

# mission<sup>refocus</sup>

STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

PRODUCED BY  
THE OFFICE OF  
ADVENTIST MISSION  
VOLUME 11  
NUMBER 1



**14** United in Mission:  
Stories of Sacrifice

**16** In Need of Hope

**18** To the Uttermost  
Parts of the Earth

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Our Circles

SPECIAL ISSUE

MISSION REFOCUS

# EDITORIAL

**W**e often hear from *Mission 360°* readers that you love mission stories. We do too, so we try to pack each issue full of inspiring narratives from around the world.

However, this issue also includes articles on the new Mission Refocus initiative. We look at how mission needs have changed through the years and the tremendous challenges we face today. It's time for a mission refocus. As a church, we need to look at what we must do to reach every nation, kindred, tongue, and people with the unique Seventh-day

Adventist message, a message of hope that our world desperately needs.

May this special issue motivate us to pray for and support these mission needs. Your prayers and donations to the mission offerings and Global Mission can help reach the millions who still need to hear about Jesus' love and soon return.

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Laurie Falvo  
Editor



***Mission 360°*** is  
on the **issuu** app.  
It's the perfect way  
to spend a Sabbath  
afternoon!

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## VOLUME 11, NUMBER 1

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# It's Time!

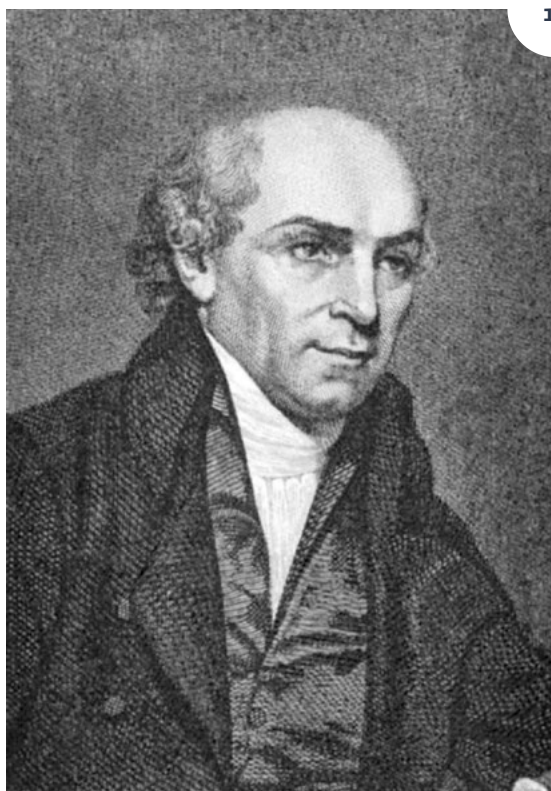
In 1786, a group of Baptist pastors met in Northampton, England. The chair of the meetings, Dr. Ryland, invited the younger pastors to submit questions to be discussed by the larger group. No one responded; perhaps they were a bit intimidated. Finally, William Carey, a cobbler turned preacher, raised his hand and asked whether the Great Commission was still binding on pastors until the end of time.

The chairman rebuked the young pastor. "You are a miserable enthusiast," he said. "Sit down." He added, "When God pleases to convert the heathen, He'll do it without your help or mine."

Six years later, Carey, who had long felt a burden for those unreached by the gospel, wrote a pamphlet called "An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens." Written at a time when the dominant understanding of the Christian church was that the Great Commission was only for the 11 apostles, it was groundbreaking. The church felt no sense of mission obligation. Carey challenged this viewpoint, writing, "It is thus that multitudes sit at ease, and give themselves no concern about the far greater part of their fellow-sinners, who to this day,



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are lost in ignorance and idolatry."<sup>1</sup> Carey practiced what he preached and served in India as a missionary for 41 years without furlough. He became known as the Father of Protestant Missions.

Carey's words "give themselves no concern" haunt me, and I ask the question, what about us today?

## A Limited Mission Vision

In Carey's time, the Christian church desperately needed a mission refocus to look beyond their own world to a world that didn't know Jesus. In the same way, the early Adventist Church needed to refocus and realize the full extent of its mission.

At first, the little flock of Adventists saw their mission field as only being North America. They saw huge numbers of immigrants coming into the United States and thought, *We can reach every kindred, tribe, nation, and people with these people coming into our territory.* But in the words of Adventist historian Arthur Spalding, this was just a "comforting rationalization."

When they finally accepted the need for a worldwide mission, their mission was still limited to reaching other Christians. "A missionary spirit should be cherished by those who profess the Message," wrote James White in 1856. "Not to send the gospel to the heathen, but to extend the solemn warning throughout the realms of corrupted Christianity."<sup>2</sup>

During his Sabbath morning sermon at the 1930 General Conference session, William Spicer, General Conference president, said these fascinating words: "When I came back from Europe in 1892, to be secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, I tell you truly we didn't have much of an idea of going to the heathen. . . . We thought: We will get a few along the edges, and the Lord will come."<sup>3</sup>

As early Adventist missionaries started crisscrossing the globe, their mission goal broadened to include all peoples. Symbolic of that fresh refocus was a young woman named Georgia Burrus. In her early 20s, she heard a call to go to India. She arrived there in 1895, the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary to that country. Among the many people she led to Jesus was a young woman named Nanibala, who became the first Seventh-day Adventist from another world religion baptized in India.

## A Global Mission Vision

A few decades later, the Seventh-day Adventist Church again decided it was time for a mission refocus. Leaders came together to plan, pray, and

strategize. They looked at the world map and saw the areas where the church still didn't have a presence. In 1989, the Annual Council voted Global Strategy, an initiative that gave birth the next year at the General Conference Session to Global Mission. Global Mission refocused the way we looked at mission work. Read these words from the Annual Statistical Report for 1990: "Church administrators of the 1990's are turning their attention from the usual view of Adventists' world mission and focusing more specifically on reaching unreached people groups."<sup>4</sup>

Global Mission was the official initiative of the church to start new groups of believers in new areas and people groups throughout the world. Global Mission helped us refocus from looking only at geographical areas to looking also at people groups. It enabled us to refocus from witnessing only to our brothers and sisters in Christian denominations to also reaching out to our brothers and sisters from other world religions.

We thank God for the growth in the church since Global Mission began. In the past 33 years, the number of churches and memberships has tripled. But is it time for us now to again have a missionary refocus?

In many ways, the world today is very different from what it was in 1990. We have 3 billion more people worldwide. We see the rapidly growing number of secular and post-Christian people, a group we ignore to our mission peril.

And consider the 10/40 Window—home to 60 percent of the world's population, the non-Christian religions, and the world's poorest people. This region, where most haven't even heard the name of Jesus Christ, remains a colossal mission task.

We thank God that since Global Mission began, the church has grown tremendously in this window. We've planted churches in cities where we thought we couldn't plant churches. But a huge challenge still faces us.

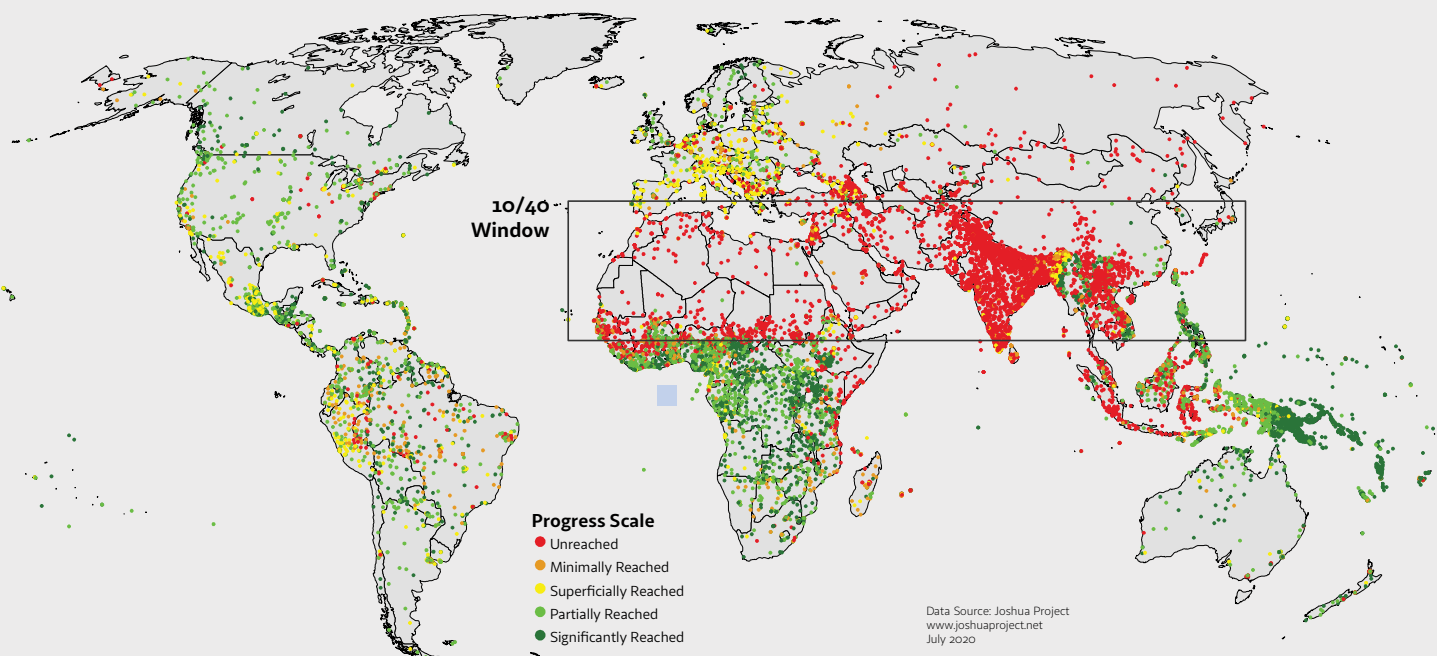
## A New Refocus

It's time for us to have another missionary refocus, another global strategy moment when we prayerfully look at our resources, personnel, funds, and goals. It's time to ask again what more we can do to reach the millions for Jesus. What can we rearrange? What can we recalibrate?

Nearly 140 years ago, Pastor William Anderson went as a missionary to Africa and devoted more than 50 years of his life to service in that great continent. He pioneered new work. He started mission stations, new hospitals, and new churches. On one epic trip, he walked 1,000 miles from Solusi,



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Zimbabwe, to Zambia, at that time, an unentered country. If he were alive today, how shocked he would be to see that there are some 1.4 million Seventh-day Adventists in that country.

Tragically, his wife, Nora, died when she was just 40. Some years later, he wrote these words: "I have given my money, my strength, my wife, and I intend to give the rest of my poor self to finish the work God has given me to do. I want you who read these lines to ask yourself that question, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'"<sup>5</sup>

That's a great mission refocus question. It's a great mission refocus prayer: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

- 1 William Carey, *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, 1792), 8, [https://www.google.com/books/edition/An\\_Enquiry\\_Into\\_the\\_Obligations\\_of\\_Christians/li5cAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1](https://www.google.com/books/edition/An_Enquiry_Into_the_Obligations_of_Christians/li5cAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1).
- 2 James White, "The Third Angel's Message," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 8, no. 18, 141.
- 3 W. A. Spicer, "I Know Whom I Have Believed," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 107, no. 37, 259.
- 4 Office of Archives and Statistics, "Global Mission: The Church's Presence, Outreach, and Mission," 128th Annual Statistical Report—1990 (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1991) 43.
- 5 Ron Reese and Douglas Morgan, "Anderson, William Harrison (1870 – 1950)," *Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists*, August 19, 2020, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=18VP&highlight=william|anderson>.



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4

- 1 William Carey
- 2 Georgia Burrus Burgess
- 3 Nanibala
- 4 William H. Anderson

Photos 2 through 4: courtesy General Conference Archives

Outside the 10/40 Window, we have one Adventist for every 136 people. Inside, it's one for nearly 2,000 people. Outside the window, we have more than 14,000 Seventh-day Adventist ordained ministers. Inside, we have just over 2,000. Outside the window, we have more than 81,000 churches. Inside, we have 11,000. Outside, we have 709 secondary schools. Inside we have just 118. And look at hospitals. Outside, we have 154. But inside, with most of the world's population, with all their tremendous needs, we have 33. Outside the 10/40 Window, we have 261 clinics; inside, we have 47.

# Quiz

Test your knowledge!



1. Approximately what percentage of the world population lives in the 10/40 window?

- 22%
- 37%
- 60%
- Because of religious restrictions, the population cannot be accurately estimated

2. There are nearly 22 million Seventh-day Adventists worldwide. What percentage lives in the 10/40 Window?

- 12%
- 23%
- 40%
- Nobody knows

3. Outside the 10/40 Window we have 1 Adventist for every 136 people. What is the ratio inside the 10/40 window?

- 1:600
- 1:973
- 1:1,200
- 1:2,000

4. How many adults see themselves now as religiously unaffiliated in the USA?

- 1 in 10
- 3 in 10
- 5 in 10
- Everyone in the USA is religiously affiliated in some way

5. Who are the “nones”?

- People who have no money
- Women who live in convents
- People who profess no religious belief
- People who don't have access to the Bible

6. What key opportunities do we have as Seventh-day Adventists to connect with the secular/post-Christian world?

- Health concerns and care
- Family, community focus
- Sabbath message
- All the above

7. In the Urban Window, there are 543 cities in the world with a population of one million or more people. What is the ratio of Adventist members per inhabitant?

- 1:20,000
- 1:50,000
- 1:75,000
- 1:89,000

8. How many cities are there in the world with more than a million people and no Adventist work?

- Thankfully, we have Adventist work in all these cities
- 7
- 23
- 43

9. By 2050, how much of the world's population will live in cities?

- 1/4
- 1/3
- 1/2
- 2/3

Answers: 1. 60% 2. 12% 3. 1:2,000 4. 3 in 10 5. People who profess no religious belief 6. All the above 7. 1:89,000 8. 43 9. 2/3

# Historical Perspective

**A**t the 1901 and 1903 General Conference Sessions, the Seventh-day Adventist Church underwent a dramatic reorganization to ensure it could reach out to all the world.

Often, when we tell the story of the early twentieth-century reform of our church, we tell it as chiefly a story of administrative restructuring. But just as important, if not more so, was the mentality of the men elected as General Conference (GC) officers in 1901 and 1903.

Arthur Daniells served as president from 1901 to 1922; William Spicer served as GC secretary from 1903 to 1922 and then president until 1930. Both were visionaries of worldwide mission. Their joint passion, and that of the GC treasurers and vice-presidents who served alongside them and of the Secretariat team that Spicer gathered around him, was taking the Adventist message into unentered territories and to unreached peoples.

Their focus was what they called the mission field, which was vast as they defined it: all areas outside the Adventist homelands in North America, Central and Western Europe, and Australasia. The home fields were expected to take the message to the mission field. Spicer told the 1922 GC Session that elected him president, “The cause of worldwide missions is not something in addition to the regular work of the church. . . . To carry the one message of salvation to all peoples . . . is the aim of every conference, every church, every believer.”



**David Trim** is the director of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research at the General Conference.

Thus, to restructuring was added the collective passion of General Conference leaders to expand the boundaries of mission; together, these factors had a dramatic impact.

From 1901, the number of new church workers dispatched from the homelands to the mission field gradually increased up to the start of World War I (see figure 1). In 1913, the numbers sent out exceeded 150—triple the number sent in 1901. The number of new mission appointees plateaued during World War I but spiked in 1920 at 310, twice the number 10 years earlier. In all, in the first 20 years after the 1901 reforms, the Seventh-day Adventist Church sent out 2,257 new missionaries. One result was global expansion of the church.

In 1920, the North American membership was 51.7 percent of the total, and the rest of the world's share was 48.3 percent; the corresponding figures in 1921 were 49.83 and 50.17 percent. Thus, 1921 was the year that membership beyond North America finally exceeded that within the North American Division (NAD). That was undoubtedly due largely to the number of missionaries and to the frontline, incarnational ministry that missionaries of that era performed.

While the figure of 300 new missionaries wasn't matched again until after World War II, throughout the 1920s the number of new missionaries each year was more than 150.

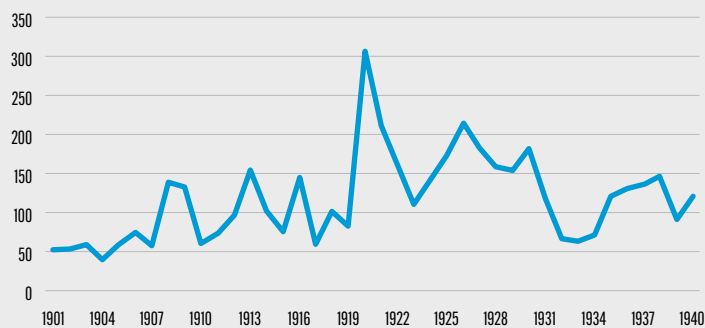
There was a dramatic decline due to the Great Depression, with numbers falling below 100 per annum for three years. But for the rest of the 1930s, the church sent more than 100 new missionaries every year despite the severe financial constraints the church faced (see figure 1).

This number dropped again with the start of World War II, but even before the war ended, it was climbing, thanks to remarkably bold and visionary planning by GC president J. Lamar McElhany and secretary Ernest D. Dick in the darkest moments of the war. It is striking that, even in the 15 years from the start of the Great Depression until the end of World War II, there were 1,597 new missionary appointees.

The quarter-century following the war, 1946–1970, was the golden age of the Adventist Church's foreign missionary program: in these 25 years, the number of workers sent to mission fields totaled 7,385. In 1969–1970, new missionaries totaled 970—by far the largest number of new missionaries sent into service in any two-year period in the church's history.

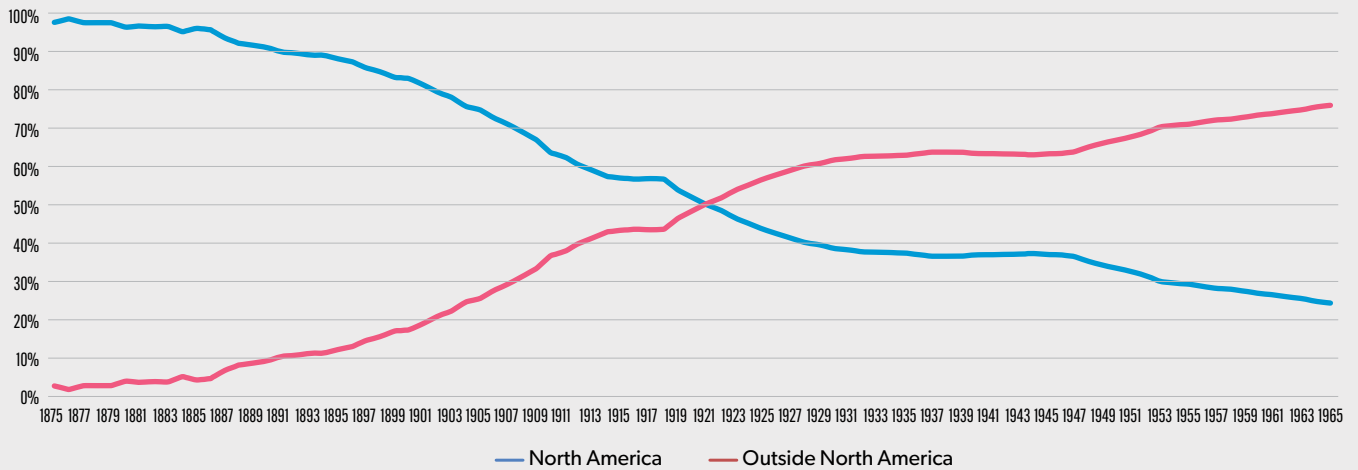
But as figure 3 illustrates, it's no coincidence that 1969–1970 marked the high point of the

**Figure 1: New Missionaries Dispatched 1901-1940**





**Figure 2: Percentage of Total Membership Inside and Outside North America, 1865-1965**



missionary enterprise, for 1970 concluded a quarter-century of steady growth in missionary numbers. The record number of missionaries sent overseas in 1969–1970 was a natural outgrowth of what came before: the high numbers sent abroad during 1945–1947, which were artificially inflated by the dispatch of large numbers of appointees who had been waiting for improvements in world conditions to travel. This inflation, in part, accounts for the apparent decline of 1948–1950, whose other cause was the collapse of the church in China. This was followed by occasional peaks and troughs in the 1950s and 1960s—yet overall, the trajectory was up, and, after 1950, sustainably so. The graph in figure 3 shows more than the annual numbers; it includes a fourth-order polynomial trendline, which shows more clearly the steadily upward trajectory in this era.

The rise of Adventist mission in the 25 years after World War II ended resulted from a huge, concerted team effort by church administrators, educators, medical leaders, and, of course, church members in North America, Europe, Southern Africa, and Australasia. But leadership was important.

The growth of the post-World War II years, like the dramatic expansion of the three decades after the 1901 reorganization, owed much to the GC officers' commitment to mission. Reuben R. Figuhr, president from 1952 to 1966, and Robert H. Pierson, who succeeded him, had both served many years far from their American homeland as missionaries. Walter Beach, who served as GC secretary from 1954 to 1970, had also been a missionary, and he couldn't have been clearer at the 1964 Annual Council when he declared, "We

are a world missionary church—not just a church with missions in all the world."

However, let's go back to 1969 and 1970, which saw the highest and second-highest numbers of new appointees in our history: 473 and 470, respectively. These two years were the apogee. Since then, the story quantitatively, if not qualitatively, has been one of decline.

In sum, looking at the 120 years since the 1901 reorganization, from then onward, there was initially steady growth in the numbers of new appointees, checked only by the Great Depression and Second World War. This brief decline was followed by remarkable growth, which plateaued at the end of the 1960s. Since that point, the number of long-term missionaries appointed has gone steadily and inexorably down. Yet, this has happened while the membership is growing.

**Figure 3: New Missionaries Dispatched, 1940–1970**

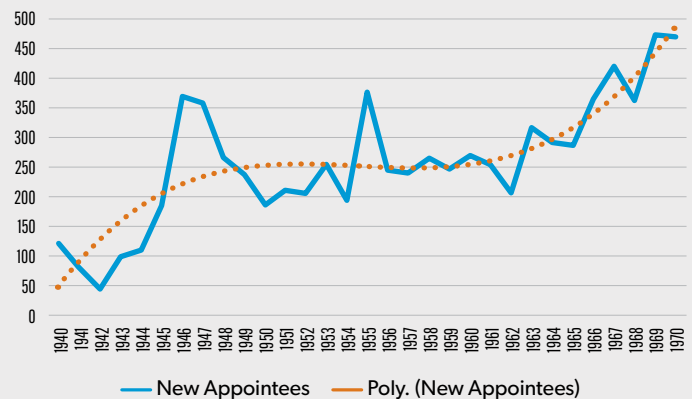


Figure 4: New missionaries per 10,000 members, 1901-2019

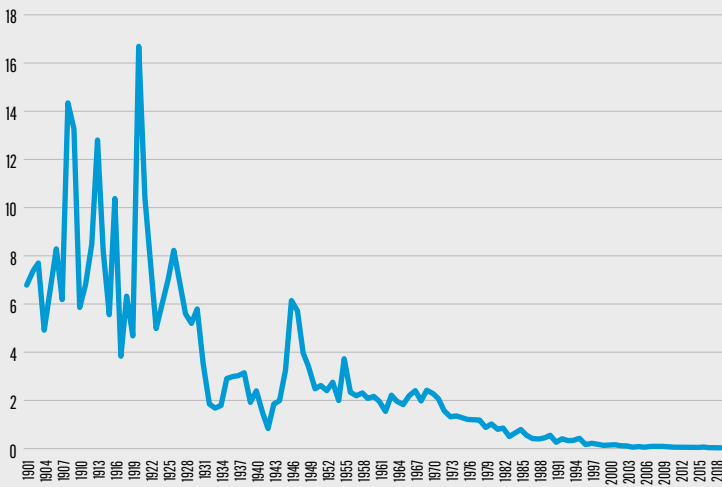


Figure 4 shows the ratio of missionary appointees per 10,000 church members from 1901 through 2019. The 1920s were good years, seen through the lens of the missionaries-per-10,000-members ratio, before the decline due to the Great Depression and World War II. Then, the chart shows spikes in the mid-to-late 1940s and the mid-1950s, reflecting the initial post-war mission expansion, sustained by rising church income in Western countries during the economically flourishing 1950s. But after 1970, there was a steep decline.

Furthermore, the nature of the work missionaries do has changed, and they aren't as long-term as they used to be. Here are just a few examples of missionaries and their service.

George D. Keough and his wife Mary-Ann served as missionaries from Britain to the Middle East on three separate occasions, starting in 1908; their service in the region totaled 33 years, with another 4 years spent at the General Conference for a total of 37 years of missionary service. They began their third tour of duty when George was 65, an age when others would be retiring, and they returned to their homeland for the final time when George was 72.

George and Laura Appel went to the Far East in 1920 and spent the next 38 years in mission service—30 in China and elsewhere in the Far East, 8 in the Middle East.

Dick and Jo Hayden also spent 38 years as missionaries, working in the mountains and jungles of Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

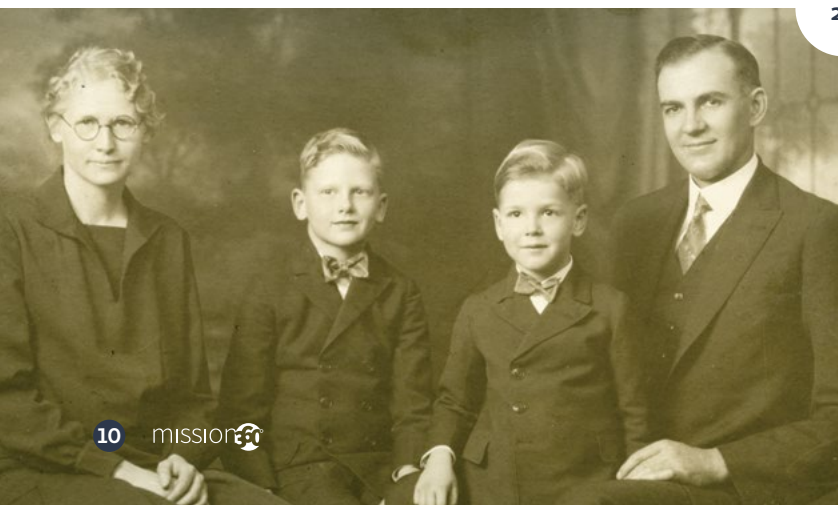
Merritt and Wilma Warren served in China and the Philippines for 47 years, starting in 1913, and didn't return to their US homeland (which must have no longer seemed like a home) until Merritt was 69 and Wilma 72.

Ezra and Inez Longway spent 55 years as missionaries: 30 in the China Division and 25 in the Far East Division.

Keough, Appel, Warren, and Longway all had spells as union presidents, while Appel was Middle East Division president and Longway and Keough were division department directors. But all spent many years working first in frontline mission.

Picture 4 shows George Keough sitting behind a desk in Lebanon when in his 70s, but during his first 21 years as a missionary he and his family often worked deep in the Egyptian hinterland where George would go and sit on the earthen floors of the local people's homes, eating whatever food they gave him and winning them to Christ by representing Christ to them.

In contrast, today's missionaries tend to be based in institutions and administrative headquarters.





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Of course, there's a need for skilled medical practitioners, accountants, and IT professionals to serve the world church; but there's also *still* a need for people today called from all around the world and sent all around the world to represent Christ to people who don't know Him. The GC Secretariat's recognition of this fact has led us to propose what is known as Mission Refocus, which includes allocating more missionary budgets to frontline mission work.

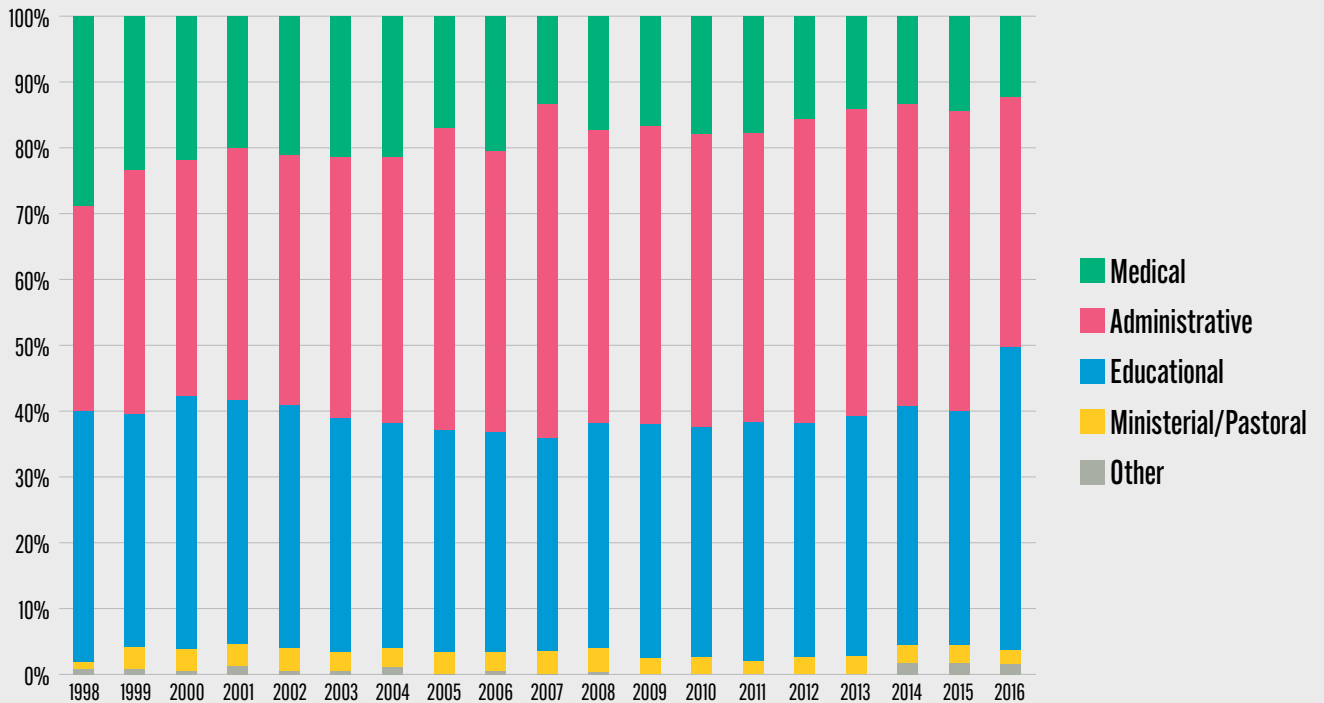


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- 1 George and Mary-Ann Keough, circa 1906
- 2 George and Laura Appel and their sons, Melvin and Alva, 1929
- 3 Merritt and Wilma Warren, 1913
- 4 George Keough, seated, in his 70s in Lebanon

Photos courtesy of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

### Interdivision Employees/International Service Employees employment 1998-2016: Types of employment



# Three Windows



Erton C. Kohler,  
executive  
secretary of  
the General  
Conference

**W**e live in times of great challenges, complex tendencies, and special opportunities for mission. Our main challenge is to stay focused on what our real priority is. The passing of time has impacted our commitment to fulfilling our global mission, and it's time to work together to refocus on our mission and missionaries. Our challenges are huge. In a world with 8 billion people, we have only 22 million members. That's almost nothing when compared with the global population.

"Big 6" Divisions	Memberships	Population
North American	5.8%	5.0%
Inter-American	16.7%	4.0%
South American	11.7%	4.5%
East-Central Africa	21.3%	4.7%
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean	19.1%	2.4%
South Pacific	2.8%	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.4%</b>	<b>21%</b>
"Diverse 8+" Divisions		
Euro-Asia	0.5%	4.5%
Inter-European	0.8%	4.8%
Trans-European	0.4%	2.9%
Northern Asia-Pacific	1.3%	2.6%
Southern Asia	5.2%	18.3%
Southern Asia-Pacific	8.0%	13.6%
Chinese Union Mission +	2.2%	19.9%
Israel Field +	.004%	.11%
Middle East and North Africa Union Mission	.03%	7.03%
West-Centra Africa	4.1%	5.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>79%</b>

Compiled from 2021 Annual Statistical Report

The main question is, how will 22 million Seventh-day Adventists reach 8 billion inhabitants in this world?

Missiologists refer to our three greatest mission challenges as "the three windows." Let's take a quick look at them.

**The 10/40 Window** is an imaginary rectangle between the 10th and 40th parallels north of the equator. It's home to some 60 percent of the world's population, the poorest people on earth, and most of the major world religions. Only 2.6 million Adventist church members are here (12 percent of the world's membership), while the rest of the world has more than 19 million.

**The Post-Christian Window** refers to Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries that are rapidly moving away from Christian values as demonstrated by the decrease in church growth and high rates of apostasy, especially among young people.

**The Urban Window**, found worldwide, is growing rapidly. There are 543 cities with 1 million inhabitants or more. In these cities is an average of 1 Adventist for every 89,000 inhabitants. The global average is one Adventist for every 358 inhabitants. Forty-nine cities of a million or more people have fewer than 10 Adventists and 43 have no Adventist presence.

How are we going to reach the masses for Jesus?

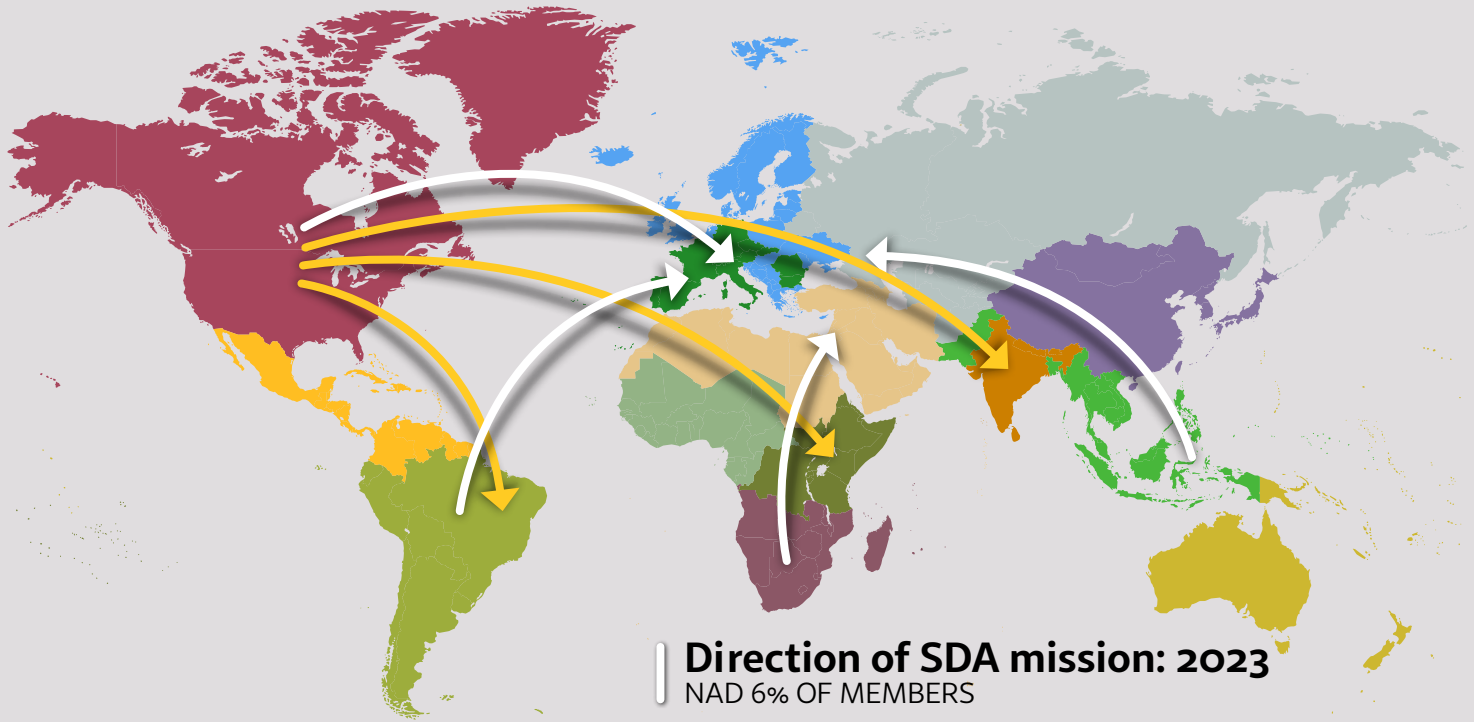
Of course, the task can be accomplished only with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the latter rain. But as the remnant people called by God to share the three angels' messages, we must work together strategically to meet our mandate.

Gordon Doss, a former missionary and professor emeritus in the Missiology Department at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary at Andrews University, has created a model to help us refocus our international mission. He created formulas to determine a region's missional needs, resulting in areas of relatively low and relatively high need for external support to fulfill the mission in their areas. This needs analysis clarifies that some regions need to be producers of mission resources while others are consumers.

Christianity and our mission have made huge advances in the global South while losing strength in the global North.\* As we work to rectify this situation, it's important to remember two premises: the least evangelized people groups should have priority in mission, and our investment for mission should move from parts of the church with more missional capacity to parts with less capacity.

## Direction of SDA mission: 1901

NAD 85% OF MEMBERS



We can divide General Conference divisions and attached unions into two groups. The first, the “Big 6,” includes the largest divisions in the world. They have 77.4 percent of the total Adventist membership and only 21 percent of the global population. While these regions have many challenges, they have the tools needed to move forward in fulfilling the mission in their areas. They have low strategic need.

The second group, the “Diverse 8+,” includes regions that face the greatest missiological challenges. They represent 79 percent of the global population but only 22.6 percent of our membership. They need support to fulfill the mission entrusted to them and have high strategic need.

So how can “low strategic need” areas help “high strategic need” areas reach their populations for Jesus? This challenge can be achieved by the following methods:

1. Sending cross-cultural missionaries
2. Providing Adventist education
3. Educating indigenous pastors
4. Developing creative mission initiatives with lay people and involving volunteers and Global Mission pioneers

5. Funding building projects
6. Producing contextualized materials

The yellow lines in the figure above shows the flow of missionaries in 1901. That was how we fulfilled the global mission and reached areas of need. The white lines shows how the flow of missionaries needs to look today.

It’s time for some areas that received missionaries in the past but today have a strong Adventist presence and structure to start sending missionaries or funding projects to other challenging areas.

Some divisions in the Global South have begun to make net contributions to the flow of missionary resources. Others need to convert from being mission recipients to being contributors.

Our call is to be a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47). May we be the generation that reaches all the unreached of the world for Jesus.

\* The global South refers to developing regions within Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, and Asia that are low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized. The global North refers to developed countries such as Australia, Canada, Europe, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, and the United States.



## United in Mission: Stories of Sacrifice

1



**Michael W. Campbell** is the director of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

**A**t times, we can see what is unmistakably the hand of God in the spread of Adventism around the world. In speaking of the working of God's Spirit, Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going" (John 3:8, NIV). The Spirit has led in surprising ways throughout the history of Adventist missionary work.

Perhaps the best known and earliest Adventist missionary to Asia was Abram La Rue (1822–1903). Initially a gold prospector, his investment property in San Francisco tragically burned to the ground. La Rue then became a shepherd, and during this time, he received some literature that led him to faith. Eager to share his newfound beliefs, La Rue attended Healdsburg College (today Pacific Union College) and then asked that church leaders send him to China. Due to his advanced age, they encouraged him to go instead to one of the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

La Rue eventually made his way to Hong Kong, where he did ship work while spreading, translating, and promulgating literature to the far ends of the earth. He sold fruit and dried nuts to help support himself and eventually encouraged several sailors to join the Advent cause. When

missionaries Jacob and Emma Anderson and Ida Thompson arrived in 1902, La Rue had seven men prepared for baptism. His work resulted in the first baptism by Adventist missionaries in Asia.

The new converts quickly internalized the Adventist message and sought to multiply the efforts of these early missionaries. One example was Timothy Tay, who had converted to Adventism in Fukien (today part of Indonesia) and studied the Chinese language in Amoy (today, Xiamen). There, he made friends with Nga Pit Keh (Zigying Guo), who was the principal of the language school Tay attended. Shortly before he came to the school, Tay studied with Ralph and Carrie Munson, missionaries who had converted to Adventism while on furlough, and Tay had begun to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Tay studied with Pastor Keh, and Jacob Anderson baptized the two. Tay returned to Malaysia and Indonesia to share his faith; Keh became the first indigenous Adventist minister in China. Their work shows that Adventism was not a western faith imposed upon other people groups but an internalized biblical message that new people groups then disseminated.

Adventist missionary work wasn't easy. Another young missionary, A. J. Cudney, sought to share

his faith across the South Pacific islands. He outfitted a boat that he named after his wife, Phoebe Chapman. Unfortunately, the crew was lost at sea. Yet this loss didn't diminish the will of Adventist young people to share the Adventist message; they saved their Sabbath School offerings for a new and better vessel. This boat was named the *Pitcairn* due to the request of the Pitcairn islanders for a missionary. A group of missionaries disembarked on the island to find individuals who had been converted by prior missionaries. The new missionaries baptized most of the people on the island.

Some of the most beloved individuals in Adventist mission history were medical missionaries Fernando and Anna Stahl. They sold their medical practice in the United States and went to Peru in 1909, serving mostly in the region around Lake Titicaca. The Stahls eventually learned the language and customs and fell in love with the people. One day, Fernando met the leader of a local mining company, who had had an accident on a perilous mountain road. Stahl treated the injured man and returned him to his home, not realizing that the person he needed to ask for property was the one that he had cared for. The man told Stahl that local religious leaders had asked him not to give Stahl any land. But his appreciation for the missionary's care led him to offer Stahl not only land but also a salary if he would become his personal physician. The land and funds sustained the mission during its formative days as Adventism spread to many other villages around the lake.

From Asia to South America and in many other places around the world, our early Adventist pioneer



2

missionaries gave their all to share their beliefs. And just as the Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways, the Lord has used the efforts of these Adventist missionaries, imperfect at times, to advance His work to the farthest ends of the globe.

- 1 Abram La Rue (back row, second from left) and Ida Thompson (front row, second from right) with a group of sailors and a soldier
- 2 Ferdinand and Ana Stahl
- 3 Ferdinand Stahl (holding hat) and Ana Stahl (holding flowers)

Photos courtesy of General Conference Archives

3



# In Need of Hope

**S**ometimes it seems like we live in a world where most of the people we meet have some understanding of Christianity and the gospel story. Yet there are many places where the vast majority of the population knows little to nothing about Jesus and His sacrifice or soon return. Here are four examples that show just how unreached some places are. Three are countries and one is a city in recognition of the rapidly growing urban mission need.

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## Damascus

Current population:  
**2.5 million**

Syria has been one of the most Christian nations in the Middle East region, but following recent instability, the Christian population has decreased dramatically

Number of Adventist members:

**0**

The number of Adventist churches in Damascus:

**0**

## Iran

Current population:  
**88 million**

Percentage of people groups unreached:  
**89%**

Percentage of population that is Christian:  
**1.65%**

Number of Adventist members in 2020:  
**0**

## North Korea

Current population:  
**26 million**

Percentage of atheists in North Korea:  
**68.8%**

Percentage of population unreached:  
**99.3%**

Percentage of population that is Christian:  
**1.6%**

Number of Adventist members in 2020:  
**0**

## Djibouti

Current population:  
**1 million**

Percentage of population unreached:  
**97.2%**

Percentage of population that is Christian:  
**2.18%**

Number of Adventist members in 2020:  
**0**

**Please pray for the unreached in Iran, Djibouti, Damascus, and North Korea.**



# To the Uttermost Parts of the Earth

1



**Yure Gramacho** is the program director for the disciple-making and church-planting initiative Mission Unusual—Tokyo!

**G**reetings from Tokyo, the most populous metropolitan area of the world!

My wife, Lais, and I were born and raised in Brazil. We met during college and married soon after graduating. We stayed in Brazil for about eight years while Lais worked as a physical therapist and I was a school chaplain, church pastor, and then the youth director of my conference.

We were comfortable in Brazil. But we began to feel a burden to go to the uttermost parts of the world to share Jesus. When we heard that the South American Division would be sending 25 missionary families overseas, we expressed our desire to serve. We put our lives in God's hands, and soon we were on our way to Mongolia!

When we share our stories about serving abroad, people often want to hear fascinating things about the country. But for us, everything was about the people. We visited their houses, ate their food, won their confidence, learned about their needs, and ministered to them. So, we were able to experience beautiful connections with them. We looked for an unreached area in Ulaanbaatar, the coldest capital city in the world, and were able to start a new group of believers there. People were hungry for the gospel, and many gave their hearts to Jesus!

While we were doing community service and an evangelistic series in a neighborhood called Nisekh, I met a woman named Yanjin. She was 81 years old and had never heard about Jesus. The first time she heard His name was when I shared the story of a young virgin who became pregnant with the most special baby who ever lived.

"What is the baby's name?" Yanjin asked from the first row of the auditorium.

"His name is Jesus," I replied. I could see her eyes sparkle. No doubt the Holy Spirit was already working on Yanjin's heart.

Every time I drove into the Nisekh area, I could see a tiny house on a faraway hill. I imagined a family living in it that had never heard of Jesus, and I wondered how the gospel would ever reach them. I began praying that God would send someone to them. But after a while, I thought, *I must go first*. So, I again put my life in God's hands and said, "OK, God, send me." I tried to find the house several times, but I never could. After a while, I quit trying, but I did continue to pray.

One day during the evangelistic campaign, Yanjin asked me to come to her house. "I want you to meet my family," she said. I agreed, and we set out walking. We had walked for forty minutes in freezing weather when she suddenly stopped and pointed to our destination. I couldn't believe my eyes.

On seeing Yanjin's home, I became emotional. That was exactly the house I was praying for! My wife and I had been struggling about whether we had made the right decision in coming to Mongolia. Now, I had my answer. I snapped a photo (see photo 2) to remind myself of what I was thinking that very moment: Never doubt that God is leading in your life. This is God's mission; He is in control!

I met Yanjin's family, and we started a Bible study group in her house. After a few months, she accepted Jesus as her Savior and decided to be baptized, becoming the first Adventist in her family. But her story doesn't end there. We left Mongolia in 2019, but Yanjin became a missionary and brought others to Jesus, including some family members and neighbors. Ironically, that isolated house on the hill that once represented "the uttermost part of the earth" in my missionary journey became the first small group in that unreached area to worship Jesus.

During Yanjin's baptism, she turned to Lais and me and said, "Last winter, you gave me coal. The coal was very good for me because it warmed my bones. Even though the cold is over, your love still warms my heart." What a privilege and honor it is to share Jesus' love with the unreached people of the world!

After serving in Mongolia for five years, we returned to Brazil to teach missiology at the theological seminary in Bahia. Again, everything was great, but after a year and a half, God said, "Let's put fire in their hearts again." Our hearts burned to return to the mission field. Soon, we accepted a call to lead a missionary team that aims to start a Seventh-day Adventist disciple-making and church-planting movement in Tokyo.

The culture and challenges of Japan are quite different from Mongolia's, but our experience is still all about the people and the way God is leading His mission. We've made many new friends who have never heard about Jesus, and we're already sharing our testimony with them, using words when necessary!

- 1 The Gramacho family in Mongolian dress
- 2 Yure the moment he saw Yanjin's home
- 3 Yure and Lais with Yanjin, *back right*, and her family in their home
- 4 Yure, *right*, and Lais, *left*, with Yanjin, *second from left*, and her neighbor whom she led to Jesus



2



3



4



To learn more about Mission Unusual—Tokyo! visit [m360.tv/s2034](https://m360.tv/s2034).



## Missional Optimization: How to Explain the Truth So It Makes Sense

**W**hile serving as a missionary, I met a young woman who became a close friend. We studied the Bible together, and she accepted the inspiration of Scripture and the death of Jesus for the forgiveness of her sins. However, she couldn't accept Christ's divinity. Ultimately, she walked away from our Bible studies and our friendship.



Jaimie Eckert is an online spiritual coach at [scrupulosity.com](http://scrupulosity.com) and a missiological freelance writer and editor. She studied and experimented with missiological principles from 2013 to 2020 when she worked in Beirut, Lebanon. Now, she lives in Maryland with her husband, Michael.

In the aftermath, I asked myself repeatedly, *What more could I have done?*

Mission work is “the mother of theology,” according to theologian Martin Kähler.<sup>1</sup> That is, grappling with diverse belief systems in the missionary endeavor provides an impetus for deeper theological discoveries. The missional urge drives us to Scripture, enriching and magnifying the ancient truths of God's Word as we try to explain them to others.

Good theology and good practice intersect at missional optimization. Such optimization doesn't happen in the isolated ivory towers of academia. It's frontline action born out of the spiritual hand-to-hand combat for a soul. It's the sorrowful cry,

“What could I have done better?” My experience with this young woman led me to a deep interest in Trinitarian theology and inspired me to write my doctoral dissertation on the missional implications of this topic.

Maybe you’ve interacted with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, or post-Christians in your sphere of influence. Maybe you’ve been discouraged because the apologetics you learned in Sabbath School don’t seem to have any impact or, perhaps, even seem to raise prejudice. Don’t let this discourage you! Mission requires constant optimization as we find better theological answers and practical approaches for each situation.

But why do we need missional optimization? Why doesn’t it work for us to explain the truth in the same way to everyone?

## Presenting truth winsomely

Non-Christians—particularly those living in the 10/40 Window—often don’t know who Jesus is. We can assume they don’t understand the meaning of terms like *gospel*, *salvation*, or *remnant*. And many of the symbols that are so rich in meaning for us are downright weird for them! Imagine hearing about a group of people who worship a dead man, sing about His blood, and have an odd ritual where they give their souls to this dead man (who isn’t really dead) by having a public dip in a bathtub!

The terminology we use can cause those we are trying to reach to misunderstand us, but we can also cause prejudice through the order and presentation of our topics. For example, Bible study guides developed in the Christian West—largely developed by Christians for Christians—begin with common ground truths before bridging into the testing truths. We usually save the testing truths for last because we know that certain teachings cut across the grain of cherished beliefs, and we must be careful about how we present them. These Bible study guides have a predictable order. Often, the first topics will include the validity of Scripture, salvation through faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the character and love of the triune God.

While these topics build rapport with fellow Christians, imagine what would happen if we followed this sequence with a Muslim friend. In just three studies, we would have delivered the most difficult testing truths for Islam. Muslims believe that the Bible is corrupted, Jesus didn’t die, and God is not triune—the three most significant barriers to Christianity presented first!

Optimizing our witness to non-Christians requires adjusting terms, explanations, and the

sequence of topics. We were counseled long ago, “Do not at the outset press before the people the most objectionable features of our faith, lest you close the ears of those to whom these things come as a new revelation.”<sup>2</sup> We must craft our presentations to make sense to them, not to us.

## Answering the questions they are asking

Another important way to optimize our presentation for non-Christians is to answer the questions they are asking, not the questions we think would make sense. For example, we believe it’s important to talk about the fact that hell is not forever. But Buddhists and Hindus aren’t asking about hell; they’re wondering how they can be reincarnated in a higher sphere. Where are our Bible studies that deal with reincarnation in a sensitive way?

We also think it’s important to talk about the manner and timing of Jesus’ return. We spend time debunking myths about the Rapture—an exclusively evangelical Christian concern. But Muslims—who *do* believe Jesus is coming back—believe He is coming as a prophet who will kill all the pigs, break all the crosses, and make all Christians become Muslim. We need Bible studies that talk about the meaning of Christ’s coming in a way that answers Islamic objections, not Protestant ones.

Regarding sharing the truth with those whose beliefs greatly differ from ours, the injunction given by Ellen White in 1895 is even more applicable today: “The people of every country have their own peculiar, distinctive characteristics, and it is necessary that men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people, and so introduce the truth that they may do them good.”<sup>3</sup>

The idea of missional optimization invites us to continue seeking better ways to present the unique truths of the three angels’ messages to people who have very different starting points. With God’s help, good theology, and thoughtful practice, we can develop powerful missional presentations for the unreached.

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1 David J. Bosch, David. “*Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*,” (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 16.

2 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1946), 141.

3 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1923), 213.

# Challenges and Opportunities for Mission in a Secular/Post-Christian World



**Kleber D. Gonçalves** is the director of the Global Mission Center for Secular and Post-Christian Mission.

**W**e live in an ever-changing world. Some of these changes have profound religious implications. The rise of secularism—the process of eliminating everything connected with religion or spirituality—has deeply impacted the advancement of God’s mission. Additionally, the attitude of many people toward Christianity and the church in general terms is rejection, evasion, and alienation.

Some of these changes are greater than we think. Usually, when we focus on the secular and post-Christian challenge, we think of the Western world with its intentional eradication of religion from public and social life. Naturally, there are plenty of reasons for that. For instance, some 30 percent of adults in the United States are now religiously unaffiliated, and approximately a quarter of the population has a secular or nonreligious worldview. These numbers are even higher when including younger generations (millennials, Gen Z). The situation isn’t any better in Western Europe. Even though many still identify as Christian, few regularly attend church. Referring to themselves as “religious nones,” this group is even less religious than younger Americans. In Australia, “religious” rejection is increasing. Almost 10 million Australians (approximately 38 percent of the population!) affirm having no religion.

However, the waves of secularism also drastically affect other areas of the world. In the Euro-Asia region, more than 28 percent of Russians say they don’t belong to any religion, and 13 percent say they don’t believe in God. Furthermore, 5 of the world’s 10 least religious nations—China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, and Hong Kong—are in Asia. For instance, one in three Buddhist temples in Japan will probably close in the next 25 years due to the lack of adherents and priests.

Similar trends are also perceivable in Muslim areas where “cultural Muslims” still identify with

Islam due to family bonds or the social and cultural environment in which they grew up but tend not to practice their professed religion. The same is happening with Jews. Among Israeli Jews aged 20 and older, 44 percent defined themselves as secular. In the United States, about a quarter of Jewish adults (27 percent) don’t identify with the Jewish religion and describe themselves as atheists, agnostics, or “nothing in particular.”

On the African continent, atheism, agnosticism, and secularism have grown in the past decades, especially in the southern countries. In South Africa, more than 15 percent of the population describe themselves as irreligious. In Botswana, 20 percent affirm they’re not religious, and in Mozambique, 14 percent. At least 30 million people in sub-Saharan Africa describe themselves as “religious nones” and claim not to follow any religious tradition.

Many countries in Central and South America are becoming more secular, with Catholicism in rapid decline. For example, in Uruguay, more than 47 percent of the population describe themselves as not religious. Mexico has the fastest-growing community of atheists, agnostics, and irreligious people in Central America—some 10 percent of the population.

As a direct result of these profound changes in the religious arena worldwide, we now face different challenges. People are trying to “create” ways to develop their spirituality, mainly moving around personal choices and with an increasing distrust of institutional control (institutionalized religion). But at the same time, doors of mission opportunities are wide open before us.

In this “unreligious” world, Seventh-day Adventists can share God’s love by building intentional bridges of communication through the Seventh-day Adventist lifestyle. Health concerns and care, family and community focus, and the Sabbath message of rest are some of the bridges we can use to connect with and share the eternal gospel in secular societies. Besides, we can’t

## Secularism in western countries

### Western secularism:

An intentional attitude or political ideology with the purpose to eradicate religion from public and social life



- About 3 in 10 adults in the USA are now religiously unaffiliated.
- And about one quarter have a secular/non-religious worldview.



- Even though many people identify themselves as Christians in Europe, very few regularly attend church.
- European “nones” are less religious than their American counterparts.



- Australia is becoming more religiously diverse.
- Almost 10 million Australians now affirm having no religion.

Sources: Pew Research Center; Australian Bureau of Statistics

forget that we have a message of hope that needs to focus not only on the future reality of God’s kingdom but also on the hope our secular and post-Christian friends so desperately—many times not knowing it—need for today.

Amid these new challenges and ongoing opportunities, a mission to be fulfilled is still before us. “The mission of the church of Christ is to save perishing sinners,” writes Ellen White. “It is to make known the love of God to men and to win them to Christ by the efficacy of that love.”<sup>1</sup> In regard to sharing the gospel with such people, the Bible says, “But how can people call for help if they don’t know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? That’s why Scripture exclaims:

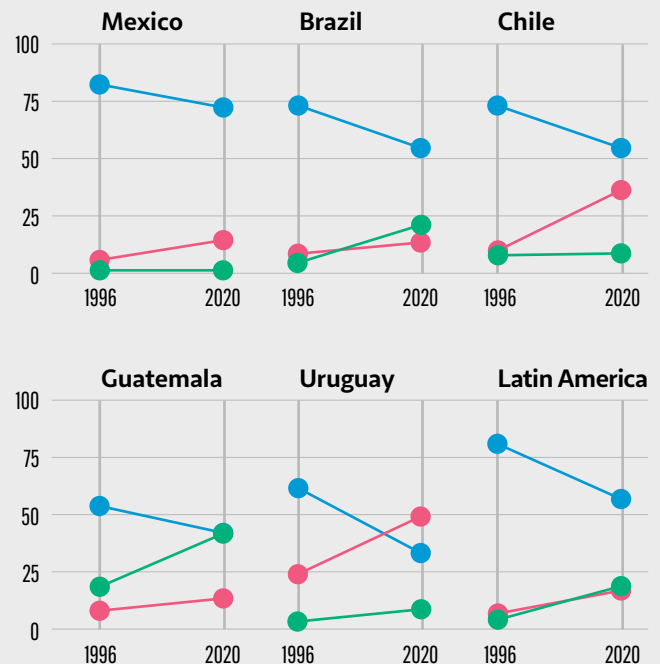
A sight to take your breath away!  
Grand processions of people  
telling all the good things of God!”  
(Romans 10:14, 15, *The Message*).

So, what are we waiting for to be part of this mission?

1. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press®, 1948), 381.

## The growth and decline of religious groups in Latin America

● Catholic ● Evangelical ● Non-religious



Source: Latinobarómetro  
THE ECONOMIST

# The Great Reversal



**Rick McEdward** is the president of the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission.

**R**ecently, I asked a new Christian in the Middle East how God brought about his conversion.

“I obtained a Bible and started searching for ways to prove Christianity wrong,” he replied. “But as I studied it, God changed me.” This man, who baptized 17 people in his country last year, became the first Seventh-day Adventist pastor in his country. A great reversal, indeed!

I believe that the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 are and will continue to be God’s means for bringing about a great reversal in the lives of millions. The message of the first angel is especially interesting. Verses 6 and 7 read, “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’” (NKJV). I’d like to draw your attention to the words “to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” because it’s a theme found throughout Scripture that helps us unlock not only the meaning of Revelation but also the entire Bible.

We get our first glimpse of the all-nations theme at the Tower of Babel, where God separates and disperses earth’s inhabitants because they worship false gods (Genesis 10). Here, we’re given a genealogy of Noah’s sons and their dispersion after the Flood, focusing on the major known nations.

The word *nation* is usually understood as geographical or political in nature. But what separated nations in Scripture was the deity the people worshipped. Worship was a central part of their identity. So, when we read “nation” in the Bible, we need to think in terms of a religious group of people.

Fortunately, God didn’t give up on humanity after dispersing them. From the time Adam and Eve abdicated the dominion God gave them, He desired to reestablish His reign in this world

through His people. We see God’s missionary heart in Genesis 12 when He tells Abraham, “I will make you a great nation . . . ; And you shall be a blessing. . . . And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (verses 2, 3, NKJV). Here we learn that every blessing we receive from God is intended to benefit the world.

Sadly, we know that Israel rarely lived up to the light God gave them. Yet He continued to give them opportunities to reach the nations that He loved. “The very existence of the Bible is incontrovertible evidence of the God who refused to forsake his rebellious creation. [ . . . ] [It] testifies to a God who breaks through to human beings, who disclosed himself to them, who will not leave them unilluminated in their darkness, . . . who takes the initiative in re-establishing broken relationships with us.”<sup>1</sup>

The phrase “all people, nations, and languages” appears seven times in the book of Daniel. One occurrence of this phrase refers to Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion, one of the great reversals in Scripture. In Daniel 4:34, Nebuchadnezzar says, “I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation” (NKJV). Here a man who was determined to burn people who wouldn’t worship him calls for people to honor the God of creation. Isn’t that interesting: a pagan king telling the world what God’s people were supposed to share?

Jesus brought about the greatest reversal of all time, fulfilling God’s mission to the nations that Israel rejected. In Matthew 24, He incorporates the all-nations theme into His prophetic discourse: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (verse 14, NKJV).

How are we doing with reaching all nations? Where are we with the 10/40 Window—home to two-thirds of the world’s population, comprising 69 nations, 5.3 billion individuals, 8,868 people groups, and 3,343 languages? Ninety-five percent of this region, where most people are Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims, has not been evangelized by any Christian denomination.

God promised in Revelation 14 that another great reversal is coming. The three angels’ messages give every nation and every person an



understanding of who He is, a warning of the false systems of worship in the world, and an invitation to respond to His great love.

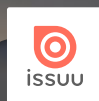
If most of the world still has no witness, what are we doing? We need to talk less about who the remnant is and start doing what the Bible says the remnant does. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to be blessing people with the love of God. God is waiting for us, but there are some significant steps we must take.

All our dreams and ambitions must be reassimilated to the mission of Jesus. We need to re-create and reorganize a system to enter every nation, every large city, and every ethnolinguistic people group in the world. And, to do that, we must, through God's power, live sacrificially, boldly proclaiming the truth of Jesus in preparation for His return.



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1. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 48. Ellipsis points in brackets are mine; those not in brackets appear in the source cited.



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## Connecting Outside Our Circles



Fylvia Fowler Kline is the manager of VividFaith.

A 2022 survey asked Seventh-day Adventists how often in the past 12 months they had spent time forming new friendships with non-Adventists. Forty-two percent admitted they were rarely or never involved. However, nearly 70 percent felt the church should increase its involvement in its community.<sup>1</sup> As a church and as disciples of Jesus, we recognize we each need to connect with, befriend, and serve those outside our Adventist circles. Yet, we sometimes struggle to find opportunities to engage with those different from us. To foster specific opportunities to connect Adventists with non-Adventists through mission-focused service, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has developed VividFaith, an online recruiting tool ([vividfaith.com](http://vividfaith.com)).

By using VividFaith to recruit all types of personnel (volunteer, contract, full-time staff, remote workers, and others), organizations are finding creative ways to connect with non-Adventists. Global Mission's Center for South Asian Religions is an example of how the church is using VividFaith

as a recruitment tool to create opportunities to meet the needs of South Asian communities around the world:

1. The Adventist Church in Kenya owns Watamu Adventist Beach Resort, a seaside resort that houses guests in three buildings. The East Kenya Union is giving one of these buildings to Global Mission, which the organization will use to serve and minister to the affluent South Asian community in Kenya. Offering first-class vacation packages that include high-end amenities, rest, health programs, and delicious food, this resort will be a place where Adventists meet specific needs while building new relationships and connections. This project needs more than volunteers; it needs full-time chefs and experts in the hospitality industry, all of whom will be recruited through VividFaith.
2. Adventist schools in India have a reputation for offering quality education, having waiting lists for enrollment, and producing students who score high in national exams. Since most students in these schools aren't Christians, the goal of Global Mission is to install school chaplains specifically trained to minister to students and their families. VividFaith will recruit these volunteer frontline missionaries to offer support through family counseling, after-school activities, and connections to private tutors, health-related resources, and more.
3. Canada has many Sikh communities, several of which are in and around Toronto. While these Sikh families have made Canada their home, they strive to keep a strong connection to their culture and language. However, these communities have lost their fluency in Punjabi because



the younger generation mostly speaks English. To connect with the Sikh community in Toronto, Global Mission plans to use VividFaith to recruit teachers who can connect with these communities through Punjabi language classes.

These are just three examples of creative ways church organizations are using VividFaith. The places and people are different; their needs, unique. But they are all opportunities to connect with non-Adventists—a way for Adventists to serve and share their faith as Jesus did. “There is work for all to do in their own borders, to build up the church, to make the social meetings interesting, and to train the youth of ability to become missionaries.”<sup>2</sup>

The following list provides more examples of how organizations can use VividFaith to advertise and recruit for positions. May they inspire you to create outreach projects of your own.

- Remote teachers for online conversational English classes
- Contract medical professionals in mission clinics
- Student volunteer teachers in mission schools worldwide
- Groups of church members to clean local parks every month
- Assistants for center-of-influence programs (for example, after-school tutoring, cooking classes)
- Job placement opportunities for new graduates in an Adventist university

- Social media coordinators for local churches
- Medical professionals for health camps hosted by an Adventist church and a government health department (such as phlebotomists, dental hygienists, or massage therapists)
- Teachers for technology classes for residents of a senior center (iPhone 101)
- Participants for a mission trip that explores the sights, culture, and Adventist church of a specific area
- Surgeons, dentists, nurses, and other medical personnel to cover services while missionary medical personnel are on annual leave
- Contract translators for resources to be shared with the local community
- Graphic designers to create websites for organizations

To explore ways your organization can recruit for one of these positions or another position unique to the needs of your community and the people with whom you want to connect, contact VividFaith.<sup>3</sup>

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1 “My Church and Its Reputation in Community, Part 2,” Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, July 27, 2022, <https://www.adventistresearch.info/my-church-and-its-reputation-in-community-part-2/>.

2 Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basle: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 291.

3 Email [manager@vividfaith.com](mailto:manager@vividfaith.com).



# Mission Trends



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**O**n November 15, 2022, the cry of a newborn baby somewhere on earth signaled the world population reaching 8 billion. Chances are that the baby was born in Africa. Experts say that by 2050, most of the world's population growth will happen in just eight countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tanzania, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines. Five on the continent of Africa. Five in the 10/40 Window.

Population data can be mind-boggling. Consider the island of Java. This relatively small Indonesian island has 145 million people. That's more people than most countries of the world, including Russia, Canada, every country in Europe, and every country on the continent of Africa except Nigeria.

Or think about Uttar Pradesh, just 1 of 28 states in India. Known to most of us as the home of the Taj Mahal, if Uttar Pradesh were a country, it would be the fifth most populous in the world.

Researchers tell us that in 2009, the world's demographic center of gravity changed forever. For the first time in history, more people were living in urban areas. By 2050, two-thirds of the world will live in them.

Cities cover only three percent of the earth's surface. But their power and influence dominate. Consider, for example, the United States' Northeast megalopolis, which extends from Boston, Massachusetts, to Washington, DC. It's a relatively small geographic area, but consider its impact:

1. *Education.* An education epicenter, the Northeast is home to hundreds of colleges and universities, including many Ivy League schools such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and MIT. This is vitally important because what's taught in university classrooms today radically influences popular culture and people's lives tomorrow.
2. *Economics.* This area has the largest economic output of any megalopolis in the world. It's the headquarters of major finance companies, including a third of the Fortune 500 Global Companies.
3. *Information and entertainment.* The American Northeast is home to the headquarters of major American TV networks and some of the world's most influential media conglomerates and newspapers.
4. *Politics.* The southern part of this region is home to political powerhouses such as the White House, the Capitol, and the United Nations. Decisions by a few leaders here affect the lives of millions in all parts of the world.

Also, consider the influence of California's urban entertainment hubs:

1. *Hollywood.* Within the space of just a few square miles in Los Angeles are Universal Studios, Walt Disney, Warner Brothers, Paramount Pictures, and more. The TV programs and movies produced in this small urban area are watched all over the world, from massive Asian cities to small rural African villages.
2. *Silicon Valley.* A few hundred miles north of Hollywood is Silicon Valley in San Francisco. This small urban space contains the headquarters of giant tech and social media companies such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Google, and Apple Inc. Can you imagine the power and influence emanating from this small urban space? Consider Facebook. If it were a country, it would be the most populous country in the world.

Against this demographic backdrop, we can see five key missiological trends:

1. *Business as mission.* There's growing recognition of the untapped potential of urban centers of

## If the Seventh-day Adventist Church were a village of 100 people

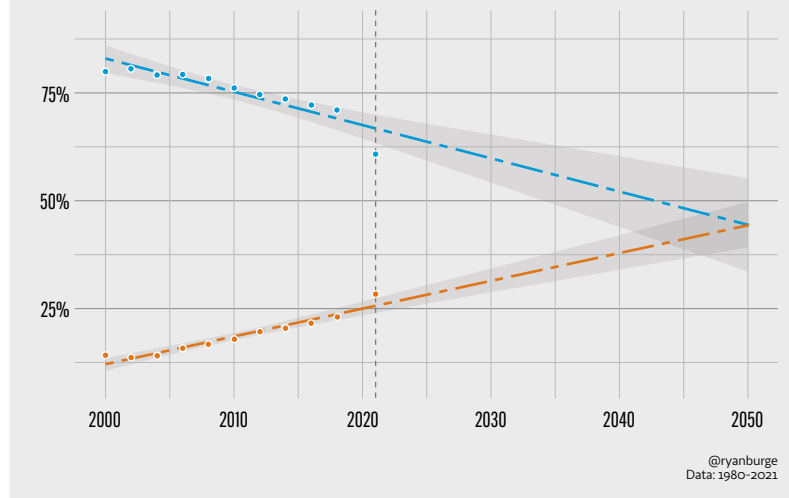
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Inter-America	
Africa	

influence, tentmakers, and church members refocusing their businesses for mission.

The United Nations has recommended the “15-minute city” concept for cities. The goal is for residents to be able to meet most of their daily needs within a 15-minute travel time by foot, bicycle, or public transport. What if Adventists committed to their own “15-minute city” concept? The goal would be to have a church, a church plant, an urban center of influence, or an Adventist-owned mission-focused business within a 15-minute travel time for anybody living in the world’s great cities.

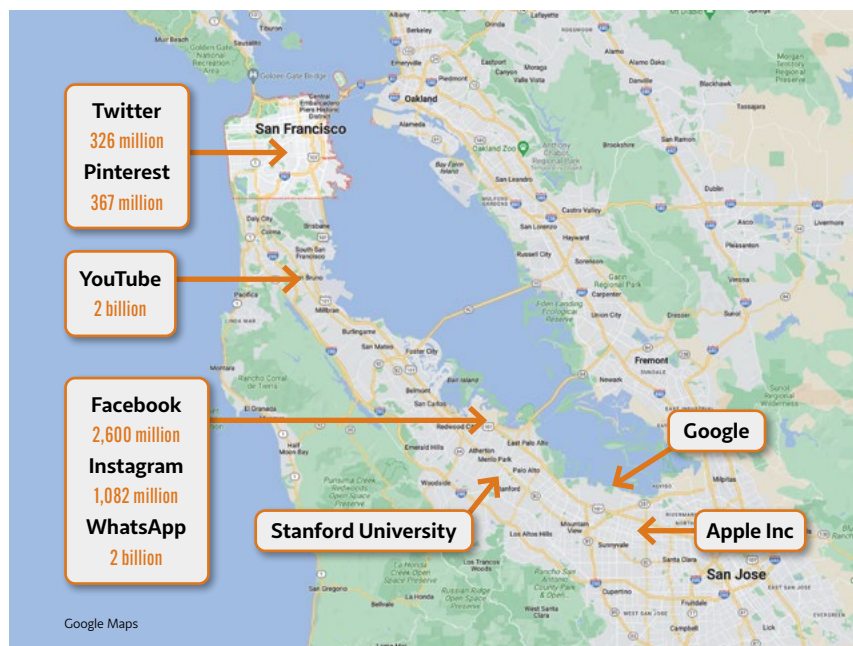
2. *Wholistic mission.* Some parts of the Christian community are just beginning to focus on this, but it’s part of our foundation as Seventh-day Adventists. There should be no artificial separation of evangelism and care for people—they should be integrated into a wholistic mission, as demonstrated by Jesus. Of course, our care for people should have no strings attached and never be conditional on people accepting Jesus or becoming Seventh-day Adventists.
3. *Indigenous mission workers.* Increasingly, Adventists in various regions of the world are taking responsibility for mission in their own territories. Global Mission pioneers—local lay people—are planting churches among their own people groups. Indigenous leaders are taking ownership of mission. Although we still need hundreds more cross-cultural missionaries, their role should increasingly be to help empower local workers and reach “unreached” people groups.
4. *Missionaries from the global South.* The number of missionaries from the global South is steadily rising. Looking at the Adventist Church worldwide, you can see where our personnel strength lies. If the Seventh-day Adventist Church were a village of 100 people, 89 would come from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. Those who have been blessed in the past by missionaries are now increasingly turning to bless others.
5. *Growth in secular and post-Christian populations.* On March 21, 2021, 46.2 percent of people ticked the box “Christian” in the British census. For the first time in history, less than half the population in Britain identified as Christian. Britain and Europe are a warning of what’s coming to the rest of the world. In America, for example, it’s expected that by 2050, if not before, the “Nones”—people who profess no religious belief—will outnumber Christians.

## What does the future of American Religion Look Like?



Jesus promised us that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world” (Matthew 24:14). Not “hopefully” or “perhaps” or “maybe.” It *shall* be preached. And God has invited us to participate in His mission of sharing love, hope, and salvation with all the world.

As we look at the demographic and mission trends around us, may we be like the men of Issachar, who “understood the times” (1 Chronicles 12:32, NIV). And may the Holy Spirit guide us to see our mission priorities, adapt our methods, and use our resources accordingly.



# Disciple-making

**J**esus called his church to fulfill the great commission to make disciples. The mission of the Seventh-day Adventists is to respond to that commission to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19, NIV). We are to obey this commission as we live in these last days, within the context of the three angels’ messages (Revelation 14:6–12).

With this goal in mind, local churches should create a warm and caring environment for spiritual growth in which youth, adults, and visitors feel loved and supported. Additionally, all ministries of the church must unite to make mature and faithful disciples.

Addressing a low retention rate is a real challenge. One of the General Conference initiatives to address this matter was to hold Nurture and Retention Global Summits in 2013 and 2019. (The presentations from both summits are available on the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research website.) Additionally, most are included in the book *Discipling, Nurturing, and Reclaiming: Nurture and Retention Summit*, available on Amazon. We are confident that these will be helpful tools for all involved in discipling, nurturing, and reclaiming former members.

During the recent General Conference Session in St. Louis, the church added a new chapter to the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* on discipleship and its importance at the local church level. Making disciples is a continuous process by which a person becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ, matures as His disciple, and makes more disciples.

A healthy church develops a nurturing plan that equips every member to be involved in disciple-making, using their talents and spiritual gifts. Strategies for nurturing and training disciples may also include networks and small groups that allow members to grow in Christ, serve people, and express their faith through various skills and interests in reaching out to the community.

Through the years, there has been a disparity between membership records and actual church attendance on Sabbath. Several world divisions are taking redemptive membership review seriously. For example, churches in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean and Southern Asia-Pacific divisions have intentionally followed the redemptive process

stipulated by the *Church Manual*. Church pastors and elders have faithfully visited absentee members and encouraged them to resume attendance and enjoy the blessings of worship with the congregation. These two divisions deliberately avoided a situation whereby “cleaning” the church books became a clinical exercise.

Counting is critical. The three parables of Luke 15 have a common thread, the urgent searching for the lost. “The shepherd who discovers that one of his sheep is missing does not look carelessly upon the flock. . . . He makes every effort to find that one lost sheep.”<sup>1</sup>

There is a great need to seek those who are far away. “If the lost sheep is not brought back to the fold, it wanders until it perishes,” writes Ellen White. “And many souls go down to ruin for want of a hand stretched out to save.”<sup>2</sup>

There is a great need to review membership records and to approach this exercise in a Christ-like, redemptive way. We’re not caring for someone when we just prune them from our rolls; we lose contact and the opportunity for ministry. We need to update the books to be more effective in pastoral care and reaching the lost. “Our primary goal is not to boast about the percentage of members present,” writes Ken Hemphill, “but to reach the unsaved in our community and to care for the inactive in our fellowship.”<sup>3</sup> Membership review should not be motivated by the pride of the church but for the progress of kingdom.

It’s important to remember that the “parable does not speak of failure but of success and joy in the recovery. Here is the divine guarantee that not even one of the straying sheep of God’s fold is overlooked, not one is left unsuccored.”<sup>4</sup>

As someone once said, “Evangelism is our priority, but disciple-making is our goal.” We hope to see more efficient disciple-making practices and outstanding initiatives that are highly effective in reaching out to and equipping new disciples, reclaiming former members, and empowering them all for mission.

1. Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1900) 187.

2. White, 191.

3. Ken S. Hemphill, *Bonsai Theory of Church Growth* (Tigerville, SC: Auxano Press, 2014), 36.

4. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 188.



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