter's coach to the Conference. The church plant and Conference will agree on levels of accountability that will include under what conditions the suggested plant could close if it is not achieving its mission. While it is desirable for all plants to succeed, it must be accepted that some will not. Agreement will be reached on time and achievable milestones that both the Conference and plant can keep to as a means of showing the viability of the plants. If there is a request for funding, then the process moves to step 5.

Step 5: Union Global Mission Approval and
Step 6: SPD CPGMC Global Mission Approval

If funding is requested by the church plant or the Conference, then the proposal for the potential church plant will proceed to the Union Global Mission Committee to see if it meets the requirements for Global Mission Funding. If it does and is approved, then the Church Planting Proposal proceeds to the SPD's Church Planting Global Mission Committee, (CPGMC - step 6).

There are two funding sources for the CPGMC. One is from Global Mission and is funding that comes from the General Conference with specific guidelines as to how it is to be used. This is then complemented with Global Mission funding from the SPD. The Global Mission funding from the SPD also comes with specific funding requirements. Part of these requirements is that a certain percentage of funding must come from the Union and Conferences.

It has been noted that sometimes church planting projects do not meet Global Mission requirements. If the proposal does not meet Global Mission Funding Guidelines, then the proposal can still be recommended by the Union to the CPGMC.

Step 7: The SPD CPGMC Church Planting Approval

The second source of funding is from the SPD itself. The SPD has set apart significant money for church planting outside of Global Mission. This means that any church plant can receive finances if the church planting process is completed. Church planting funding is conditional on the above process being carried out. If funding is

approved, it will be accompanied by ongoing reporting and accountability. This will include a signed agreement between the church plant and the local Conference.⁵

Steps 6 and 7, it will be noticed, happen within the one committee, the SPD CPGMC. This is because the one committee appropriates two different sources of funding. An essential part of the decisions made at each step of the process and examined very carefully in steps 6 and 7 is the importance for each church plant to cease being reliant on the denomination for its financial survivability as soon as possible. The church plant will need to show that it is contributing to its own growth and also assisting, outside of itself, in the overall mission of the sisterhood of churches of which it is a part. Also important at each stage is the commitment of the church plant to keep planting churches. Part of the DNA of church planting has to be the continued commitment of each church to reproduce.

Evaluation and accountability of the process is not placed in the process as an additional step. Although mentioned last in the process, it is actually happening at every level of the process. When final funding approval is agreed on, the last thing that is checked is that the accountability checks are currently being fulfilled and will be in the future. The process was discussed under essential elements of the church planting process, but it was felt that it needed to be placed in the process itself as a reminder of its importance. The various committees will receive regular updates from the church plants

⁵ The signed agreement between the Church Plant and the local Conference is to ensure that both entities are happy with the growth of the church plant, as part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If the agreement is not kept, then the Conference or Church Plant can decide to close the Plant. All assets would then revert back to help fund future Church Plants.

via the Conferences regarding the progress of the church plants. Since funding is usually over a period of two to three years until the church plant has reached financial independence, evaluation and accountability are an essential for funding to continue.

The above process, it is felt, gives church planting in the Adventist church a real opportunity to again be the method used to proclaim the Adventist message to the world. The process fits within the current structures of the church and allows for each appropriate administrative level to both own and contribute to the process. It is reproducible because little or no change will need to be made wherever the process is used.

Positive Aspects of the Process

In evaluating the process described above, it would be helpful to have a look firstly at the positive aspects of the process. Knowing what works and why may give the opportunity to use the strengths of what is working as a leverage to help overcome any supposed weaknesses.

The Process Fits within Current Denominational Structures

As has been noted, there are a number of different levels of denominational administration. This process allows for each level of administration to have its say when and if its resources are needed to assist in the church plant. The local Conference, the key level in the approval of a church plant, has input from the beginning. It is the one that is approached, or it can approach those who desire to plant a church. Fears of churches going independent are to a large extent alleviated at the Conference level because of the

positive detail in the church planting process, particularly the assessment and seminar run to assist church planters develop their church planting proposal. Ultimately it is the Conference that chooses to sign off on a church plant.

The Union and Division are also involved as resources are needed. They reinforce the role of the local Conference and see that the agreements made with the Conference and the church plants are being followed.

It is important in the Adventist system that each level of administration is not bypassed or ignored. Each level has resources to contribute, and this process allows for that to happen. No extra level of administration is needed, and each level is only approached if its resources are required. The level of decision-making has been kept to the lowest level, as close to the church plant as possible, involving the Conference and church plant. It is only when the local Conference needs further resources that the other levels are approached.

The Process Is Simple and Reproducible

The process is simple and reproducible because it combines the essential elements of church planting and the Adventist church organisational system. The essential elements of church planting as mentioned include a farm system for future church planters. This process takes advantage of the ready-made Adventist leadership farming resources. Assessment of church planters is also part of this process as are church plant team development and ongoing coaching and planter support.

The process is simple and reproducible because it can exist within the Adventist leadership system without adjusting those administrative controls. No administrative leader needs to feel that he or she will not be consulted or involved. Their individual roles as leaders in the church are being acknowledged and supported.

Concerns with the Process

There is benefit in not only looking at the positive aspects to the process but also looking at any concerns regarding the process. Being open about any concerns a process may have is acknowledging reality. Very few processes are perfect. Identifying concerns gives opportunities to change the process, find solutions to challenges or minimise those concerns.

Different Interest Groups Could Derail the Process

As has been mentioned, there are some within the denomination who seem to have reason to want to see church planting fail. What these reasons are is not fully understood. It seems that, rather than seeing church planting as an effective way of doing evangelism, making disciples, and honouring the heritage of Adventism as a church planting movement, it is actually seen as a means by which liberal practices and teachings will enter the church.

It could be that various interest groups may feel threatened. It may be that, while not intending to derail the process of church planting, their criticisms go further than an evaluation of church planting to actually causing people to see church planting as a danger, a threat to Adventism. O'Ffill, in his book *Lord Save My Church*, discussed in

chapter 2, could well be an example of this. The title itself could be read by some to mean that the church is lost and needs saving. When, in the book, he sees church planting as carrying an “inherent danger,” he may be causing people to see church planting as a threat.⁶ Any attempt to promote church planting could well be seen by some as promoting a process others have seen as negative to Adventism.

The Process May Not Be Sustained

It is one thing to start a proposed church planting process; it is another to keep it going and see its effects grow. Personnel could change, leaving new leaders at Conference, Union, or Division levels who have not been previously involved in church planting and have little or no interest in seeing church planting develop.

If the process is not continually stressed as the means by which church planting is to progress, then church plants may be left without assessment, coaching, and ongoing support. This, the author believes, will lead to a higher rate of church plant failures and church plants choosing to go independent. This in turn will add ammunition to critics of church planting.

How to Address the Concerns

Success is the best way to address the concerns people have with the process or church planting in general. As good Adventist churches are planted and healthy growth ensues, then the negative attacks will abate. Communication is important. It will be an

⁶ O’Fill, *Lord Save My Church*, 108.

essential part of the CPC and the Conferences to communicate the church planting success stories through such avenues as the SPD's official church paper the *Record*.

Personnel will continue to be changed. There is nothing that can be done to change that reality. What could help is to implement the church planting process in all its facets as quickly as possible, particularly the elements supporting the process. With coaches and assessors being trained and equipped across a wide area, the chances increase within the Adventist system that, even if personnel do change, they will already have come across the church planting process in their previous roles, or may even themselves have been trained as coaches, assessors, or other capacities. Initial evidence suggests this may already be happening. There are individuals now who, while not at a Conference level, had been as trained coaches. When they moved to a Conference position that was responsible for church planting, they were already favourably disposed to church planting.

If the church planting process is established quickly, along with the essential elements that give structure to it, the church planting process will soon be seen as part of the Adventist system. Once it is seen as part of the system, it will be supported as part of the recognised establishment.

Church planting is fortunate to have significant leaders in the Adventist church within Australia supporting it and wanting to see it succeed. Both the previous Division President, Laurie Evans (who retired in 2007 and helped start the CPC), and the current President, Barry Oliver, are very committed to mission and church planting. Leaders at the Union, including the President, Chester Stanley, Graeme Christian (the Ministerial

Secretary), and Roger Govender (the Personal Ministries Director) are also fully supportive of church planting. In addition, most of the Conference Presidents support church planting.

There are challenges that will face the proposed church planting process. None of these challenges is insurmountable. All of them can be overcome, particularly if, as it is believed, God is central to the Adventist church.

CHAPTER 11

IMPLEMENTING THE PROCESS FOR CHURCH PLANTING

For the successful implementation of the church planting process and for the process to be sustainable, the essential elements of the process need to be put in place and continually updated. These essential elements, as discussed, include the farm system, people trained to assess church planters, coaches trained and effectively matched with planters, church planting seminars, and ongoing support of church planters and teams. The evaluation and accountability elements of both the church plants and the church planting process will also have to be implemented. This chapter will examine how each of these elements will be placed in the church planting process, and how they will be maintained and expanded.

The key organisational level in the church planting process is the local Conference. It is key in terms of being a gatekeeper to the process and also by being the primary place where most of the key elements of the church planting process need to be implemented.

When it comes to the farm system, as has already been mentioned, the denomination has ready-made farm systems. These include the school and college system and the youth departments, primarily at the Conference but also the Union and Division levels. There are also fishing pool events. The CPC sees little problem in

having these entities view church planting as one of their leadership outcomes.

Preliminary discussions with youth departments have confirmed this.

Fishing pool events have already been experimented with in the Western Australian Conference (WA) and have proved successful. They are continuing with such events as regular feeders into church planting. The NNSW Conference, having seen the success of these fishing pool events, has plans to start its own in 2008. Success breeds success, and there is good reason to believe that fishing pool events will become a regular farm system in each Conference in Australia. The farm system helps step 1 of the process better produce potential church planters.

An important part of the process described in chapter 10, is that the Conferences are trained and equipped to assess potential church planters. There is also the need for coaches who have been properly trained to work alongside church planters and their teams. Further, Conferences need to be able to run church planting seminars so that church planting teams can come together and develop their church planting proposals. Finally, Conferences need to be able to supply ongoing support to church planters and their teams as they plant their churches in those first vital years. These elements allow steps 2, 3, and 4 of the process to succeed.

The Adventist church within Australia did not have either the training or the resources to enable the essential elements to be placed in the church planting process. The CPC, in close co-operation with the Union and the Conferences, invited Church Resource Ministries, (CRM) under the leadership of Steve Addison, to conduct the initial training and resourcing in the above key elements.

Over an initial period of two years, each Conference was invited to send four to eight individuals for training and equipping in these elements. Over the two years, the teams came from all over Australia to the SPD five times. Each Conference was asked to bring teams of those in the Conference responsible for approving church plants and facilitating their ongoing success. This included the Conference president, ministerial and personal ministry directors, and other appropriate personnel. All but two of the smallest Conferences attended. The cost to the Conferences was \$9,900 each for the five seminars over the two years, plus manuals and incidentals. The SPD's CPC funded travel, accommodation, and meals for the five seminars. The total cost of the initial training to put in place the essential elements of the church planting process, was over \$73,000 and was funded by the CPC.

The training and resourcing conducted by CRM was undertaken in 2005 and 2006. As mentioned, all Conference presidents, except those of the two smallest Conferences, sent teams. They came together and were trained in fuelling a church planting movement, developing leadership farms to continually find church planters, assessing church planters, and coaching church planters and their teams.

Each Conference now has trained assessors, and coaches. The coaches and assessors primarily come from the personal ministries department of the Conferences, the leaders of whom have previously been trained as NCD coaches. Instead of doubling up on coaches, it was felt that coaches already trained to coach churches through the NCD process could also be taught to coach church planters.

All NCD coaches are trained by the Union. After dialogue with the author, as director of the SPD CPC, the Union has agreed to take responsibility for the ongoing training of Conference personnel in church planter coaching. This means that this essential element of church planting will be sustained into the future and expanded as needed.

The Union has also agreed to maintain the training of assessors into the future. This again will be done primarily through the personal ministries department of the Union.

What is gratifying is that, at all levels of church administration, it is not only the personal ministries departments that have taken responsibility for seeing church planting succeed. At the Union and Division level, along with most of the Conferences, the ministerial directors have taken a keen interest in church planting. Besides being trained and equipped themselves through the work of CRM, they are now actively supporting the Conferences in their church planting endeavours.

The first church planting seminar was conducted in the WA Conference in 2006 under the leadership of Conference President Glenn Townend. The author, as director of the CPC, was one of the presenters at this seminar. Since that time, the WA Conference has held one or two of these seminars a year. The NNSW Conference is planning to run its first seminar in 2008. Each seminar is being run primarily by the Conferences, with help from the Union and CPC. It is envisaged that, as more people in each Conference become aware of church planting as an evangelistic method, they will request to enter the church planting process. As a result, more Conferences will start to run church planting

seminars. Initially, the CPC and Union may facilitate these seminars, but the local Conferences will eventually run them. The Union and CPC will then continue to resource and empower the Conference leaders running the seminars.

Ongoing support of church planters is the responsibility of the local Conference. The coaches will report regularly to the Conference the continuing progress of the church planters and whether further assistance is needed. Regular retreats for church planters and their teams will be part of the ongoing support of church plants. It is early in the church planting process as yet, but the WA Conference is trying ongoing retreats for church planting teams. These retreats, where spiritual nurture and continued encouragement and equipping are carried out, seem to be very successful. These should provide the stability and reassurance that the teams are not alone, but have the support of the wider church in their endeavours.

The importance of accountability and evaluation has been discussed. Each step of the church planting process has accountability and evaluation built into it. Every committee that meets, from Conference to Division, will ask the accountability and evaluation questions. If the questions are not asked by one level of administration, they can be asked at the next. The CPC can become involved if, at any part of the process, the right questions are not being asked or if further areas of accountability need to be developed.

The Role of the Church Planting Centre in Implementing the Process

The director of the CPC put together the church planting process, but he could not have done so without close consultation with all levels of church administration.

Individuals in local churches, Conferences, and businesses offered advice. Fellow church planters, such as Peter Roennfeldt, were consulted. From an administrative point of view, those offering the most helpful suggestions and comments included Graeme Christian, Ministerial Secretary of the Union. Rob Steed, former Personal Ministries Director, along with his successor Roger Govender, also offered much appreciated wisdom and advice. Each of these men had worked longer than the author in denominational departmental work and were invaluable in helping the author steer his way through the levels of administration to facilitate the implementation of the church planting process.

Final approval of the process had to come from the Union and SPD. Special mention needs to be made of the former Division President, Laurie Evans. Without his support both professionally and personally, the CPC would not even be in existence. When it came to advice regarding the proposed church planting process the author was developing, the advice from Evans was very clear, “Keep it simple.”

The Union, through Christian and Govender, gave approval for the process in 2006. The SPD via the Church Planting Committee also gave approval later in 2006. The author’s Conference President, John Lang, was chair of that committee. In an interesting complication to the SPD approval, it was noted that the Global Mission Committee would also have to approve the process. This was because, before the

amalgamation of the Global Mission Committee and the Church Planting Committee in 2007, both committees dealt with church planting. The author felt that the church planting process needed to deal with both committees. Ray Coombe was the person on the Global Mission committee who offered the most advice and kept the author focussed on what needed to be done for approval to be given. On the current Church Planting Global Missions Committee, Ray Coombe is the secretary.

On a further note, Global Mission is an initiative of the GC, designed to facilitate the Adventist church in entering previously unentered areas around the world. While focussing primarily on the 10/40 window where the most people live who have not as yet known of Christ, it also endeavours to reach unchurched people groups in more developed secular areas of the first world. The author needed to ensure that the process was viewed positively by the GC as well as by the SPD. As such, the author, in developing this church planting process, dialogued a number of times with the Director of Global Mission at the GC, Gary Krause. The fact that the Director of Global Mission is the author's brother did not hinder the development of the church planting process.

CONCLUSION

This paper has focussed on developing a reproducible church planting process for the Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church. The thesis behind this paper is that, if such a process could be found, it would do much to re-establish the Adventist church as a church planting movement.

Part One of the paper examined the heritage of the Adventist Church as a church planting movement. It demonstrated that church planting was the method by which early Adventists spread their message. Explanation was given as to why church planting lost its emphasis in the Adventist church. Current challenges faced by the Adventist church, if it is to again become a church planting movement, were examined, including the state of church planting in Australia. Part One also looked briefly at the secular, postmodern culture of Australia from the first fleet to today in its attitude to authority, religion, and institutions. It was shown that the intended church planting process, if successful, would need to ensure that the church plants produced were missional and that they were not seen negatively because of being part of an institutional church.

Part Two described the message that went along with the method that caused the growth in the Adventist church. It is this combination of method and message that caused, and will still cause, the Adventist church to grow. The message of the Adventist church centers around making disciples in the context of the three angels' messages of

Revelation 14. The early Adventists developed their teachings and were then able to put them together in a package that was summarised in Revelation 14:6-12.

The teachings included the Seventh-day Sabbath as binding on Christians today. Another teaching was the holistic nature of humans: body, mind, and spirit impacting on each other. This has had practical outcomes for the Adventist church. They now operate the largest private school system in the world outside the Roman Catholic Church. Included in this school system are elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities. They have an extensive hospital, clinic, and health food network. A third teaching was the Adventist eschatological understanding of the Sanctuary and the soon coming of Christ. As a package with its other doctrines, it gave Adventists a reason for existence and a mission for the future.

Part Three examined the characteristics of successful church planting movements, as well as the essential elements needed for a framework for the process. Characteristics included the importance of spirituality in the life of the planter and team, along with a passionate commitment to lost people. Developing leadership systems and seeing that the developing leaders came primarily from the harvest was another. Church planting also needed to reproduce quickly, using culturally relevant methods. The church planting method outlined had these characteristics as a basis for its success.

The essential elements that would work as the framework of the church planting process were leadership farm systems, the assessment of church planters, planting team development (including coaching), and, finally, ongoing planter support.

Part Four described the actual church planting process that the paper focussed on, as well its implementation. The process could work because it fit within current denominational structures and allowed all appropriate areas of administration to be consulted. The process was simple and reproducible. This meant that other Adventist administrations around the world could apply it to their situation, too. It allowed for assessment, training, equipping, coaching, and ongoing support. Anyone who felt called to plant a church could now approach his or her local Conference within Australia and become part of the process. During the past four years while this process was being developed, church planting started to be spoken of again. The SPD Church Planting Centre was initiated, and key denominational leaders became focussed on church planting. Over thirty church planting initiatives were started. That was only the beginning. It is the desire of the author that the Adventist church in Australia and around the world again becomes the church planting movement it was called to be, to share God's message to the world.

APPENDIX

CHURCH PLANTING GLOBAL MISSION COMMITTEE

PERSONNEL

Chairperson	Associate General Secretary, South Pacific Division (B R Kemp)
Secretary	Global Mission Coordinator, South Pacific Division (R L Coombe)
	Associate Chief Financial Officer (Expatriate Services), SPD (D R Potter)
	Ministerial Association Secretary, South Pacific Division (G H Webster)
	Director of Personal Ministries and Sabbath School, SPD (J Talipuan)
	Senior Accountant, South Pacific Division (R W Strahan)
	Director of Adventist Volunteer Services, South Pacific Division (R H Bolst)
	Union/Conference Representatives
	Greater Sydney Conference Global Mission Coordinator
	Australian Union Conference Global Mission Coordinator
	Director, Centre for Church Planting
	Chief Financial Officer, Australian Union Conference
	Global Mission Coordinator, New Zealand Pacific Union Conference
	Glenn C Townend

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Review and evaluate the situation of unentered areas and people groups within the South Pacific Division and recommend strategies to the Division and unions for possible Direct Action Plans in response to Division-wide needs. Power to act.
2. Process all applications for Global Mission funding. Power to act.
3. Receive church planting proposals from the unions and approve grants within the limit of available funds from the Centre of Church Planting. Power to act.
4. Administer the funding of all Global Mission and Global Mission Church Planting and Centre of Church Planting projects. Power to act.
5. Receive reports on projects and monitor progress of all projects approved by this committee. Power to act.
6. Develop an effective method for communicating news and information on Global Mission and Centre of Church Planting projects to church membership. Power to act.
7. Recommend to union conference administrations for approval, training and professional development initiatives for those involved in church planting. Recommend to unions.
8. Receive reports from the Director of the Church Planting Centre on a quarterly basis or as determined by the committee. Power to act.

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|-----|---|--|
| 9. | Recommend the location of the conference-based Church Planting Centre as may be deemed appropriate from time to time. | Recommend to Seventh-day Adventist Church (SPD) Limited. |
| 10. | Approve yearly operating budget for the Centre of Church Planting. | Power to act. |
| 11. | Recommend vacancies on the committee to the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SPD) Limited. | Recommend to Seventh-day Adventist Church (SPD) Limited. |

FUNDING FOR CHURCH PLANTING INITIATIVES

The Church Planting initiatives will operate on appropriations and grants received from the South Pacific Division and other entities as may be negotiated.

This initiative is based on a half-budget for the Director which may be varied as negotiated between the Division and the employing entity of the Director and as approved by the Global Mission and Church Planting Committee.

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