

The Unfinished Task

By Lester Merklin
and Bruce L. Bauer

When we first entered the ministry, there was a lot of talk about how close Adventists were to finishing the task of taking the gospel to every nation. We do not recall the low number of countries that we said were left, but the figures looked very good with Adventists working in most of the world's countries. And Adventists were not the only church doing the mission countdown. Then Ralph Winter and others alerted the Christian church to an important fact: the nations of the Bible were not—could not be—the nations within the political boundaries of today. Such boundaries are often artificial, having been fixed by outside or colonial powers. The biblical nations—those needing to hear the gospel before

Jesus can come—are the tribes, the language, and ethnic people groups in our world. No longer did the figures look so good. There was a lot to do before Christ could return (figure 1).

Fortunately, the Christian church awoke and began to target the thousands of unreached people groups so that the extent of the unfinished task to reach every people group is smaller today than it was a couple of decades ago. Nevertheless, the task is still enormous. According to the World Christian Database (WCD) there are still 2.6 billion people who have not yet been evangelized. These are people who have never heard the very basic gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, let alone the fuller message of the Bible that is an Adventist mandate (figure 2).

The 10/40 Window has become the focus of Christian mission, and rightly so, for in that area of the world—located



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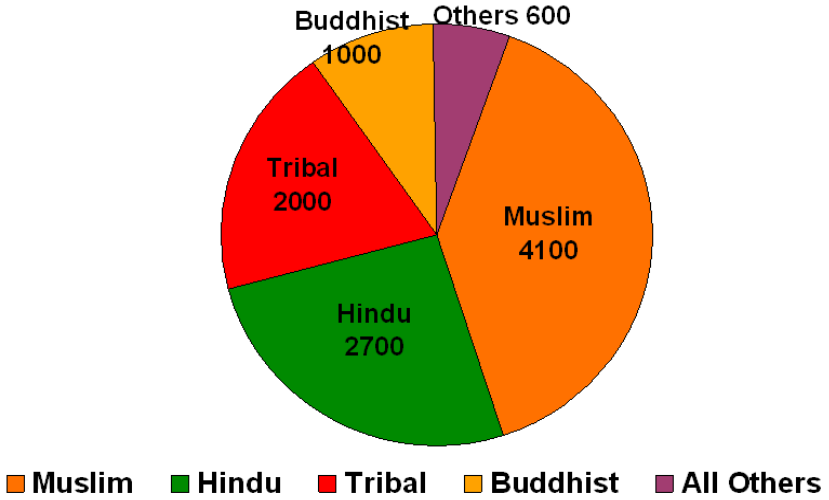


Figure 1. Unreached People Groups

from the west coast of Africa to Japan and from 10 degrees to 40 degrees north of the equator live 63% of the world's population, 86% of the world's people groups, most of the world's poor, the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist/Chinese worlds, and the greatest challenge remaining for

Adventist mission. In the last fifteen years the population of the 10/40 window has increased by 250% while the rest of the world has grown by 90%.

Only 15% of the world's Christians are in the least evangelized countries with a substantial number of those Christians liv-

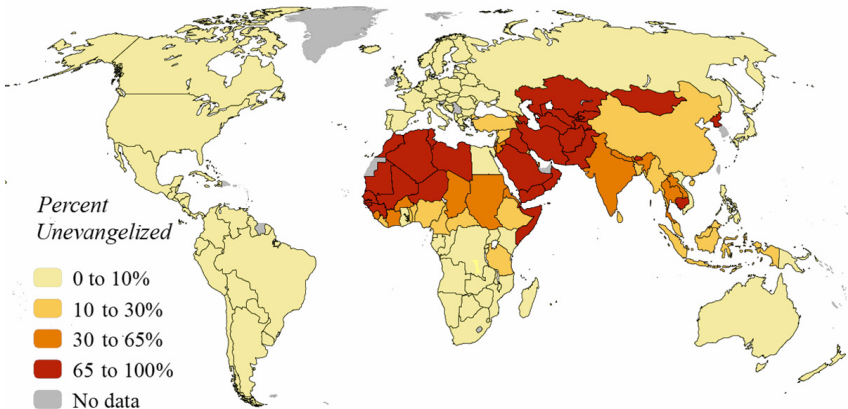


Figure 2. Unevangelized People per Country

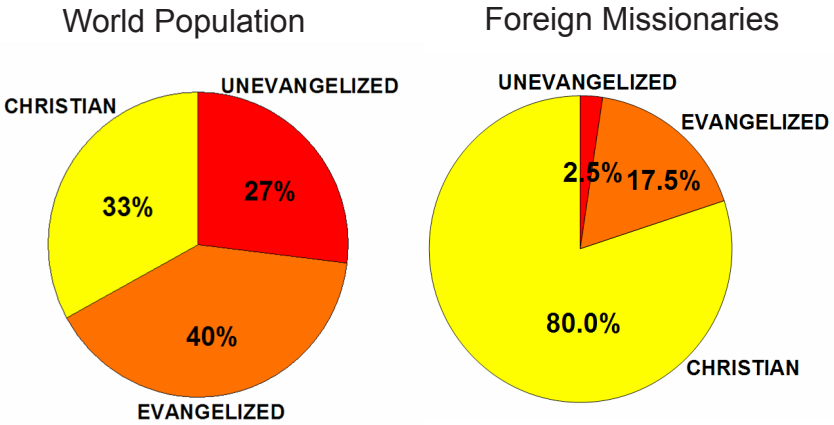


Figure 3. Missionary Distribution

ing there as guest workers or alien residents.

There are 13,094 people groups in the World Christian Database, but 22% of those groups have 1 percent or less of their populations that is Christian and the unreached groups represent 1.17 billion people.

How are Christians doing in targeting those least-evangelized people? Unfortunately the allocation of resources is not in proportion to the need. Figure 3 shows that only 2.5% of missionaries are being sent to evangelize these peoples. The discrepancy between the need for missions and the dis-

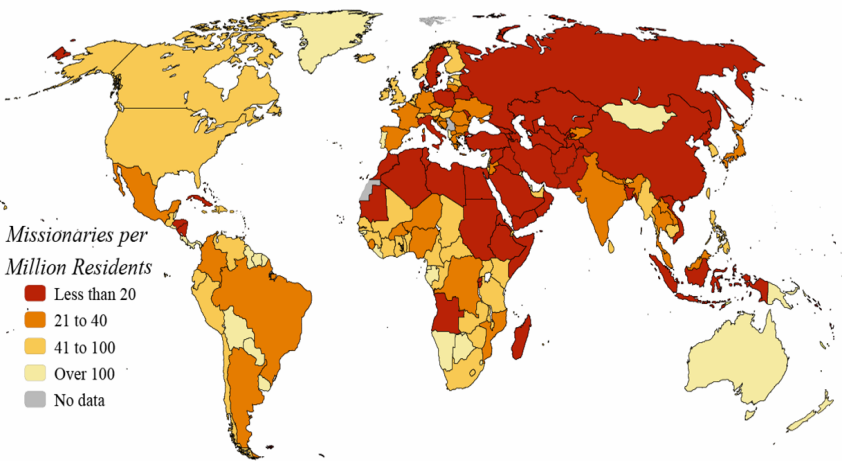


Figure 4. Missionary Presence

tribution of missionaries shows an obvious lack of resources in those areas where the world's great religions are located. Christian populations (1.3 billion people) receive 74% of all Christian missionaries, while the 1.2 billion Muslims only receive 6% of the world's missionaries, Hindus with 800 million receive 2%, and Buddhists with 340 million receive 3% of the missionary taskforce (Myers 2003:76; see figures 3 and 4).

Of the 8,500 written languages in the world, 3,000 do not have any Christian literature. Of the 13,510 spoken languages and dialects 10,700 of them representing 8,450 people groups do not even have access to radio evangelism. Although 2,350 of these people groups do have Christian broadcasts in a "near-language" or in the lingua franca of their country (World Christian Trends 2001:45) can Christians feel comfortable limiting the proclamation of the good news to the

few who may understand another language? Adventist World Radio only broadcasts in 70 languages and the Adventist Church only evangelizes through all methods to about 16% of the world's languages (figure 5).

Adventist Mission Work

Seventh-day Adventists have not done extensive research at the people group level. The General Conference statistics concerning the Adventist Church's work among population segments of one million people reveals that the Adventist presence among most of the 10/40 Window people groups is actually unknown. Since Adventists do have statistics for how many countries they are working in, this article will focus on what is presently taking place in the least evangelized countries—a term that is more often used in current mission literature. The least evangelized countries include an area approximating the 10/40 Window

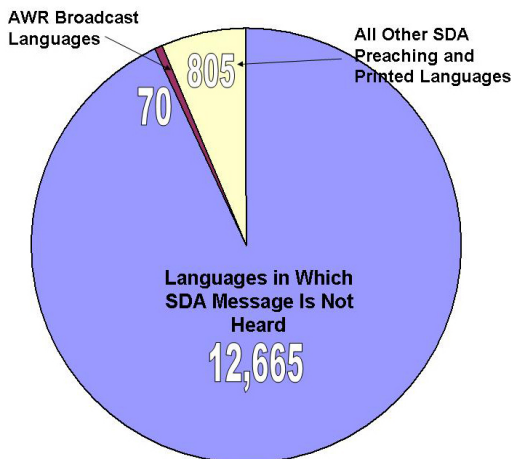


Figure 5. Languages and Evangelization

but including Indonesia and Mongolia and excluding South Korea, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Southern Cyprus, and the Philippines because of their higher levels of evangelization.

Adventists utilize a high percentage (68%) of their Global Mission Pioneers—stipend volunteers who engage in church planting and evangelism in areas where there are no Adventist churches—in the least evangelized portions of our world. One-half of these, however, are in only two of the 10/40 Window countries. Some global mission pioneers are working within the Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim populations, but the actual number of pioneers who work among the least reached peoples is not available. We believe that further research would show that most of these are not reaching peoples within the great world religions, with the exception of no-caste Hindus.

Only about 20% of the volunteer missionaries sent through

the General Conference Office of Adventist Volunteers are working in the least evangelized countries of the world where half the world population lives. The World Christian Trends figures show that only 4.6% of General Conference missionaries (IDEs) are evangelizing in these countries!

In the next section of this paper the fifty-four least evangelized countries are placed in their eight divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to help give a better grasp of the task remaining. Then, several suggestions are offered as to how the Seventh-day Adventist Church could begin to place more mission resources in those places where there are few Adventists.

In the tables that follow the number of ordained ministers, membership, and population figures are taken from the *142nd Annual Statistical Report—2004*; the percentage of Christians is taken from *Operation World* with the figures for 2005.

Table 1. Euro-Africa Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Afghanistan	0	1	28,514,000	0.00%
Algeria	0	27	32,323,000	0.29%
Iran	0	20	67,433,000	0.33%
Libya	0	68	5,632,000	3.00%
Morocco	0	12	30,575,000	0.10%
Tunisia	0	25	10,002,000	0.22%
Turkey	0	56	71,300,000	0.32%
TOTALS	0	209	245,973,000	

Fifty-Four Least Evangelized Countries in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions

In some ways the numbers below are scandalous. How can a prophetic movement that believes it has a message for every kindred, tongue, and people tolerate a situation where 245 million people do not have even one ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor working in seven countries of the Euro-Africa Division? How can only 209 members witness effectively to 245 million people? These countries are certainly

worthy of extra focus, extra help, extra expenditure of means, and extra personnel. Most of the above countries are creative access countries, but other denominations have found ways of working in them (see table 1).

The numbers are also staggering for the sixteen least evangelized countries in the Trans-European Division territory. Forty-five ordained pastors for 372 million people is a task too huge to contemplate.

Part of the challenge for the Euro-Africa and Trans-European

Table 2. Trans-European Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Bahrain	0	25	723,000	10.36%
Cyprus	0	73	948,000	74.14%
Egypt	7	807	73,390,000	12.98%
Iraq	1	185	25,856,000	1.55%
Israel	5	874	6,807,000	2.25%
Jordan	1	153	5,617,000	2.75%
Kuwait	1	159	2,493,000	8.17%
Lebanon	1	393	4,502,000	31.93%
Oman	0	47	2,662,000	2.54%
Pakistan	20	9,168	159,196,000	2.31%
Qatar	0	31	743,000	10.47%
Saudi Arabia	0	0	25,131,000	4.54%
Sudan	8	12,071	39,148,000	23.19%
Syria	0	0	17,954,000	5.12%
UAE	1	222	4,193,000	9.25%
Yemen	0	0	20,025,000	0.05%
TOTALS	45	24,208	372,240,000	

Divisions in their Muslim work is a lack of contextual written materials and carefully prepared radio programming for the large population of Muslims in their least evangelized countries. Muslim outreach in these countries will need creative types of workers and strategies. A non-resident missionary for each of these countries would be a starting point—one who would advocate for the unreached in that country and one who would work to develop and place literature, Bibles, DVDs, the Jesus Film, and other contextual supplies in each of these countries. Tent-making missionaries and international Adventist business people could also be directed and supported by a non-residential missionary.

No country is off limits to what God can do. If the division presidents of these two areas were offered additional personnel in these twenty-three countries that are least reached, we are

sure they could find many ways to use much additional help.

The Southern Asia-Pacific Division has the added challenge of having countries in the least evangelized status from both the Muslim and Buddhist worlds so it faces the challenge of having to develop contextualized work in two very different areas. Indo-China and the people of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand presents this division with special challenges with restrictive governments, tremendous openness to the gospel, yet with few contextualized materials available. The Buddhist Study Center could use additional personnel to develop culturally sensitive materials for Buddhists and to increase its impact on training pastors and members in more effective outreach (see table 3).

The least evangelized countries in the West-Central Africa Division all have large Muslim populations. Chad, with its six

Table 3. Southern Asia-Pacific Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Bangladesh	28	22,715	141,340,000	0.72%
Cambodia	11	4,356	13,107,000	1.19%
Indonesia	434	191,800	218,746,000	16.00%
Laos	0	407	5,787,000	1.85%
Myanmar	76	24,142	50,101,000	8.70%
Sri Lanka	12	3,385	19,569,000	7.62%
Thailand	34	9,911	63,763,000	1.62%
Vietnam	6	7,891	81,465,000	8.16%
TOTALS	601	264,607	593,878,000	

Table 4. West-Central Africa Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Benin	2	3,356	7,250,000	31.78%
Burkina Faso	4	2,812	13,575,000	18.36%
Chad	6	2,807	9,539,000	27.78%
Gambia	1	652	1,547,000	4.10%
Guinea	1	828	9,246,000	4.72%
Guinea-Bissau	1	2,241	1,538,000	14.32%
Mali	1	1,234	13,409,000	1.92%
Mauritania	1	4	2,980,000	0.16%
Niger	2	187	12,415,000	0.40%
Senegal	3	392	10,852,000	4.76%
TOTALS	22	14,513	82,351,000	

ordained Adventist pastors has a largely Christian southern region where most Adventist work is located, but in these ten countries there are 3,743,227 people for every ordained Adventist pastor (see table 4).

The least evangelized countries in the Southern Asia Division (see table 5) are all largely Hindu countries, even though there are 126 million Muslims, 19 million Sikhs, and 8 million Buddhists in India. What happens in such situations is that

the Indian Adventist Church largely works for those who are Hindu or for those who belong to other Christian denominations and does little for the Muslims, Sikhs, and Buddhists. The challenges of India are immense with its 1,652 languages, 6,400 castes, and many tribes.

India has only one ordained pastor for every 2,598,672 people. To give some comparison of those numbers, if the USA had the same ratio of ordained pastors to its population it would

Table 5. Southern Asia Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Bhutan	0	0	967,000	0.46%
India	442	917,207	1,086,640,000	2.40%
Nepal	5	2,575	24,746,000	1.89%
TOTALS	447	919,782	1,112,353,000	

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Table 6. Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
China	97	338,277	1,300,060,000	7.25%
Japan	61	15,061	127,635,000	1.56%
North Korea	0	*866	22,776,000	1.69%
Macao	1	191	449,000	7.31%
Mongolia	3	721	2,519,000	0.71%
Taiwan	28	4,925	22,647,000	6.06%
TOTALS	190	360,041	1,476,086,000	

*No report since 1959

only have 113 ordained pastors instead of 2,961, the UK would only have 23 ordained pastors instead of 116, Korea would only have 18 instead of 488, Australia would only have 8 instead of 247, Kenya would only have 13 instead of 323, Mexico would have 41 pastors instead of 384, and Brazil would have 69 instead of 1,232.

In India it is possible to reach out to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Buddhists. Again, a lack of resources, materials, and personnel to effectively develop contextualized methods limits what can be done. Surely more of the church's resources could be utilized in the world's second largest country.

The Northern Asia-Pacific Division is involved in an interesting development with the Korean Union sacrificing money and personnel to help with the church planting and pastoring needs in Japan. Korea also sends missionaries to other parts of the division. This is a plan that should be adapted by more of our world divisions in order to send additional workers to those areas with few Christians (see table 6).

The Euro-Asia Division has two additional Muslim countries where restrictive governments, few Adventists, and situations where the local people often have a distorted picture of what a Christian looks like because of their experience under Soviet rule

Table 7. Euro-Asia Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Tajikistan	4	772	6,615,000	1.38%
Turkmenistan	1	77	5,719,000	2.66%
TOTALS	5	849	12,334,000	

Table 8. East-Central Africa Division

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Djibouti	0	0	712,000	4.67%
Eritrea	1	501	4,447,000	47.43%
Somalia	0	0	8,305,000	0.05%
TOTALS	1	501	13,464,000	

combine to create challenges for the Adventist Church. In these two countries each ordained pastor has 2,466,800 to evangelize (see table 7). Shouldn't the world church be just as concerned about the work in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as it is for the work in the towns and cities in local areas?

How can one ordained minister in Eritrea effectively minister to 13 million people in that region of Africa (see table 8)? Again, I am sure that if budgets were made available that the leaders in the East-Central Africa Division could make good use of them.

Least Evangelized Countries in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist/Chinese Worlds

In order to help us see the scope of the challenge remaining, the next three tables look at the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist/Chinese worlds. The numbers are staggering; the lack of workers glaring. How can small local memberships in the 10/40 Window areas of the world ever have enough resources to evangelize their countries and territories without outside help. Notice the numbers in table 9.

The least reached countries of the Muslim world have 2,079,824 people for every ordained Seventh-day Adventist pastor. There are 4,341 people for every Adventist member. However, the majority (191,800 of 253,921) of the Adventist members in the Muslim world live in just one country—Indonesia. If Indonesia was removed from both the membership and population lists then there are 14,223 people for every Adventist in the rest of the Muslim world and only 96 ordained pastors working for a population of 883,561,000, or 9,203,760 people for each ordained pastor.

If there was the same ratio in other parts of the world, North America would only have 35 ordained ministers instead of 3,196; Inter America would only have 28 ministers instead of 1,465; South America would only have 31 ministers instead of 1,773; and the South Pacific Division would only have 4 instead of 587. Can the Adventist Church tolerate these kinds of numbers? Should Adventists be complacent and accepting of these kinds of ratios? I believe that the answer is NO!

How can Adventists increase the number of ordained local

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Table 9. The Muslim World

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Afghanistan	0	1	28,514,000	0.00%
Algeria	0	27	32,323,000	0.29%
Bahrain	0	25	723,000	10.36%
Bangladesh	28	22,715	141,340,000	0.72%
Benin	2	3,356	7,250,000	31.78%
Burkina Faso	4	2,812	13,575,000	18.36%
Chad	6	2,807	9,539,000	27.78%
Cyprus	0	73	948,000	74.14%
Djibouti	0	0	712,000	4.67%
Egypt	7	807	73,390,000	12.98%
Eritrea	1	501	4,447,000	47.43%
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Saudi Arabia	0	0	39,148,000	4.54%
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Syria	0	0	17,954,000	5.12%
Tajikistan	4	772	6,615,000	1.38%
Tunisia	0	25	10,002,000	0.22%
Turkey	0	56	71,300,000	0.32%
Turkmenistan	1	77	5,719,000	2.66%
UAE	1	222	4,193,000	9.25%
Yemen	0	0	20,025,000	0.05%
TOTALS	530	253,921	1,102,307,000	

Table 10. The Hindu World

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Bhutan	0	0	967,000	0.46%
India	442	917,207	1,086,640,000	2.40%
Nepal	5	2,575	24,746,000	1.89%
TOTAL	447	919,782	1,112,353,000	

ministers in the Muslim world? By sharing resources and transferring IDE budgets to help build the church in Muslim countries. It is time for those places where the Adventist message has been preached for 100 years to provide local budgets for teachers and institutional workers so that present IDE budgets can be deployed to build local leaders

in the 10/40 Window areas of the world.

In the Hindu world there are 2,488,485 people for each ordained minister and 1,209 people for every Adventist member (see table 10). In contrast, in North America there are 329 people for every member, the Inter-America Division has 106 people for every member, the South America Di-

Table 11. The Buddhist/Chinese World

Country	Ministers	Members	Population	Christians
Cambodia	11	4,356	13,107,000	1.19%
China	97	338,277	1,300,060,000	7.25%
Japan	61	15,061	127,635,000	1.56%
Korea, North	0	*866	22,776,000	1.69%
Laos	0	407	5,787,000	1.85%
Macao	1	191	449,000	7.31%
Mongolia	3	721	2,519,000	0.79%
Myanmar	76	24,142	50,101,000	8.70%
Sri Lanka	12	3,385	19,569,000	7.62%
Taiwan	28	4,925	22,647,000	6.06%
Thailand	34	9,911	63,763,000	1.62%
Vietnam	6	7,891	81,465,000	8.16%
TOTALS	329	410,133	1,709,878,000	

*Figures from 1959

Table 12. Population Ratio to Member/Ordained Minister

	Muslim World	Hindu World	Buddhist/ Chinese World
Population per Ordained Minister	2,079,824 *9,203,760	2,488,485	5,197,197
Population per Adventist Member	2,981 *14,223	1,209	4,169

*Ratio for the Muslim world when the figures for Indonesia are removed

vision has 126 people for every Seventh-day Adventist, and the South Pacific Division has 88 people for every Adventist. This reminds us that while there is still much that needs to be done in the four divisions mentioned, there is much greater need in the Hindu regions of our world.

There are 5,197,197 people for every ordained minister in the Buddhist/Chinese world and 4,169 people for every Adventist member in an area of the world that has proved difficult and resistant to the gospel (see tables 11 and 12).

Recommendations

This brings us back to the issue of where Adventist mission resources are deployed. Too many are employed where the church has been working for 100 years or more with too few resources in the Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist/Chinese worlds. There are still 2.6 billion people who have not heard the gospel; 1.17 billion are not likely to be reached by local Christians or Adventists—they are still dependant on cross-cultural missionaries. There are 12,600

languages that are not being used by the Adventist Church in telling people the good news. Only 95 of the more than 4,000 least-evangelized peoples have an Adventist ministry. A large majority of Adventist IDE missionaries are working for those who are already Adventist and too few are working in areas where there are few if any Christians of any denomination. It is time to shift Adventist missionary resources from the Americas and central and southern Africa to the 10/40 Window areas of our world where 63% of the world's population live but where only 20% of the Adventist IDE budgets and 20% of the Adventist Church's volunteers are located.

In order to make this type of strategic shift several areas of Adventist mission will most likely need to be addressed.

First, Adventist leaders and members need to have a renewed vision and commitment for mission to the unevangelized. Most divisions in the world field have seen a continuing decline in mission giving. The North America Division (NAD) gave fewer total dollars to missions in 2006 than

they did in 1980, and that does not take into affect the inflation factor. Too much of the NAD mission giving goes to supporting ministries and too little to the mission projects of the denomination. This will only change when the church becomes as good at promoting and reminding the members of the challenge remaining as the supporting ministries are.

Notice the giving patterns of the various divisions in table 13.

What would happen if through education and the sharing of the challenge remaining each of the world divisions could increase their giving to missions by just

half a cent for each tithe dollar given? That increase alone would result in an additional \$6,667,410 each year for Adventist mission.

Second, Adventists must begin the process that will refocus organizations, budgets, and personnel resources on the unfinished task of reaching the least evangelized peoples. Every division must become convinced of the necessity of placing more Adventist resources in the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist/ Chinese areas of our world. Adventist leaders have talked about this for many years; there have been plans and proposals to make the shift. On May 30, 2002,

Table 13. Tithe and Mission Giving for 2004

Division	Total Tithe \$	Total Missions	Mission Giving for Every Tithe Dollar
ECD	10,055,475	869,460	8.64 cents
EUD	98,208,665	6,429,515	6.54 cents
ESD	11,407,188	307,045	2.69 cents
IAD	126,381,940	7,172,920	5.67 cents
NAD	762,318,495	21,513,741	2.82 cents
NSD	55,473,638	2,751,248	4.95 cents
SAD	113,106,993	3,095,315	2.73 cents
SPD	50,903,933	3,134,749	6.15 cents
SID	25,182,127	1,184,547	4.70 cents
SUD	1,969,149	107,000	5.43 cents
SSD	22,113,054	907,475	4.10 cents
TED	48,617,876	2,714,624	5.58 cents
WAD	6,770,755	317,921	4.69 cents
TOTALS	1,333,482,562	50,505,560	3.78 cents

Lowell Cooper wrote to Matthew Bediako suggesting that IDE budgets needed to be increasingly deployed for 10/40 Window activity. The previous day a document had been drafted with the following goal: "To deploy at least 25% of available IDE points in direct 10/40 window activity by December 31, 2005." But to date that modest proposal has not been implemented and few budgets have been reassigned.

Third, we must write policies dealing with the deployment of missionary resources that allow for flexibility and innovation. For example, Pastor Isaiah is the Adventist World Radio speaker for Vietnamese broadcasts. He pastors two Vietnamese churches in southern California, prepares four hours of broadcast material each week, supervises 50,000 baptized Adventists in the house church movement in Vietnam, works with an additional 300,000 Sabbath-keepers, supervises district and regional house church leaders, conducts training in Asia each year for those leaders, yet since he is based in California present policy does not allow him to be supported as an IDE worker. He is not able to be freed from his pastoral duties and work as a non-residential missionary for the Vietnamese people because there is not enough flexibility in existing policies.

With an increased emphasis on Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist outreach the church will need to come up with innovative ways to use personnel. Policies must be

written that allow for much more flexibility than presently allowed.

Fourth, all IDE budgets should be transferred from the divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the General Conference for allocation. A General Conference level committee with representation from the divisions should work together on the allocation of IDE budgets, with the goal of steadily shifting the resources to the 10/40 Window until at least 63% of Adventist missionaries work where 63% of the world's population lives.

Fifth, each division should be encouraged to commit to funding new and additional IDE budgets that will be dedicated to church planting and pioneer work in the 10/40 Window. If Korea can do it so can Brazil, Kenya, Germany, Canada, Mexico, Indonesia, and many other countries.

Sixth, the mission activities of the Adventist Church need to be reorganized under one head. It is ironic that our church has publishing departments, youth departments, education departments, Sabbath School departments, home and family departments, but no one central place where the task of Adventist mission is focused on and cared for. Instead Adventists have spread out and weakened the thrust of Adventist mission by having one department respond to the calls from the divisions, another department promotes mission offerings, still another department cares for missionaries and applies policy, while Global Mission can

promote and fund raise, but cannot send missionaries to strategic locations. Some progress has recently been made as the Office of Mission Awareness was merged with Global Mission, but Adventist mission still suffers from a lack of unified leadership.

Conclusions

Global Mission has impacted our church by increasing the number of new groups started from one per day to eleven per day. Global Mission has initiated and funded the Religious Study Centers that have worked at preparing materials for the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and Secular Postmodern populations. But it has been frustrating to be a member of the Global Mission Study Centers Director's meetings for the past five years and hear of the tremendous needs in the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist/Chinese areas of the 10/40 Window with very little done and very little hope that something will be done to challenge the Adventist members to give more and support more so that a greater amount of Adventist resources can be allocated to those parts of the world where Adventists are only marginally represented.

There is no denying the fact that there are still great needs in North, Central and South America. There are many pressing needs in Australia, Europe, and the central and southern parts of Africa. But the Adventist Church must begin to take a larger view of mission than just looking out for

the needs in the home division, the local union, or the local conference. Adventists must always keep the needs of the local areas in balance with the needs of those parts of the world where there are few Adventist and few Christians of any denomination.

Adventist leaders of one hundred years ago sacrificed to send missionaries to far away places when they could have easily justified keeping them at home by saying there were still pressing needs in the local areas, but they sent them out with the result that Adventism is the most widespread Protestant church in our world. Are Adventists courageous enough to do it again and send workers to the 10/40 Window areas of our world? Adventists must be world Christians who look at the whole world as the areas of responsibility for the Adventist task is world evangelization.

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