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# Adventist Leadership's Understanding of Urban Mission in Africa: Reflections from the Adventist University of Africa 2014 Cohorts

## Introduction

The approach to Christian mission differs from one context to another (Hesselgrave 1978:511). Urban mission demands different approaches than rural mission, for “urban strategist seeks to develop a pattern that will be effective in reaching all people groups present” (Conn 1999:111). The focus of this paper is to evaluate the misconceptions of Adventist church leaders when embarking on urban mission in Africa. The main challenge arises from failure to acknowledge the differences in the heterogeneous urban population in terms of differing social, cultural, political, educational, economic, and religious characteristics (Henderson and Wang 2007:283; cf. Peil and Sada 1984:49). This heterogeneity is in contrast to the semi-homogeneous population of the rural areas in Africa (Collinson, Tollman, Khan, and Clark 2003). These differences require appropriate and relevant approaches to both rural and urban mission. This discussion examines the characteristics of urban mission and contemporary Adventist leaders' misconceptions in Africa.

## Background

Settlements in Africa (or the world) can be classified in two categories: rural and urban. The populations in these environments have significantly different characteristics, which directly impact approaches to mission. In urban settlements individuals pursue different economic activities or trades, political associations, interests, educational achievements, and they often have different cultural backgrounds and religious affiliations (Greenway 2002:553). This diversity creates challenges for urban mission in Africa (Conn 1999:46).

The people who migrate from rural to urban areas in Africa usually maintain ties with their rural background in two major ways. First, most of them keep two homes, one rural and the other urban. Second, the urbanites frequently visit their rural home to celebrate major events in their lives such as births, marriages, and deaths, so they maintain their cultural values, language, and identity (Smith 1998:77). The urban population in Africa is therefore a composite of individuals with unique and peculiar beliefs, cultures, languages, values, and ethnic backgrounds (Greenway 2002:555).

In contrast, the culture in rural areas can generally be defined as homogeneous within a community where people share the same beliefs, values, language, and ethnic backgrounds. African Traditional Religious (ATR) beliefs and practices influence the worldview of Africans who migrate from rural to urban settlements. These beliefs are diverse due to the varied nature of the belief systems. It is significant that African urban settlements maintain and hold on to these ATR beliefs and practices (Kraft 2002:384-387). Such a variety in belief systems poses a challenge to the effectiveness of uniform strategies to reach the ethnically diverse populations in African urban settings.

Economically, people in urban populations pursue diverse business, professional, and occupational activities such as formal employment, self-employment (formal and informal trading), contract employments, day and night duty shifts (Greenway 2002:553). This varied and inconsistent availability of urban dwellers makes identifying an urban mission strategy a challenge to Adventist leaders in Africa.

The dense population that characterise contemporary African urban areas means that political opposition and terrorism are rife in urban settlements. Political opposition parties and terrorist groups target the urban settlements in Africa because they want to gather significant support within a short time (Glickman 2003:164-167). Therefore, there is competition for supporters and followers within the urban areas. For example, in 2013, all of the al-Shabaab terrorist attacks in Kenya occurred in urban settlements (Agbiboa 2013). Such activities threaten plans and strategies for urban mission in Africa.

Education is another variable that creates urban population diversity. Urban settlements have different types of schools. Some are located in the elite low density suburbs, some in medium density suburbs, and others in slums. These schools vary in resources and allocations, teacher-pupil ratios, and human expertise. The level of education children acquire from these schools differs and this also creates heterogeneity in the urban population in Africa (Bakke 1983:78-80). Post-secondary education also draws people from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities in search of

higher education (Greenway 2002:553). As a result of different educational levels and goals, the urban population is diverse and hence a challenge to mission in Africa.

This paper, therefore, seeks to establish how Adventist church leaders in Africa understand the heterogeneous population and the need for appropriate urban mission strategies. The study also critically examines the implementation strategies currently employed in urban mission in Africa.

The study aims to answer the following questions: First, how do Adventist church leaders distinguish the urban heterogeneous population with reference to church mission? Second, do leaders implement strategies for urban mission that relate to the urban population's unique demands? Finally, what characterizes the availability and distribution of resources for urban mission in Africa?

### **Conceptual Framework: Biblical Perspective of Mission**

Regarding the biblical perspective of the mission of the church, the greatest question is, How well does one know the biblical story? While seeking to unearth the "biblical theology of the Church's mission," Wright (2010:39) reiterates the importance of following the examples of Jesus and Paul, for they both stay focused on the message of the Scriptures.

In Acts 13, Paul is in Antioch, a Gentile Pisidian city where he visits the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath as was his custom. Beginning with a story familiar to Jews from the OT narratives, his intention is to provide a prelude to the story of Jesus, thus connecting it with the good news that what God had actually promised their ancestors, he had fulfilled for them and their children by raising up Jesus (Acts 13:32-33). Paul does not end there. He continues to demonstrate that what some of the Jews had rejected, some God-fearing Gentiles had accepted. He then challenges his hearers to a missionary calling, this time with another Old Testament text that he applies to himself and his missionary colleagues: "For this is what the Lord has commanded us; 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth'" (Isa 49:6, cf. Acts 13:47 NIV).

Luke 24 describes the first day in the life of the risen Jesus. He spent the whole afternoon teaching the OT Scriptures. On the road to Emmaus, during a rare encounter with two of his disappointed disciples (disappointed that the redemption of Israel was a failure), Wright (2010:38) points out that Jesus confronts them with the OT (Moses and the entire prophets) to explain how the grand narrative led up to him, the Messiah, and how his death and resurrection are in fact the way God had kept his promise to Israel (Luke 24:13-27).

This lecture continues later that evening in Jerusalem with the rest of the disciples where Jesus repeats the same OT story to help them understand where it led. Reminding them of their role as witnesses of the things that had happened, Christ opens their minds yet again to understand the Scriptures, reiterating the importance of his suffering and resurrection from the dead on the third day. This calls the sinner to repentance, a message the disciples and others must preach in his name to all the nations (Luke 24:44-48).

Against this background, it is important to visualize the biblical story as an actual line on which one can plot key points, as is suggested by Wright (2010:39). The four major events on the biblical story line are creation, the Fall, redemption in history, and new creation. Greenslade (2002:42, 43) believes that through this story line, the church in its mission is drawn into the action, where it finds itself caught up in the saving movement of God. Here the church enters the story, looking out from its biblical world with new eyes to postmodern lives and the world.

Stott (2002:4) boosts Greenslade's argument, pointing out that the mandate of the church for world evangelization is the whole Bible, and God's creation must reflect this. This has the following implications:

1. All human beings are responsible to God, who has an outgoing, loving, and compassionate character and is not willing that any should perish.
2. God's children are also responsible for his promise that all nations will be blessed through Abraham's seed and will become the Messiah's inheritance.
3. Humans are responsible to the Christ of God, now exalted with universal authority. Christ impels the church to evangelize.
4. Believers are responsible for forming the church of God, which is a multinational, missionary community under instruction to evangelize until Christ returns.

All these responsibilities define what urban mission entails, for it goes beyond geography and sociology. It entails the church leadership's ability to recognize: (1) God's primary focus of initiating, enabling, and fulfilling mission, and (2) the church's instrumental role in urban mission work (Atoyepi 2010:37). This is the theology of both *missio Dei*—"mission that is primarily and ultimately the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate" (Bosch 2009:392) and *missio ecclesia*—mission of the church, with unity in both purpose and deed (Kirk 1999:229).

### **The Concept of Mission**

According to Wright (2006:22), mission should be understood as the

church's committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation. This is in line with Bosch's (2009:390-393) definition and rendition that our mission flows and participates in the mission of God. In this definition, Wright (2006:23) further expresses his dissatisfaction with what he terms "mission that stresses only the roots" of the Latin verb *mitto*, to send, because this definition tends to only emphasize its primary significance in the dynamic of sending or being sent. This view seems to contradict that of Walter Kaiser (2000:11), which considers mission a central point of action, the act of being sent with a commission to carry out the will of a superior, in this case God.

Whereas there is a fundamental difference between these two schools of thought, one appreciates their point of departure. For Wright (2006:23), tying the definition of mission to the act of sending alone tends to limit the broader view of God's *missio Dei* to a narrowed understanding commonly seen in mission, especially in rural Africa where mission is only understood as an act of sending global pioneers to people groups who have not heard the gospel. This robs the church of understanding the true biblical teaching of God's mission and promotes the practices of people. For Walter Kaiser (2000:11), the sending provides a lexical link between the Old and the New Testament and by extension it defines the role of God and his people in God's *missio Dei*. Furthermore, it is greatly important to define the roles of both God and God's people in missiology, because it further defines the place of God and his Church in *missio Dei*.

Even though these two perspectives differ in application, one sees a connection in their meanings. On the one hand, to appreciate the whole purpose of mission, one needs to understand mission within the broader perspective of *missio Dei*. Mission must always be defined as God's agenda and business, people are only privileged to participate. On the other hand, to place the roles of each agent into perspective, one has to appreciate the centrality of mission, which definitely lies in the sending, because not only does one have to define mission in terms of sending, but also, one is forced to define who is sending and who is being sent. In this case, God is the one who commissions and sends the urban church while participating in the going. In other words, God plays two key roles: that of going and that of sending, which makes him the primary object of urban mission, as well as its owner.

The view of mission during the age of discovery meant mostly "expedition" (Van Gelder 2000:33). In order to challenge this understanding of mission, the Willingen Conference in Germany of the International Missionary Council (1952) together with the Vatican II Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (AD Gentes 1965) made attempts to reclaim the mean-

ing of mission to denote God as the sending and the sent one. This process placed the concept of the *missio Dei* and mission under the ownership of God's Triune nature, instead of in the hands of the church. Furthermore, these conferences distinguished between mission (singular) and missions (plural). "Mission" is preserved for God.

A new definition of mission primarily refers to the *missio Dei*, which can be understood as God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. Formerly, missions were defined as the missionary ventures of the church, and included particular forms of participation in the *missio Dei* related to specific times, places, or needs (Bosch 2009:10). *Missio Dei* thus articulates the good news that God is a God for people, and therefore his church rejoices to be part of this mission.

### The Concept of Urban Mission in Africa

Mission includes three categories of people: (1) a sender/senders (God in His Triune nature), (2) a person/persons sent by the sender (the church or the missionaries), and (3) the person/persons to whom the person/persons sent is/are sent (the world or the unbelievers).

However, history indicates that over the course of Christian history, the understanding of mission changed so that instead of the authority of mission being vested in the Triune nature of God, it was instead understood to be vested in the hands of the church, mission societies, Christian potentates, and even in the hands of the missionaries themselves. One case in point is Roman Catholic Church missions, where juridical authority remained for a long time the constituent element for the legitimacy of the missionary enterprise (Rutt 1972:228). During this time, mission was viewed in expansionist, field-occupational, conquering, and triumphalist terms. This further resulted in the excessive use and misuse of terminologies such as mission, missions, missionary, and mission field inside and outside the church, so much that there was no proper distinction of the true meaning of God's mission as opposed to the ventures of human beings.

Historically, the renewal of Roman Catholic missions, the European discovery of previously unknown parts of the world, and the general missionary vision within the Protestant churches around the 18th century led to missionary undertakings in Africa (Fall 1979:100). Later, priority was given to the abolishment of the slave trade along the African coast with those in government leadership offering the needed support. Colonialism and the search for independence within African states led to urban settlements.

Urban Africa prides itself on some of the world's earliest cities following the formation of urban centers along the Euphrates (3,000 BC) and in Egypt along the Mediterranean shores (Hance 1970:211, 212). Some of these cities include pre-16th century cities and "notable towns" such as Cairo and Alexandria (Egypt); Ibadan, Benin, Ife, and Kano (Nigeria); Mogadishu (Somalia); Zanzibar (Tanzania); and Mombasa (Kenya) (Peil and Sada 1984:15). Others that trace their origin from the 16th century include Accra (Ghana) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). Among the cities of the 19th and 20th centuries are Khartoum (Sudan), Nairobi (Kenya), Harare (Zimbabwe), and Bamako (Mali) (O'Connor 1983:25).

Some of the African cities are more indigenous in outlook, with strong traditional ways of life, some are religious, while a good number share the features of a colonial, European, dual or hybrid city (O'Connor 1983). They all keep growing at phenomenal rates. All these cities, along with others, grow at such a remarkable rate that with a projected 71% urban growth rate for 2000-2015, the African continent is the fastest urbanizing region in comparison with other continents (Earthscan 2006). This is the reason why Harvie Conn observes that African cities "are cities in a hurry" (cited in Kim 2009:41). As Henry Mutua rightly observes, the challenge for the church to make a difference through its mission to the African urban society of the 21st century becomes considerable (49). This is becoming even more so as global urban population projection vis-à-vis the rural populations doubles by 2030 and the cities grow by 130% over the same period (Daniels 2004:502).

### E. G. White on Urban Church Mission

Ellen White has written much on city evangelism. Seventh-day Adventist leaders have access to a lot of counsel and have so many reasons to believe in the truths that have been given, but the understanding of the African urban settlements depends not upon the amount of light these leaders have received, but upon the use they make of what they have.

Speaking of the little work accomplished within the cities at the time, White (1902:4) had this to say "We all need to be wide awake, that, as the way opens; we may advance the work in the large cities." Whether it is by default or by design that African Adventist urban church leaders are aware of the open doors within the urban settlements, White (101) envisioned a time when everyone would see the cities as God sees them. This idea resonates with the fact that *missio Dei* defines the concept of *missio ecclesia*. By making *missio ecclesia* its derivation, *missio Dei* now moves the ecclesiocentric view of mission of theologians and churches to a God-centered one (Mashau 2007:337). As Kirk rightly affirms, *mission ecclesia* frees the church to persuade humanity, not to seek salvation in the church

alone, but to believe and behave in particular ways that seek conformity between “God’s self-revelation and our human experience” (1999:11). It is a picture of partnership, rather than tension, of the two concepts (*missio Dei* and *missio ecclesia*) that feature prominently in the discussions of the agent of mission (see Mashau 2007:336).

The missiological implications confronting African urban areas directly or indirectly relate to religious beliefs and attitudes among the diverse people who live there, their motivations and needs, as well as their receptivity, as indicated by Conn (1999:47). Constant revolt, rising crime, and political upheaval often witnessed by the millions who live in low income settlements in these areas continue to frustrate the work of urban mission. The question that begs an answer is, Does the Adventist church leadership in these areas understand the problem?

This paper argues that the Adventist church leadership’s theology should reflect the light that the Bible sheds on the issue of mission in urban areas, that is, appreciate the place of diversity and the heterogeneity of the urban population. The biblical admonition and commandment to the church as understood by Seventh-day Adventists in the Three Angels’ Messages provides direction for the same.

The basis of the paper is taken from Rev 14:6, “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” I argue in this paper that the heterogeneous population in urban Africa represents those who dwell on earth (i.e., including African cities, towns, urban areas, and all the human settlements in these areas, e.g., wealthy suburbs, streets, and slums), every nation (i.e., to include all the nationalities represented in the urban areas, e.g., those of white origin, black origin, coloreds, Europeans, Asians, and Africans), kindred (i.e., to include every class, status, and personalities, e.g., young and old, poor and rich, learned and ignorant, free and slaves, drug addicts and commercial sex workers), tongue (i.e., to include different races, tribes, ethnic groups, and languages), and people (i.e., all humanity).

## Methodology

This critical study derived inspiration from the mixed method, that is, the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Questionnaires, observations, and interviews were used as the data gathering instruments. A sample of 51 participants was purposefully selected from the 2014 Adventist University of Africa (AUA) cohorts.

The sample consisted of 3 groups of AUA students who occupy leadership positions in the Adventist Church in Africa (Botswana, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar,



Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). They were drawn from three cohort programs: the MA leadership class with 28 students (54.9%), which comprises departmental heads at both conference and union level, church pastors, lecturers, and teachers at different levels in Seventh-day Adventist schools; MA missiology ATR class with 18 students (35%), which comprises mainly district church pastors; and the Doctor of Ministry class with 5 students (9.1%), which comprises conference directors, union presidents, and executive secretaries. All the participants are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and hold leadership roles that enable them to influence the Adventist Church's urban mission in Africa. As Adventist leaders they are trained in leadership and ministerial duties within the Adventist Church and are all working within African urban areas. They were found purposefully suitable for the study.

### Findings and Discussions: The Leadership Experience

Table 1 shows the experience of the participants. The majority (45.1%) have served between 10 and 20 years in the church. Only 9.8% have served for a period between 0 and 5 years. Therefore, the experience demonstrated reflects potential ability to organize urban mission to meet the demands of the urban mission in Africa.

#### Question 1. How long have you served in the church?

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
0-5 years	5	9.8	9.8	9.8
5-10 years	9	17.6	17.6	27.5
10-20 years	23	45.1	45.1	72.5
20-30 years	14	27.5	27.5	100.0
Total	51	100.0	100.0	

## Understanding of Mission

Most of the respondents who have served in the church between 5-10 years defined urban church mission as reaching out to people who are affluent, educated, and middle class. These groups, they said, are made up of people from different cultures, nationalities, races, languages, and ethnic backgrounds. Their problems range from pride, arrogance, excessiveness (i.e., intemperance, drug trafficking, and/or abuse and corruption).

The respondents who have served the church between 10-20 years, making up the majority of the urban Adventist ministers, defined urban mission from the evangelistic point of view. This involved proclaiming the gospel to everyone in the urban areas, irrespective of class, status, religion, race, language, nationality, or education. In other words, the task of urban mission is to target people who have found themselves in the towns, cities, or urban areas for various reasons.

The respondents who have served between 20-30 years defined urban mission in light of cross-cultural mission, especially to the poor and the suffering in society. This touched on the need of the church to provide material support to people in slum areas and to have compassion for the homeless and street children. One respondent quoted Matt 9:33, 35-36 as a basis of engaging people in urban areas.

Generally the participants demonstrated understanding of urban church mission as different from rural mission. The majority of the participants concurred with Moyer (2007:12) on the heterogeneous character of urban culture.

## Church Engagement in Urban Mission

On the issue of the Adventist leaders' perception of urban engagement and mission, the majority (72.5%) showed that they thought the Adventist Church is engaged in urban mission. The minority 27.5% disagreed as indicated below.

### Question 2. Do you think the church is engaging in urban service?

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
YES	37	72.5	72.5	72.5
NO	14	27.5	27.5	100.0
Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Although many participants (i.e., 37 out of 51 (72.5%)) indicated that the Adventist Church was engaged in urban mission, many failed to give a comprehensive account of the ways of engagement. Most of the participants cited the General Conferences' big city campaigns as the only existing evidence for meaningful urban mission in Africa. Other reasons given included the fact that most Adventist urban churches are believed to be engaged in urban evangelism. These are characterized by many evangelistic campaigns and revival meetings organized by churches in the urban areas. However, the respondents felt that these evangelism projects were slow and disjointed. A respondent gave the following examples of urban mission in the East-Central African Division (ECD): Kinshasa for Christ and Rutana for Christ. Notable in the respondent's explanations are the annual urban campaigns to evangelize cities and towns. These, they said, indicated that the Adventist Church still cares for urban dwellers.

Fourteen participants out of the total 51 (27.5%) indicated that the Adventist Church was not engaging in urban mission. They gave the following reasons: The Seventh-day Adventist Church concentrates its evangelistic and missionary programs in rural areas. This means that the urban churches send and support missionaries to rural areas to carry out evangelistic campaigns, as has been the tradition, instead of doing the same for urban areas. This resulted in little impact upon the city/urban dwellers.

Another reason touched on the technical knowledge of undertaking mission within urban areas. Some leaders reported that the Adventist Church is lacking, not only in sensitizing and training its congregation on methods of engaging urbanites, but also in providing material equipment.

Information Technology (IT) was given as another area of lack. Most urban SDA churches have not embraced modern technology for disseminating information, both inside and outside the churches. The Adventist churches are yet to utilize facilities such as presentation media, internet connections, and social networks as a tool to reach urban masses, especially the youth. A respondent said that a lack of such knowledge and its utilization cause many Adventist urban churches to shy away from the city and to rather focus on rural areas for evangelism.

The upper class in urban societies have not been targeted with the Adventist message. Participants indicated that although many politicians and officials have a soft spot in their heart for Adventist programs in Africa, the urban church is yet to design programs suitable for this group in society. This group of urban dwellers is not usually comfortable attending the "traditional open air evangelistic meetings." The "traditional way" of doing mission only makes use of pastors holding evangelistic campaigns in public spots such as parks and stadiums, inviting powerful choirs to present the music, and holding a mass baptism at the end of the campaign.

The problem with this traditional way, they said; is that it targets only the church members who had backslidden and who eventually end up being re-baptized. Overall, Adventist urban churches lack programs suitable for the individual needs of non-Adventists in Africa's urban centers. This problem further leads to poor nurturing and church growth.

Finally, participants pointed out a lack of proper coordination in Adventist urban church programs. Although some urban churches were engaged in missionary activities in the urban areas, poor planning of such programs and a lack of coordination leads to a loss of converts. These causes many church leaders to concentrate on sending missionaries to rural areas.

### **Training of Leaders and Members in Urban Mission**

Table 3 gives a report on the existence or non-existence of training by showing the response of respondents when asked about church training of both leaders and members in urban church mission.

#### **Question 3. Is the church training its leaders and members in urban mission?**

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly Agree	21	41.2	41.2	41.2
Agree	17	33.3	33.3	74.5
Disagree	13	25.5	25.5	100.0
Total	51	100.0	100.0	

The majority of the participants (21 or 41.2%) strongly agreed that pastors, by the virtue of being trained, are qualified to undertake urban mission work. This assumption nullifies the specific distinction that characterizes urban mission from general missiology. Secondly, they are content with the periodic seminars that pastors undergo during the year. These seminars exclude the members of the church and therefore urban mission remains the sole task of urban pastors, which in itself undermines the implementation of mission to the heterogeneous groups in urban settlements. Out of the 51 participants, 17 (33.3%) generally agreed that, slowly but surely, the Adventist Church is awakening to the need to train personnel in urban mission, such as in the case of the mission programs starting within the Adventist University of Africa. There was concern, however,

that the small number of students who are attending training may not have a large impact on the diverse and highly populated urban areas of Africa. The participants also expressed concern that, though there was training at AUA, the training is not urban mission specific. The seminars and meetings organized only focus on mission in general terms.

A lower percentage of 25.5 totally disagreed that the church was not offering training to the leaders and members within the Adventist Church in urban areas. However, they cited a lack of categorization of mission fields as urban and rural by the church as a problem. Others felt that ever since they started working with the church, there has been no special seminars organized specifically for urban mission. The participants also mentioned that the church was not engaging members in training due to cultural and language differences. Issues of culture and language act as a barrier because not many members within the churches were trained to speak foreign languages or even preach in them. This is related to the overall problem of a lack of career missionaries since most of the time it is pastors and elders who preach the gospel in urban areas.

The technical environment of the cities and urban areas was also indicated as a hindrance and a challenge to the training of most Adventist urban churches. Lack of training among the church leaders and members was also evidenced by a lack of understanding, confusion, and neglect regarding the slums, the areas where most sex workers and drug abusers live, and the offices and political arenas where most of the affluent and the middle class operate. Most church leaders do not want to be associated with these groups. This problem forces the majority of the church leaders in Africa to continue with the traditional way of engaging in mission (i.e., staying in a safe place and possibly putting up fences around the tents and hiring police to guard the meeting sites. This creates a barrier between the "holy people" and "sinners." The question remains, who will engage non-believers if they cannot access such places?

### **Missiological Implications of Urban Mission in Africa**

Over and above the limitations for mission in urban areas already stated, there are other challenges that impede urban mission in Africa. First, acquiring land for building churches is scarce and very expensive. The traditional methods of holding evangelistic campaigns, which require pitching big tents, are more and more hindered by a lack of space in urban areas. There are competing activities in urban areas such as sports, political rallies, and economic activities such as trade shows and other social, political, or religious gatherings. As a result many Adventist leaders try as much as possible to avoid urban areas.

The Adventist church members are economically burdened with financing mission. The high cost of living, financing existing church programs such as a building, and the meagre incomes in Africa also impede urban mission. The interest in using pastors and evangelists from outside of Africa also overburdens finances for mission in Africa.

A lack of commitment to evangelism and discipleship is another problem within the Adventist leadership in African urban settlements. Though the Adventist churches in the towns had the potential for growth during their formative years, the near absence of almost all institutional means of spiritual growth outside the weekly Sabbath services has been a great hindrance. Having no effective mid-week services, small group meetings, or outdoor services, members had to resort to self-help for needs that fall outside Sabbath meetings. The life of most churches is at a complete standstill until the pastor and the faithful arrive for the ritual weekly sacraments.

Low pastoral morale is another factor. Pastors often do not see the need to work hard in branches or districts, knowing that a transfer is always around the corner. Overburdened with large districts and congregations, little pay, and a high cost of living in the urban churches, most work is relegated to the church elders, who run the churches with little understanding of church policies. There is a new problem that results from the pressure to upgrade the educational levels of the pastors. Many are now caught up in the urban madness of attending lectures and classes in the evenings instead of attending to their sheep.

Adventist leaders in Africa lack knowledge of how to help the church grow. This is the predicament of all the pastors who have been posted to the church. They preach, but lack an understanding of a strategy for growth, having had no exposure to the field of mission or urban ecclesiology.

The absence of training programs on Adventist urban mission has led to a poor understanding of the heterogeneous urban populations in Africa. A lack of knowledge of God (*missio Dei*) and his ways for ministry characterize many Adventist congregations. From church leaders to members, there has been very little training as far as urban ministry is concerned. Very few pastors have had any training in these areas, and no single leader has had either urban ministry or leadership training. This affects the churches as they hardly know what to do with the issue of urban church growth. Members come on Sabbaths, hear a little from the Word of God, and are dismissed with no clear direction on how to witness to the many people they interact with during the week.

### Recommendations

The recommendations below have been deduced from the findings of

the study. More study is required for specific parts of Africa due to the continent's diversity in need and population. For a more effective urban mission model, this paper suggests a further study of the context of African urban settlements. In the meantime, the following outlined suggestions for considerations apply.

### Leading as a Model

Leadership is a gift of the Spirit. Africa is in need of uncompromised leaders who will follow the Master wherever he leads. Modelling leadership calls for servant leaders who will do what the master requires them to do. One example of such a leader is Ellen White. She opposed the centralization of power. As a renowned leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, White can be remembered for her generosity to the poor, compassionate treatment to the erring, accountability to God, and support for all races (Tutsch 2008). These qualities are important for Adventist leaders in Africa because of the heterogeneity of the population they are dealing with.

### Promoting Cross-cultural Contextualization

African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices are real and a common factor within the heterogeneous population of urban settlements in Africa. It is a great mistake for Adventists to neglect to understand and deal with these beliefs and practices and how they impact Adventist worship in Africa. There is a need to intensify the training of church leaders concerning the folk Christian practices associated with these beliefs to equip them on how to present the gospel in such cultural settings.

### Emphasize Training of the Laity

The principle rule arising from Christ's lessons on discipling lies in making more and more disciples. Africa's diverse heterogeneous population can only be reached if all would be involved in the work of taking the Good News to the dying. The call to rescue the perishing and care for the dying in Africa's growing urban settlements cannot be left to church leaders alone. For the work to advance there is a need to train more and more to join the evangelism task force. "Those who would be overcomers must be drawn out of themselves; and the only thing which will accomplish this great work, is to become intensely interested in the salvation of others. . . . For, it is impossible to be nurtured apart from involvement in soul winning" (White 1903:207).

## Income Generating Projects

It is apparent from the findings that many Adventist urban church leaders and churches in Africa struggle with the issue of limited finance. The high rate of unemployed Adventist youth who are roaming the streets in urban areas in search of jobs is appalling. Whereas Africa struggles with urban poverty, disease, and unemployment, urban Africa is endowed with much talent and skill among its youth. Such talent could be tapped as a resource to create employment for many more unbelievers. Adventist believers in Africa are a wealthy lot. The majority of its congregations own resources which include money, skill, time, and human resources. All the church requires is to mobilize its members to starting and owning sustainable income generating projects. With proper guidelines and biblical direction, proceeds from such projects could do a lot more and teach members much more about the principle that it is better to give than to receive.

## Training on Urban Resource Utilization

Adventist leaders in Africa must equip their members with skills, knowledge, and wisdom in areas of financial management, time management, human resource management, and modern technology resource management. It is not enough to nominate annual or biannual leaders for the local church and then just load them down with responsibilities without giving them the necessary skills to take care of God's resources. As stewards of the resources within their disposal, Adventist churches in Africa must be vigilant in adding to these resources for the sake of expanding the kingdom's business. God will bring every church or leader or believer to judgment that did not utilize all their resources and put to full use all the potential given to them.

## Evangelizing on Diversified Fronts

The African urban church of the 21st century is in need of programs that are as diverse as its populace is diverse. Skills and new approaches must be brought forth to draw the ever growing postmodern mind closer to the truth of salvation. The rapid rate of urbanization in African urban settlements can no longer tolerate training pastors using a "one-style-fits-all approach" (Clinton 2005:192). Growing churches teach, train, and send out their members to communities to not only preach the gospel, but also to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:16-20).

## Recommendations for Further Study

The paper sampled only MA and DMin students in the AUA 2014



cohorts, which the researcher considered adequate for the purpose of this study. A more comprehensive coverage of all Adventist urban church leaders has the chance to reveal and illustrate more of what constitutes the diversity of Adventist's African leadership's understanding of urban mission. Also, a comparative study of Adventist leadership's understanding of rural mission would better explain the factors hindering and promoting urban church mission in Africa.

### Summary and Conclusion

This study investigated the perceived understanding of urban church mission by African Adventist leaders attending their post-graduate studies at AUA in Kenya. The 2014 cohorts provided a general overview of the African Adventist leadership's understanding of urban mission in Africa. The findings, analysis, and interpretations are summarized in the different sections of the paper together with the conclusion. The paper finds that the more Adventist church leaders and members emphasize the factors of leading as a model, promoting cross-cultural contextualization, emphasizing the training of the laity, mobilizing the members for income generating projects, training leaders on urban resource utilization, and evangelizing on diversified fronts, the more the Adventist Church will grow its mission in urban Africa.

The paper concludes that Adventist leaders lack a critical understanding of the urban character and relevant implementation strategies. Based on this view, the paper makes recommendations for how urban mission in Africa can be improved.

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