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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY FOR PLANTING A GROWING
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN
RIVERS-WEST CONFERENCE, NIGERIA

by

Smart Maduagu

Adviser: Mike Cauley

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH
Professional Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY FOR PLANTING A GROWING
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN
RIVERS-WEST CONFERENCE, NIGERIA

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Date completed: October 2022

Problem

Rivers-West Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, like most Seventh-day Adventist Conferences in Nigeria, is growing at 1% (GC Statistics 2020) while the population of Nigeria is growing at 2.5% (The World Bank Data, 2021). The local Adventist church membership growth is not matching the country's population growth when compared to the obvious spontaneous growth of other Christian churches like the Redeem Christian Church of God (RCCG) which began thirty-eight years after the advent of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria; they have about twenty thousand (20,000) churches (History and Growth of RCCG, 2014) while the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria has two thousand seven hundred and ninety four (2,794) churches in 2021 (GC Annual Report 2021). A major contributing factor is the Conference's lack of a strategy for planting churches.

Method

Under the author's leadership, and the support of the Conference, a vision for church planting, as well as a strategy for accomplishing this vision, was developed. Volunteers, which composed the church-planting team were drawn from the Conference in 2019 for this mission endeavor. These volunteers were inspired and trained to become missionaries for this enterprise. At the conclusion of the project, 17 people from the church planting team were given questionnaires to evaluate the outcome of the church planting project and their spiritual growth and maturation over the course of the process.

Result

In the Rivers-West Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, a church was planted at Anyu in the Odul clan of Abua/Odual Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. Volunteers chosen from different parts of the Conference reported a greater awareness of the secrets for success in church planting. These success secrets include: (a) creating a mindset for pioneering mission among the members and within the conference, (b) longer-term planning, and training of volunteers, (c) creating a process for volunteers working in the church plant effort to grow and become mature disciples, and (d) recruiting participants who understand the language and the culture. Finally, the need to plant more churches and recruit volunteers for future church planting efforts was noted.

Conclusions

From the Conference's perspective, the volunteer's feedback, and the author's experience and engagement with this church-planting project, it was demonstrated that a combination of vision, strategy, planning, training, and perseverance resulted in a significant impact upon Anyu, Nigeria. Further, some volunteers developed a stronger drive for future church planting. But, most compelling, was the demonstration of how essential revival is, and

complete reliance on the Holy Spirit. Further, research on integrating a deeper discipleship model with the volunteers and those who formed the new church plant is recommended.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Professional Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Smart B. Maduagu

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Church planting is a process that results in the establishment of a local church composed of believers in Jesus Christ in a particular location through the preaching of the gospel. Kelly and Kidder make the case that church planting has been an effective way of expanding the kingdom of God and will continue to influence Christian evangelism until the end of the age (Kelly, 2012; Kidder, 2014). The prophetic insight of Ellen G. White in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has made planting churches a priority. However, there has been a decline in church planting passion in Nigeria with attendant risk to the mission and growth of the church.

This introductory chapter will describe a ministry context in which the challenges of church planting are highlighted. It will provide an overview of the development of the project, including steps of theological reflection, a review of recent and relevant literature, and a description of how the intervention was developed and evaluated. The Conference voted on the strategy for this church planting project. In the end, the chapter will define technical terms that are unique and essential to this study with a summary of the chapter.

Description of the Ministry Context

River State is the fifth most populous State in Nigeria. It is in the Niger Delta region of South-South Nigeria where Barrister Nyeso Wike serves as governor (2015-2023) administering twenty-three Local Government Area. On the north, Rivers State is bounded by Imo and Abia State, Akwa Ibom State to the east, Bayelsa, and Delta States to the west. It is also bounded to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. Rainfall is usually periodic in the state; it starts from March through November but peaks in July each year. This may be the reason why fishing and farming are the principal occupations of the Rivers people. The drier region (upland) of Rivers State covers 61% of the land and the riverine is 39%. (Rivers State, Nigeria, October 20, 2021). The State generates about a third of Nigeria's gross domestic product, national income, and foreign exchange. According to the 2006 census data (Nigeria has had no national census activity till 2022), it is the sixth-largest geographic area in Nigeria. The State is the commercial center of the Nigerian oil industry. It is rich with both oil and gas hosting many international oil companies like Shell Petroleum Development Company, Chevron Nigeria Limited, Total-Elf-Fina, Agip Oil Company, Saipem Nigeria Limited, Daewoo Nigeria Limited, Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited, etc. with the attending challenge of gas flaring that causes environmental pollution (Anugwom, 2017, p. 33, 34). It has petroleum refineries, two seaports, the Trans Amadi Industrial Estate, and the Onne Oil and Gas Free Zone. The State is rich in silica sand, glass, clay, and other solid material that are untapped (Rivers State: One People, One Voice session 2020).

Rivers State has a population of over 5,198,716, consisting of 2,673,026 male and 2,525,690 female. Ages 15 to 64 account for 61% of the population in the state. Ages 15

and below account for 36% of the population, and those aged 65 years and above the remaining 3%. Port-Harcourt and Obio-Akpor are the most inhabited Local-Government Area while Omuma is the least. The total area of the state is 11,077 km² (4,277 sq mi) and the density is 635.89 inhabitants per square kilometer (1,646.9/sq mi) (Rivers State, 2021). The state is noted for its linguistic diversity with 28 indigenous languages. For the past five years, many communities in Rivers State have been marred with cultism, ritual killings, youth restiveness, and general violence caused by unemployed youths (Iheamnachor, 2016). The number of people in the state and the activities of the area make them prime places for church planting.

Rivers-West Conference (RWC) is located in Rivers State, it is made up of four Local Government Areas of the State namely: Abua/Odual, Ahoada-East, Ahoada-West, and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, with a population of 1,563,448 (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Yearbook 2020, p. 44). It started as an Administrative Unit in March 2012 from the old Rivers Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church which is now the Port-Harcourt Conference. RWC became organized as a Conference in 2013 and dedicated the Conference office in 2015. The Conference has one Secondary School (High School) called Mission High School, Obite with a student population of 103 with 13 staff, and an orphanage at Edeoha with 35 inmates and 11 staff. It has fourteen (14) ordained ministers, sixteen (16) un-ordained ministers, and six (6) office workers (Second Report Quadrennial Session, 2017, pp. 15, 23) that are pastoring 17,161 members worship in 82 organized churches and 91 companies with a tithe of \$180,537 in 2019. (Rivers-West Conference: 2020 Annual Statistical Report of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, Volume 2, 2019 Statistics, p. 54).

The Conference has conducted church planting through the districts (groups of churches), Conference departments like Adventist Women's Ministry (AWM), Men's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and the Evangelism department. The Conference Evangelism department planted two churches in 2013 (Omoku town), three churches in 2014 (Ahoada town), and three in 2015 (Abua town). And because of cultism, youth restiveness, and violence in the area, no church was planted in 2016. The AWM did not plant a church in 2015 or 2016. The youth planted an unhealthy church in 2016 at Akinma in Engeni clan. The Men's Ministry planned to revive this church in 2016 but did not succeed. The men planted a church in 2015 at Onbo but planted no church in 2016.

The Chorale Music Ministry, a music group in our conference formed in 2014 whose vision is to sing classical music and plant churches, planted a church in 2015 in Mbiama, Rivers State. The Chorale Music Ministry planted another church in Johnkroma (JK4) in 2016 and another church in Ubeta district in 2017 in Rivers State. There is no evidence that any of these planted churches have initiated another church plant and the group did not plant a church in 2018 and 2019.

Upon being fully employed as a gospel minister in 2004 and posted to Odi in Bayelsa State Nigeria, I became the speaker of a two-week public evangelism program that led to the birth of a new church plant. This church plant was initiated by a singing group called Explorers in Diaspora. It was made up of seven youths between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three and their mentors' Elder and Mrs. Beatrice Amah. In this Conference, where I have served as a district pastor, Single Ministry Director, campus evangelist, radio evangelist, and television evangelist, I have been part of thirteen church plants.

Statement of the Problem

Rivers-West Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, like most Seventh-day Adventist Conferences in Nigeria, is growing at 1%, which is 402 members annually (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church Statistics, 2020), while the country's population is growing at 2.5% (The World Bank Data 2021), which is approximately five million births annually. If the Conference grows at the same rate of 2.5% like the nation, it would have added 1,005 members annually. This current scenario is resulting in a declining local Adventist church membership where the country's population is increasing as well as the spontaneous growth of other Christian churches. Therefore, the Adventist church is becoming a shrinking part of the national population, increasing her challenge to fulfil its mission. A major contributing factor is a lack of strategy, by the conference and its members, to plant churches.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is to develop, implement, and evaluate a strategy to plant a church in the Rivers-West Conference.

Delimitations of the Project

This project will be delimited to the Rivers-West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Church members. Only regular members and visitors who have been attending church at least twice a month for the last six months will be included.

Description of the Project Process

The project process included constructing a theological reflection, reviewing current literature, developing and implementing an intervention, and then evaluating and reporting the outcomes within a selected research methodology and protocol.

Theological Reflection

To develop a theological basis for church planting, the following three areas were examined. First, is a theological foundation for church planting in the Bible. Understanding what is church, how Jesus sees the growth of the church and the willingness of believers to participate with God to accomplish His purpose. Second, the Antioch church was examined as an example of a church which engages in church planting. Third, church planting in Paul's ministry was reviewed as an example of individual participation in church planting. In addition, the counsel of Ellen White on church planting was considered. By way of conclusion, a summary was presented.

Literature Review

A review of literature necessary for church planting was explored by concentrating on selected research in eight major areas. First, church planting in the Early Church, which created the foundation for the response of the apostles to fulfill the great commission, was explored. The study of how church planting became a major tool in taking the gospel to the entire world and entering places where the gospel had never been preached, was highlighted. Second, literature related to church planting in early Adventism was surveyed. This portion of literature reveals the passion and policies of the church that led to the planting of Adventist churches in many countries. Third, literature related to early church planting in Africa, which traces the establishment of the Adventist

Church with its challenges and the victories was explored. Fourth, church planting in the region of West Africa, and how the arrival of some Christians brought the establishment of churches in the area with the result that Christianity became contagious, was reviewed. Fifth, I surveyed church planting in Nigeria, and how missionaries from Europe and indigenous preachers planted churches in different areas amidst the ethnic diversity of the country. Sixth, church planting by Seventh-day Adventists in Nigeria was explored, from the coming of David C. Babcock in Western Nigeria to when the Advent message moved to Eastern and Northern Nigeria. Seventh, I explored contextualization in Africa, and how to adapt the meaning of the gospel to the African culture without compromising the power of the gospel. Finally, principles for church planting within the North American context, which are applicable in other cultural contexts, was discussed.

Development of the Intervention

The project intervention emerged out of my experience in church planting and a desire to understand the biblical mandate and best practices for creating a church planting focus in the Rivers-West Conference. It became evident that unless we change our culture regarding the planting of churches, we shall not experience a great increase in membership. I found this to be particularly true for the church in Nigeria. After better understanding the way churches are planted effectively, a strategy for planting a church in the Rivers-West Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was developed and implemented.

From the theological reflection and literature review, I concluded that a vision for church planting was necessary to fulfill the mandate of enlarging the Kingdom of God in Nigeria. Newly planted churches are more effective in evangelism (Stetzer & Im, 2016,

p. 7). One reason is that newly planted churches have newer members, who in turn have more friends who are unbelievers. The friend circles of older members contains fewer unbelievers. Also, as the project was implemented, the necessity of total reliance on the Holy Spirit was brought to the forefront. This brings spiritual vibrancy to congregations. Therefore, as church planting becomes a culture within the church, the church will experience greater membership growth, numerically and spiritually.

Structure of the Intervention

The strategy I developed was to (a) find a location where a church plant is needed, (b) recruit and train volunteers from different parts of the Conference by bulletin announcements and phone calls to implement the church plant, (c) secure funding from the RWC which was voted on November 18, 2018, and (d) plant a church through recruitment and training of volunteers, (e) hold an evangelistic effort. The project started with the delivery of lectures on when, how, and where to plant a church for different groups in the Conference. The region for the church plant was visited six months before implementation of the feasibility study. The Abua zone where the church plant was held consisted of Abua and Odual clans. We chose this zone because the Odual clan does not have a Seventh-day Adventist Church. This area was visited about three months before the implementation of the church plant to conduct orientation and training for church leaders and volunteers. Days of fasting and prayer for the success of the church plant were conducted in the zone. It was led by the Conference President, Pastor Chimezie S. Obuzor.

The community of the church plant, Anyu in Abua/Odual Local Government of Rivers State, Nigeria, was visited three times to ascertain logistics in conjunction with

community leadership. Permission to use the community town hall for medical outreach for the treatment of diseases, use of the community primary school as the venue of the public evangelism, accommodations for the volunteers, identifying a power source, and possible sources of drinking water were all elements of the plan which were addressed during these visits.

The medical team for the church plant arrived at the venue a week before the other volunteers arrived. The work of the medical team was to learn natural methods from competent medical missionaries, so that they may teach and treat the infirmed community members. All volunteers camped at the venue four days for training and prayers, before the start of the implementation. The accommodation had apartments for males and females which made coordination easier. Seminars and evaluation meetings, with all volunteers, addressed areas of weakness and strength and were conducted daily.

Research Methodology and Protocol

This intervention made use of questionnaires for a qualitative research methodology. Information from the volunteers about their experiences and perceptions of the church-planting project was gathered. All volunteers that participated in the questionnaires were required to sign an informed consent form. Care was taken to protect the confidentiality of data and the volunteers to guarantee the reliability and credibility of the research. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before the beginning of the project. Data was also gathered about the Conference's record of church plants with field notes and observations. The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the church plant in Anyu community in Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Seventeen out of twenty-three volunteers completed the questionnaires. The

interpretation of the raw data gathered is provided in Chapter Five. Chapter Six will provide the conclusion from the interpretation of data, together with overarching conclusions from the entire project.

Definition of Terms

The terms which appear in this project, some frequently used with specialized meaning are as follows:

Church is the body of Christ. According to Horn (1960/1979), the English word church is from the Greek is “*ecclesia*, from *ek*, ‘out’ and ‘*kaleo*’, to call.” (p. 224). These are people called from darkness into the light of God. “In NT times this term is most frequently applied to a body of people who believes in Jesus as the Messiah and who accepts Him and His teaching” (p. 224). The church, an embassy of salvation, from the beginning it is to reach the whole world and reflect the fullness and glory of Jehovah (White, 1911, p. 9). The church is a group of people that believes in Christ. Contrary to contemporary definitions, “church” is not a building, but the people who worship in that building.

God’s Kingdom refers to all the territory that God has dominated with His love, and the inhabitants of the territory have acknowledged it.

Missional is the equipping and sending of believers to minister to a world in need of salvation and the knowledge of Christ. “A missional church, then, is one that trains and encourages its people to be in mission as individuals and as a body” (Keller, 2012, p.259). Missional is related to missionary, it is becoming a missionary in your location.

Planting is an agricultural term that refers to sowing seed, but it is used in the Christian context for establishing churches, generally after an evangelistic series of

meetings or the expansion of a mother church in a particular location.

Vision is a term used to point to a clear statement that has “a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants, self and circumstance.” (Barna, 1992, p.28). It is making the invisible visible, imagining the future to become today.

Volunteers are men and women who participated in church planting without monetary remuneration in response to a divine call to this unique ministry such as the disciples who left their families and forms of employment to follow Jesus.

Conference funding represents financial support and other resources from the Rivers-West Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Summary

This introduction has offered a glimpse of the process of church planting within the Rivers-West Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and it is addressed from a pastoral viewpoint. The interpretative analysis of this case study is proposed to offer insights into the spiritual and professional value of church planting for a local church, as well as the conference. This work can only be done through collaboration between the Conference, the local pastor, and volunteers. This work may serve as an encouragement for others who are interested in evangelistic work in conjunction with pastoral ministry.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

From the parable of the mustard seed in Matt 13:31-32, the seed though small became very large. The *seed* is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). When it is planted in the hearts of people, it bears fruit and continues to expand. Christ expected dramatic growth of His church when He commanded the disciples to sow the seed beginning from Jerusalem to the entire world (Acts 1:8).

Growing denominations plant new churches because it is important in fulfilling the Great Commission (Stetzer & Im, 2016, p.7). “All the world” in Acts 1:8 comprises hosts of Muslims covering Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, confessing faith in Allah and Mohammad as His prophet. It comprises millions of Hindu people in India who worship images in search of peace. It comprises secular people in Europe and America who explore joy through worldly entertainment. It comprises millions in faraway African villages where people need deliverance from charms and demons and where thousands die of malaria, AIDS, and other diseases every day.

Although there is church decline in many parts of the world (Pass, 2012, p. 468), planting more churches is the most effective way to expand the kingdom of God (Waggner, 1990, p. 11). This chapter will explore five important ingredients for a successful church planting: (a) The theological foundation for church planting, (b) the Antioch Church in Acts 11 as an example of a healthy church planting other healthy

churches, (c) church planting in Paul's ministry and the factors that empowered Paul in church planting, and (d) Ellen G. White's counsel for church planting, At the conclusion of the chapter there will be a summary.

Theological Foundations for Church Planting

The Concept of Church

What is a church? According to Horn (1960/1979), the worshipping community known as the English word church is from the Greek "*ecclesia*, from *ek*, 'out,' and *kaleo*, to call." (p. 224). William-Webster (1999) defines a church as "a body or organization of Christian believers." These are people called from darkness into the light of God (1 Peter 2:9). Abraham was called out of the nations (Gen 12:1) and ancient Israel was called from slavery to freedom, to declare the purpose and glory of God. "In NT times this term is most frequently applied to a body of people who believe in Jesus as the Messiah and who accept Him and His teaching" (p. 224). According to Brand, et al. (2003) "Redemptive history demonstrates that God's purposes are not limited to the redemption of individuals. Instead, God's intent has been to form a body, a group of people, fulfilling the mission of God. (Gen. 12:1-3)" (p. 295).

The way a church member perceives the work of mission will affect whether they will be motivated to plant new churches. Some believe there is no need to plant new churches because small churches should become medium churches and medium churches should become large congregations. This mindset dwells on the maintenance of the existing church structure more than God doing a new thing through Kingdom expansion, by way of the multiplication of churches. Some argue that our energy should be put into revitalizing dying churches, even though church planting is acceptable. However, church

planting is the most effective way of growing membership because new churches reach more and new people. One reason this is true, is the circle of friends of new members contain more unbelievers than the circle of friends of existing members. (Arn,1997, p.167). Stetzer and Im (2016) state that “Though large churches are often more cost-effective than small churches, new churches are often more effective than large churches in evangelism” (p.7). The parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9) is a reminder that there must be intentionality; the seed must be planted. The multiplication of churches demonstrate that the Christian movement is alive and fulfilling the will of the Master (Abraham, 1989, p. 70).

The church according to Easton (1903) is “All the Christians in a particular city. Whether they assembled in one place or several places for religious worship, they were an ecclesia. Thus, all the disciples in Antioch, forming several congregations, were one church (Acts 13:1); so also, we read of the "church of God at Corinth" (1 Cor 1:2), "the church at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1), "the church of Ephesus" (Rev 2:1), etc.” (PC Study Bible formatted electronic database 2003 Biblesoft, Inc.), proclaiming God’s word and establishing new congregations.

These redeemed, called-out persons, formed out of proclamation of God’s Word, are the church. As these new believers follow the great commission to proclaim, baptize and teach, new groups of believers are formed in various locations and the multiplication of churches continues (1 Pet 2:9) (Waggner, 1990, p. 11). The New Testament church is to accomplish what ancient Israel failed to do in reflecting the light of God to the world (Matt 28:19; Rom 2:28, 29; Gal 3:28, 29; Eph 2:8-22; 1 Pet 2:5-10; 1 Cor 1:7,8; 2 Pet 3:14; Rev 14:5) (Horn, 1960, p. 224).

The Teaching of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ called the twelve disciples and a few women (Luke 8:1-3) and sent them out to be witnesses. He established the church for mission and said, “And as ye go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give’” (Matt 10:7-8). This is the good news –the gospel. According to Brand, et al (2003) “The term “gospel” occurs frequently in the NT in both noun and verb forms, literally meaning “good news” or preaching good news.” The noun form *euangelion* occurs 75 times, and the verb *euangelizomai* occurs 56 times (pp. 670 – 671). The number of times this word appears in the Scriptures underscores the importance of the preaching the gospel as Christ commissioned. The gospel, according to Horn (1960), is, “The message of Christianity, the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. This “good news” was revealed in embryo form from the beginning (Gen 3:15; 12:3) but was later disclosed, more fully, by writers (p. 429) of the New Testament. Christ declared, “as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). The Father sent Jesus Christ “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10), so Christ sends us with the same purpose of the Father, to seek and save those who are lost. We are following His example when we do this. It is a personal message to all believers, and it cannot be ignored. As we continue to seek the lost through the proclamation of the gospel, people believe, and churches are formed.

Christ in Nazareth clarifies the scope of His work, “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:

and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt 28:18-20). “All nations” refers to the different people groups across the world. This command breaks every political and geographic boundary - to all the inhabitants of the world. This command for all believers, tells them where (the world), what to do (teach them to become disciples), and how to retain them (baptize and continue to teach). The work is to preach “repentance and forgiveness of sins ... to all nations” (Luke 24:47). Christ described His work, and the work of His followers, by quoting Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18).

His work was possible because the Holy Spirit anointed Him. Christ commanded his disciples, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Preaching the gospel becomes efficacious when the Holy Spirit takes control. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” As they spoke the word of God boldly, many believed and churches, bodies of believers, were formed.

When the Holy Spirit is present in the life of a disciple, the disciple is empowered to witness locally and globally, with boldness and power, because Christ's presence accompanies His followers (Stetzer & Im, 2016, p. 34). Christ was anointed (a) to preach the gospel to the poor; to bring hope to the those robbed of their inheritance as children of

God. And Jesus' disciples will do the same. As Jesus came to (b) heal the broken-hearted, those who proclaim the gospel bring balm to those devastated by the sin's destruction. Jesus disciples (c) deliver the captive. They set people free who are in servitude to sin and affliction. As Jesus came to (d) recover sight to the blind, those who serve in Jesus' stead bring spiritual sight to spiritually blind. Jesus' disciples follow the Master and (e) set at liberty those imprisoned by addiction and affliction (Nichol, 1956, 1980, pp. 5-6). When we effectively enter the ministry of Christ, with Christ power and presence, the fruit be people who have been called-out ones - the church.

Willingness of Believers

From the New Testament, church planting was a result of the early Christians' inner compulsion to witness across the Roman Empire. The Antioch church was planted by disciples who witnessed (Acts 11:20). Stetzer and Im (2016) point out that, "Church planting began in Jerusalem. Acts 1 – 7 describe the founding, growth, and early challenges of the Jerusalem church. The church was born in prayer (1:12-14), immersed in the Spirit (2:1-4), and bathed in the miraculous (2:5-13). God brought about a powerful ministry in Jerusalem, the center of the earliest church" (p. 40). The church in Acts was a willing and consecrated people, at disposal for the mission, even at the risk of death.

The Bible gives direction, according to McGavran (1990). "Church growth is basically a theological stance. God requires it. It looks to the Bible for direction, for what God wants done" (p.8). In Luke 9:62 "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Early disciples understood and faithfully responded to God's mandate.

On the day of Pentecost, three thousand were baptized (Acts 2:41), five thousand were later added (Acts 4:4), multitudes became believers (Acts 5:4), and priests were added to the body of Christ (6:7). Apostolic preaching produced new congregations. Preaching and planting go hand in hand, like a healthy seedling naturally becomes a plant, securely rooted in soil.

Christ declared, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . . The command to “Go” is an extension of the sending of Christ by the Father (John 20:21). We are continuing where Christ physically stopped in His earthly ministry. Because the gospel will be preached to all nations, the saved in the new earth will come from all nations, tongues, and peoples (Rev 14: 9-14). Referring to the scope of New Testament preaching, Stetzer and Im (2016) state that by “using the phrase 'all nations' Jesus intended for the gospel to reach lost people among whom missiologists call 'people groups'.” In fact, He intended for us to take the message to every people group and population segment” (p. 31). Christ came to save the nations (John 3:17). Presenting the gospel to every people group will necessitate the formation of new churches.

To encourage urgency in soul-winning, Christ said, “Say not ye, 'There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?' Behold, I say unto you, 'Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. . . I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.'" (John 4:35-38). Christ sees a harvest where we do not. By faith, followers “go.” Because of the promise of Jesus, they anticipate a harvest.

Making disciples is stronger when done in the context of a group of believers (a church). Church planting is the setting for the Great Commission that says “teaching” them to observe all things. They are formed into a group - the church - so that they may be taught. An *ecclesia* is a group of "called-out ones", not a group of individuals.

The planting of new churches will bring renewal to existing churches (Nebel, 2002) and these renewals will become a catalyst for further witness. Dudley and Ammerman, (2002) observe, “Declining churches often have higher levels of commitment than other churches, but commitment to unproductive activities” (p.4). Through engagement in proclaiming the gospel, fresh wind and power will flow into congregations. As these established congregations make mission a priority and support establishing other congregations, the focus moves from self to God's agenda.

Illustration for Growth

In the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin (Luke 15:3-7; 8-10), Christ teaches that we must go out to search for sinners. This is what believers should be doing today, according to Boshart (2009). “The church takes up residence at the places yet to be reconciled to God to proclaim and be a sign of the reign God is bringing to bear to all creation. The hope of the missional church’s witness is that upon seeing and hearing those not reconciled to God, she will seek reconciliation only God offers through Jesus” (p. 44). Searching for the lost will drive members to a deeper experience with Jesus. And Christ out in Matthew 24.14 that this will be the work of His body until the end of time.

When we use the gifts, the Holy Spirit has placed at our disposal, we shall see results. Philip went to preach in Samaria, many believed, and the apostles sent Peter from Jerusalem to confirm the stories of conversion (Acts 8: 3-15). Philip preached in

other cities such as Samaria (Acts 8:40). The followers of Jesus preached to larger and smaller crowds (Acts 8:25). Through the preaching of the early disciples the churches expanded to Judea, Galilee and Samaria (Acts 9:31). Peter was sent by an angel to preach to Cornelius, a Gentile, which tells us that gospel pioneers may see uncommon things happen. At the death of Stephen, Christians were scattered beyond Israel (Acts 9). This led to the formation of the Antioch church to which we now turn.

The Antioch Church

Through the preaching of scattered believers, the church in Antioch was formed. The city of Antioch in Syri, the third largest city in the Roman Empire next only to Rome and Alexandria, was founded by Seleucus I Nicator about 300 B.C. The city was named Antioch in honor of his father Antiochus (Horn 1960, 1979, p. 49). Many Jews in Diaspora lived and engaged in business in this city (Brad (Ed) et al, p.75). Antioch in the days of the apostles had splendor as well as vice (White 1911, p. 158). It was the home of Nicholas, one of the seven deacons (Acts 6:5). The Bible says:

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the LORD Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. (Acts 11:19-21)

Antioch is the primary place to learn about church planting in the Scriptures. The Scriptural account offers principles worthy of our attention (Keller 2012, p. 355). These principles include reliance on the Holy Spirit to choose missionary church planters, creating a church structure to support church planting, using their best human resources for planting churches, and supporting team ministry.

The Importance of a Mother Church Support

Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Antioch church became a great missionary–sending church (Acts 13:3). Missionaries were sent throughout the world” (p. 40). Possibly, Nicholas, one of the seven deacons and a native of Antioch (Acts 6:5) influenced the preaching of the gospel in this city (Nichol 1980, p. 262). The Antioch church was born through the preaching of the gospel. They reached people from various places across the Empire. Many persons were added to their number and good reports reached the church in Jerusalem. Apostolic leaders in Jerusalem send Barnabas to encourage them (Acts 11:21-24). Speaking about Barnabas’s influence, the Bible says “Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23). His name means “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36). He encouraged Paul, he encouraged the church in Antioch, he encouraged John Mark when Paul rejected him (Acts 13:13). The example of what happened at Antioch teaches that a church plant has a greater opportunity to survive when it has care from a mother church or organization. Furthermore, the presence of Barnabas from the mother organization (Jerusalem) brought more converts (Acts 11:24-26).

Many church plants have died because of inadequate nurture from a mother organization. Barnabas had qualities that blessed the Antioch church. He was full of the Holy Spirit and faith (Acts 11:24). Those who preached in Antioch may have been uncertain about what the future would hold but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. the Antioch church flourished. Barnabas’ remained in Antioch for about one year teaching the new believers (Acts 11:25,26) and the Antioch church flourished. This is a

compelling lesson for church planters - the nurture of new members in a newly planted church enhances the stabilization of that church.

Barnabas demonstrated the value of teamwork by bringing Paul to Antioch.

Teams achieve more when everyone has a role to play. In soccer, every player cannot be a goalie or striker. Each has a role to win the game. When church planters work in teams, the weakness of one is minimized by the strength of the other.

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)

The story of Barnabas and Paul's team ministry is a compelling illustration for gospel workers, and especially church planters.

Missionary Center

Commenting on the success of evangelism in the apostolic church, Niringiye (cited in Bunn 2008) raises this inquiry:

I am constantly intrigued and challenged whenever I look at the logic and strategy of the young missionary church in the book of Acts, as it sought to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). Considering that the early church did not enjoy the numerical strength we have ...What was their secret? What can we learn from their strategy? (p. 5)

A missionary church trains, equips, and guides members to be on mission because the church is not only a gathering of believers, but a body that sends others to minister to the world (Keller 2012, p. 259). The church in Antioch became a missionary center and sent Paul and Barnabas to preach to the Gentiles after much fasting and prayer (Acts 13:1-3). Antioch became a missional church, a church constantly on God’s mission.

Keller (2012) established six marks of a missional church:

1. The church must confront society's idols.
2. The church must contextualize skilfully and communicate in the vernacular.
3. The church must equip people in mission in every area of their lives.
4. The church must be a counterculture for the common good.
5. The church must itself be contextualized and should expect nonbelievers, inquirers, and seekers to be involved in most aspects of the church's life and ministry.
6. The church must practice unity (p. 274).

The Antioch church was characterized by the above marks of a missional church. They were determined to preach to their society, they welcomed new believers, they became a training ground for those sent out to preach to other cities, and they continued in fellowship to remain united (Acts 13; 14:21, 26; 15:35; 18:22; Gal 2:11). It became a principal headquarters for the early church. And even though the town was known for idol worship and other pagan customs, the church found victory through the power of God (Nichol, 1956/1980, p. 262).

Another secret to the success of the Antioch church was reliance upon the Holy Spirit. This especially resulted in planting new churches. It was only after fasting and prayer that Paul and Barnabas were sent out (Acts 13:1-3). He empowered the preachers to heal, do miracles, and preach with boldness. He determined who was sent to plant churches and, at times, restricted gospel workers from entering certain places (Acts 16:6).

A church is described as a living organism (1 Cor. 12:12-26; Rom 12:3-5; Eph 4:16; Col 2:19) and reproduction is characteristic of living organisms The fruit from

healthy fruit-bearing plants contain seed which allows it to reproduce. And it is a requirement for the body of Christ. In fact, Jesus cursed the tree that did not bear fruit.

Stetzer and Im (2016, pp. 38-40) provide an outline of church planting in the Book of Acts:

1. Church Planting in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7)

- A. It's Origin

1. Born in prayer (1:12-14)
 2. Bathed in the Spirit (2:1-4)
 3. Begun with proclamation (2:14-39)

- B. It's Functions

1. Doctrinal teaching (2:42)
 2. Fellowship (2:42)
 3. Worship (2:42-43, 46-47)
 4. Prayer (2:42; 4:29-31)
 5. Benevolence (2:44-45; 4:34-35)
 6. Identification with the community (2:47)
 7. Witness (4:33; 5:42)

- C. It's Organization

1. Apostles (6:2)
 2. Deacons (6:3)
 3. Congregation (6:5)
 4. Elders (15:6, 22)

II. Church Planting in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12)

- A. Church planting done by laity (8:1, 4)
- B. Mass evangelism (8:5-6, 12)
- C. Village evangelism (8:25)
- D. Churches multiplied (9:31)
- E. Growth enhanced by miracles (9:32-42)
- F. Salvation extended to Gentiles (10:44-48)

III. Church Planting in the World (Acts 11-28)

- A. Scattered laity started Jewish churches (11:19)
- B. Christians from Jerusalem plant Gentile-Jewish church in Antioch (11:20-21)
- C. Antioch became the greatest missionary church
 - 1. Sensitive to the Holy Spirit (13:2)
 - 2. Submissive to the Spirit (13:3)
 - 3. Sending church (13:3)
- D. Paul's first missionary journey
 - 1. Preached first in synagogues (3:5; 14:1)
 - 2. Moved from city to city (13:13-14)
 - 3. Shifted to the Gentiles (13:13-14)
 - 4. Returned to check on the new churches (14:21)
 - 5. Appointed elders to lead the churches (14:23)
- E. Paul's second missionary journey (15:40-18:22)
 - 1. Employed a team ministry (15:40)
 - 2. Returned to visit new churches (15:41)

3. Guided by the Holy Spirit (16:9-10)
 4. Evangelized households (16:15, 33)
 5. Taught in the marketplace (17:17)
 6. Contextualized the message (17:22-23)
 7. Emphasized responsive people (18:6)
- F. Paul's third missionary journey (18:23-21:17)
1. Returned to visit the churches (18:23)
 2. Established mother churches in urban areas (19:10; I Thess 1:8)
 3. Started house churches (20:20)
 4. Encourage stewardship in new churches (I Cor 16:1-3)

Church Structure

There was a structure in the early church to support new church plants. Peter was sent from Jerusalem to Samaria to confirm and encourage the pioneering work done by Philip. Barnabas was sent from Jerusalem to confirm and encourage the work done at Antioch. Paul often returned to the places where churches were planted to train and encourage them. And Paul sent letters when he could not go. When a church is structured to encourage new believers by training and equipping them for the mission, it enhances church planting. This principle of providing support for newly planted churches, not for control but encouragement, is an essential ingredient for a successful church plant.

Church Planting in Paul's Ministry

Paul was converted on the road to Damascus where he had an encounter with Jesus (Acts 9). He started preaching Christ only a few days after his conversion (Acts 9:20-22). He demonstrated being teachable by becoming an apprentice of Barnabas, even

though he had more education than him (Acts 22:3). Before God could place others under Paul's authority, He placed him first under the authority of another, Barnabas.

From the church at Antioch, where Barnabas and Paul served for one year (Acts 11:26), they were sent out to reach other cities (Acts 13). These new churches were, according to Galadima and Turaki (2001), "self-propagation, self-supporting, and self-governing (p.180). Successful church plants begin planting another church within a few years from their beginning.

The Sending Church

Note that the sending of Paul and Barnabas was an outflow of fasting and prayer by the brethren in Antioch (Acts 13:2-3). Take note of who sent them. "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed into Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:4). The Holy Spirit sent them and the Antioch church was only a tool. Today church planters must feel convicted by the Holy Spirit to go and plant. That is the only guarantee of protection. The Antioch church was submissive to the Holy Spirit. This may imply that more churches will be planted if existing churches seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and remain sensitive to His missional promptings. Barnabas and Paul were leading figures at Antioch yet, the church was willing to send their best the furtherance of the gospel commission.

Paul and Barnabas, and later with Silas and others, became the greatest church planter in Christian history (Ugo, 2012, para 4). Bunn (2008) argues, "It would be difficult to find any better model than the Apostle Paul in the work of establishing new churches." Describing Paul's concept of church planting, Hibbert (2009) denotes, "He uses the words 'planting' (1 Cor 3:6-9; 9:7, 10, 11), 'laying foundations' (Rom 15:20; 1

Cor. 3:10), ‘giving birth’ (1 Cor 4:15; Phlm 10), and ‘betrothing’ (2 Cor 11:2) for starting churches.” In just ten years, Paul established churches in four provinces: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. Prior to AD 47 there were no churches in these provinces but by AD 57 Paul could speak of his work there as being accomplished (Rom 15:19-20)” (p.15).

Paul was innovative. The apostle went out of his way to preach Christ and win believers. “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law” (1 Cor 9:19-20). He began with a religious gathering place - the synagogues (Acts 13:15; 14:1). He preached to crowds (Acts 13:45). He moved from city to city (Acts 13: 5-14). He was creative about way to enter new territories. He studied the culture and context of the cities. He was adaptive and creative, seeking more effective methods for establishing the work of God. White (1946) maintains, “Men are needed who pray to God for wisdom, and who, under the guidance of God, can put new life into the old methods of labor and can invent new plans and new methods of awakening the interest of church members and reaching the men and women of the world (p. 105). It is essential to create new ways to do the work without compromising divine principles.

Location and Team

According to Ugo (2012), “Paul focused intentionally on urban church planting. His strategy to make disciples began with evangelizing the cities and planting local churches in them. . . . For Paul, the city was the natural place to preach the gospel and plant churches. He recognized it as the flashpoint from which the gospel would spread

out to surrounding areas” (Urban Evangelism and Church Planting section). Paul’s ministry was focused on the Gentiles even though he initially preached to the Jews (Acts 13:46-49). Paul was restrained from preaching in Asia and Bithynia but was called to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). These were evidence that he listened to the Holy Spirit’s direction. He returns to the places where churches were planted to encourage them (Acts 21-22; 15:41). Here Paul is interested in the nurture of new believers.

Paul knew that new believers must be established into a community of believers, thus they were organized as churches. He provided leadership through the ordaining of elders (Acts 14:23). Local elders worked as a team to mature and produce other churches. Bohannon (2005) notes, “The elders of the local church were commissioned by the Spirit of Christ to carry on the work of Christ as a collegiate leadership team (Acts 20:28; 14:23). This is evident by the biblical witness of a plurality of elders (team leadership) established in each church (Acts 11:30; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18).” To buttress the importance of creating churches for new believers, White (1911) agrees that “as an important factor in the spiritual growth of the new converts the apostles were careful to surround them with the safeguards of gospel order. Churches were duly organized in all places in Lycaonia and Pisidia where there were believers. Officers were appointed in each church, and proper order and system were established for the conduct of all the affairs pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the believers” (p.185). God is dishonored when no adequate plan is done to keep groups of new believers in a church even when they are few. In forming churches White (1911) maintains:

This was in harmony with the gospel plan of uniting in one body all believers in Christ, and this plan Paul was careful to follow throughout his ministry. Those who in any place were by his labor led to accept Christ as the Savior were at the proper time

organized into a church. Even when the believers were but few in number, this was done. (pp. 186-187)

New converts are to continue the mission of the church.

Below is an outline of Paul's strategy as a church planter:

1. His educational training gave him a large understanding of God's divine plan (Acts 22:3).
2. He had a vision from God (Acts 9:15; 26:16-18).
3. He preached from the beginning of his conversion (Acts 9:20-22).
4. He was teachable (Acts 11:25-26).
5. He was an example (1 Thess 2:1-12).
6. He had small groups and public evangelism (Acts 13:44; 14:1; 19:9-10).
7. He searched for receptive ground (Acts 18:6).
8. He modeled to others (Acts 16:2-3; 18:19; 19:22).
9. He became selective of team members (Acts 14:23).
10. He had a strategy (Acts 13: 14, 44-49; 14:1; 17:2; 19:21).
11. He had a team (Acts 13:1-5; 15:40; 16:6; 20:4).
12. He reported to another church (Acts 14:26-28).
13. He took risks and was dynamic (Rom 11: 1-14; 15:20-22).
14. He tried new methods (Acts 13).
15. He cared for new converts and others (Acts 14: 22; 20:17-21, 31; 1 Thess2:7-11)
16. He was close to coworkers (2 Tim 1:2).
17. He delegated to others ((Acts 13:13; 14:21-23; 16:1-3; Titus 1:5).
18. He lived a sacrificial life to fulfill the mission (Acts 14:19-20; 16:25; 2 Cor 11:23-28).

19. He left the churches he planted in the hands of others and had faith that God will keep them (Acts 16:40; 18:9-11; 20:31; 19:10; 20:23).

20. He followed the example of Barnabas and the Antioch church in sending others to plant new churches (Acts 13:1-4; 6-12) Worcester (as cited in Stetzer & Im, 2016, pp. 36-38).

Some principles from Paul's example are worth mentioning: First, he realized that God gives His blessing of the work. He was only a follower of Jesus and a messenger. He was willing to enter new places and experiment with new ideas God brought to him. He was willing to be all things to people to win them. Referring to the method of our work, White (1970) confirms, "There must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unity must and will be preserved" (p. 105).

Secondly, he was willing to have a team, knowing that team ministry will enlarge his strength. Maxwell (2008) suggests, "No accomplishment of real value has ever been achieved by a human being working alone" (p. 7). Paul trained Timothy to train others who trained others (2 Tim 2:2).

Thirdly, to expand God's kingdom, Paul released his best partners. Perhaps he learned this from Barnabas and Antioch, his sending church. As he trained people, he sent them to other places.

Fourthly, he was not in competition but in cooperation with Barnabas, Antioch church, and the church in Jerusalem, for competition has no place in church planting and Kingdom expansion.

Ellen G. White Counsel on Church Planting

The ministry of Ellen G. White has greatly contributed to the effectiveness of the mission of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. White maintained, “The church is an embassy of salvation, from the beginning it is to reach the whole world and reflect the fullness and glory of Jehovah” (White, 1911, p. 9). To spread the Word of God, James White, her husband, started a printing press to produce tracts to be shared around the world. White (1947) said:

The vineyard includes the whole world, and every part of it is to be worked. . . . New churches must be established, new congregations organized. At this time there should be representatives of present truth in every city and in the remote parts of the earth. The whole earth is to be illuminated with the glory of God’s truth. (p. 24)

Commenting on reaching the world, White (1947) insists:

The Lord calls for pastors, teachers, and evangelists. From door to door His servants are to proclaim the message of salvation. . . . The world needs to see in Christians an evidence of the power of Christianity. Not merely in a few places, but throughout the world, messages of mercy are needed. (p. 23)

As these messages of mercy are preached, churches will be planted. White (1970) wrote:

The power of the gospel is to come upon the companies raised up, fitting them for service. Some of the new converts will be so filled with the power of God that they will at once enter the work. They will labor so diligently that they will have neither time nor disposition to weaken the hands of their brethren by unkind criticism. Their only desire will be to carry the truth to regions beyond. (p. 354)

She adds, “Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches”

(White, 1932, p.315). As new believers preach to others, new churches may be formed.

Summary and Conclusion

Four units of thought were discussed in this chapter:

The first segment deals with the priority which the Bible gives to church planting. The early church was continually raising up new groups of believers. Newly planted churches were often mission focused. Today, church planting remains a highly effective way of enlarging the kingdom of God.

The second segment presents the Antioch church as a model of a healthy church plant; a church that was planted when the disciples scattered after the stoning of Stephen. When the believers preached to the Gentiles, God opened the hearts of these unreached people. This was the first place the name Christian was given to Christ's followers. Antioch became a missional post from where Paul and Barnabas were sent as missionaries to the Gentiles. It served as a mother organization to many newly established churches. This confirms that the outgrowth of planting a church is for that church to become an instrument for planting other churches.

The third segment performs an analysis of the factors that enabled Paul to plant churches. He experienced the power of the Holy Spirit through preaching rather than relying upon his eloquence. After his conversion, he was willing to be discipled or mentored by another follower of Jesus. He preached in varied circumstances, adapting to fulfill his calling. He invested in building a team. He regularly visited planted churches to organize and encourage through teaching and ordaining elders. He sent others, and letters, to some churches and thus visited them vicariously.

Finally, Ellen G. White's counsel on church planting was reviewed. White compels the church to go to the farthest corners of the world and involve new converts in frontline mission

He has given us His power (Matt 28:19) and He has given us gifts (Eph. 4:11-14), so that the church may reproduce by making mature disciples who will be sent to the world. God raised standards against the powers of darkness - the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin who were opposing the work of the disciples. But, notwithstanding persecution, the message prevailed (Acts 5:12-14). The threat of Herod and the government of the day did not stop the message (Acts 11:24).

Because of the space limitation of this chapter, it is recommended that more studies be done on church planting in the New Testament as well as how church planting was funded and sustained.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ON CHURCH PLANTING

Literature relating to church planting is numerous. Volumes have been written about planting churches from different continents and contexts. An exhaustive exploration of these sources is beyond the scope of this paper. This literature review will touch on (a) church planting in the first century, (b) church planting in early Adventism, (c) church planting in Africa, (d) church planting in West Africa, (e) church planting in Nigeria, (f) church planting in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria, (g) Seventh, contextualization in Africa, and (h) Eighth, research from within the North American context which may be applicable across many cultures.

Church Planting in the First Century

The early church was made up of small groups of believers in many places. Donkor (2008) observes, “Paul speaks of such a church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3, 5), of Philemon (Phil 1, 2), and of Nympha in Laodicea (Col 4:15).” Allen (2000) argues that Paul established the church in Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia – the four provinces of the Roman Empire before AD 57 (p. XIII). Adding to Allen (2017), “The center in which Paul established his churches were all centers of Greek civilization. Even at Lystra, half the inscriptions that have been discovered are Greek, while the other half are Latin” (p.7). Paul started his ministry in centers of influence. He adds that these cities “were centers of the world’s commerce. These cities occupied an important place as leaders of the province, foremost in every

movement of policy.” (p. 9). This implies that Paul’s church planting in the first century was in significant cities located in Asia Minor. Garow (2000) adds that, in the first century, churches were planted in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and North Africa (p. 369).

According to Curtis (2010, para. 2), “the spread of the Christian church in its earliest centuries is one of the most amazing phenomena in all human history. The church was considered a *religoprava*, an illegal and deprived religion. Wave after wave of persecution was unleashed to squash it,” but the church expanded. Although many Christians died in the first century because they refused to conform to the emperor cult, churches were planted in many places Garow (2000) (p. 17).

Ruffcorn (1994) provides insight as to how Christianity spread so powerfully. “Evangelism is the proclamation of the good news, both inwardly and outwardly, by word and action in an intentional and relational manner” (p.20). This is what the early church was doing. They preached the gospel and healed diseases.

Kelly (2012) opines:

Early Christian bishops in the Roman Empire, by contrast, were so well-known for their identity with the poor and that eventually, though part of a minority religion, they were seen to have the right to speak for the local community as a whole. Caring for the poor and the weak became, ironically a major reason for the cultural influence the church eventually came to wield. If the church does not identify with the marginalized, it will itself be marginalized. (p. 224)

When the church met the needs of the people, hearts were open to the gospel, and churches were formed.

Churches were planted as unbelievers were surprised by the deep love expressed by believers, not only to each other, but to the marginalized. According to Kelly (2012), “the pagans of the first and second century were astonished at the Christians’ compassion

for the sick and the poor. David Bentley Hart explains that Christians essentially invented orphanages and hospitals; no one had ever thought of them” (p. 37). Through these works of kindness hearts were softened, and as people believed in Christ churches were formed. Christianity is contagious (Wilson, 2008).

The Apostles planted churches in the cities. Christian expansion started from the cities, but not from the elites, yet the society became changed by it. This process has been confirmed by Kelly (2012), “cultural changes tend to flow out of Urban and academic centers. But these changes are typically not initiated by the innermost elites with the highest position of prestige, for they have a vested interest in the status quo” (p. 225). It is difficult to change a system that you are a beneficiary of its dysfunction. Zunkel (1987) adds, “church planting is the most effective way of growing membership because new churches reach more people” (p.123). We must therefore not be discouraged about our position in the society. The power of love conquers earthly power. The churches which started through the demonstration of God’s love in the first century, are able to re-attune the church today to God's strategy for impact upon the populous.

Church Planting in Early Adventism

The Seventh-day Adventist Church derives her mission from Matt 28:19, 20, where we are commanded to make disciples of all nations. From early Adventism, there has been an emphasis on taking the message to every tribe, tongue, and people in Rev 14: 6, 7 (Malcom Bull & Keith Lockhart 2007).

Murray (2001) said, “Church planting reminds ecclesiologists that mission is the primary task of the church. It is possible for local church leaders, denominational representatives, and ecclesiastical commissions to concentrate on other aspects of church

life . . . but to fail to relate these to the calling of the church to be a missionary community” (p. 54). The church must carry the mission of God to the world. According to White (1947):

The Lord calls for pastors, teachers, and evangelists. From door to door His servants are to proclaim the message of salvation. . . . The world needs to see in Christians an evidence of the power of Christianity. Not merely in a few places, but throughout the world, messages of mercy are needed. (p. 23)

Knight (2008) asserts, “From its very beginning Seventh-day Adventist has viewed itself as a called-out people with a prophetic mission. Adventism has never seen itself as just another denomination. It is that understanding that has given the Advent movement power. While the denomination is evangelical, it has never been merely evangelical.” (p. 29). It was this mindset that made the church move to plant churches in many areas.

Cauley (2012) asserts, “early Adventists had a whatever-it-takes attitude and gave their best for the Master” (pp. 22-23). It could be the manifestation of this hard work by early Adventists that prompted Knight (1993) to observe, “one out of every 35 Americans attended Adventist Camp Meeting.” The Americans came because they were invited. White (1948) testifies to the need for planting churches by emphasizing that churches need to be planted in all regions, and people groups around the world (pp. 6, 24). We are to develop different methods to plant churches everywhere. To expand the discussion Ron Sylvia (2004) suggests, “new churches reach more new people and established churches reach more established people. . . . Statistically, the larger and older a church is, the less likely it is to successfully evangelize” (p. 4). New churches will further our task of planting more churches.

Malphurs (2011) argues, “Numerical growth is important to Christ’s churches, particularly in church planting. Christ wants his church to grow numerically (Acts 2:41,

47; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31, 35,42; 11:21,24; 14:1, 21; 16:5; 17:12) and if it isn't, something is wrong" (p. 51).

According to Gladden (1999), referring to Seventh-day Adventist ministers, he observed, "Ministers were paid from tithe to be evangelists and church planters. Tithe was also used to support a thin layer of administration to coordinate and support the front-line evangelistic work of the church (p. 5). He adds "Protestant churches hired ministers to serve already-established churches as their pastor. Adventists did not. Early Adventist leaders decided that the best way to fulfil our mission was to spend the tithe for salaries of full-time workers who would be evangelists (win souls) and church planters" (p. 5). He continues,

Ministers were primarily church planters and evangelists. After planting a church, they leave it in the hands of the church members and go to plant other churches. Although other protestant churches had pastors for their established churches. (p. 5)

In other words, Gladden believes tithe should be focused on planting churches. In Maxwell's (1982) view, not every member became enthusiastic about spreading the message in early Adventism (p.165).

This may be why White (1911) restated the work of the church by saying, "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency" (p. 11). White's point is that the church is called for a mission, and the mission is fulfilled through carrying the gospel to unreached places, which entails church planting. Church planting was evidence that God had called a minister to the work of the third angel's message according to James White. By July 1975, Seventh-day Adventists

became the most active protestant church in the world because it had entered about 193 countries. The next most active Protestant denomination has entered only half as many countries (p. 152). Church planting addresses the problem of evil in the world. When Christ is proclaimed, darkness flees.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists was organized to be a catalyst for mission (church planting) (p. 52). In 1890 it took 1.7 pastors to plant a church in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Gladden 1999). In the Rivers West Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria, it takes eighteen. Maxwell (1982) asserts “From the earliest beginnings Seventh-day Adventism has been more than a mere religious society.” It has been a movement with a message and a sense of mission.

“Let the message fly,” wrote James White in 1949, “for time is short,” (p. 152). There was an “open door” to salvation, meaning all are welcome into Christ’s redemption (Damsteegt 1977, p. 278). Maxwell (1982) adds that at the end of the “shut-door period” Millerites believed that there was no more repentance for those who did not repent a few days before October 22, 1844. After this period Joseph Bates predicted that the Sabbath would spread to France, Britain, Russia, and the Middle East (p. 153). Seventh -day Adventist churches were planted when hundreds and thousands of people came to the tent evangelistic preaching of Loughborough, White, Andrews, Cornell, Waggoner, and others (p. 154). Books and missionaries were sent overseas (p. 155). Maxwell (1982) argues that even though the General Conference turned down the request of M. B. Czechowski to return to Europe as a missionary in 1864, he sought support from other sources and went to plant the first church in Europe (p. 156).

Maxwell (1982) notes, "In more cases than anyone knows, the first converts to the third angel's message in the distant lands were won by lay missionaries of the Tract and Missionary society years before the arrival of a missionary in person" (pp. 157, 171). M. B. Czechowski planted the first organized Seventh-day Adventist church in Tramelan, Switzerland, Europe in 1867. This was the first Seventh-day Adventist Church outside North America (p. 161). Those who received the advent message often met together in houses (p. 167). Those that heard the advent message took the house groups and planted churches in different places. Theodore Anthony planted the first church in Turkey, Abraham LaRue in Hong Kong (p. 176). Dr. H. P. Ribton in Egypt, William Hunt in South Africa. And still, in South Africa, Peter Wessels and G. J. Van Drueten discovered the Sabbath and started worshipping without knowing if there was any Sabbath church in the world. They later came across William Hunt by providence (p. 178). There was unprecedented zeal in the lives of early Adventists to plant churches. Such zeal, if repeated today, will turn our world "upside down."

Church Planting in Africa

According to John Mbiti (1971), the West did not bring the knowledge of God to Africa. The concept of the Creator has been known in Africa before the advent of Christianity (p. 292). In addition, Walls (2007) claims:

What happened to the Ethiopian eunuch—an official, it would seem, of the kingdom of Meroe – we, like Luke, have no means of knowing; nor do we know much about the origin of Christianity either in Egypt or in North Africa. But it is clear that by the second century their churches could claim to be old and established. (p. 87)

Churches were planted in Africa during the first century. Walls (2007) continues, "Ethiopia became a Christian empire while Alexandria was swallowed up in an Islamic one. But time after time, when an Abyssinian abuna died, someone made the long,

hazardous journey to Alexandria, and someone was consecrated in Alexandria for the oversight of the church” (p. 89).

During the first five centuries, Falk (1997) notes, “Christianity was established in North Africa during the time of the apostles. It spread rapidly, won the allegiance of the majority of the population, and contributed most significantly to the ministry of the Christian church” (p.23). Further, Walls (2007) asserts, “we realize that by the time the Arabs arrived in Africa, bearing Islam, Christianity was already well established and deeply rooted there” (p. 88).

Disappointingly, the churches did not continue. According to Walls (2007), “the Christian world reoriented, realigned northwards; Ethiopia became isolated and Christian Nubia gradually succumbed to attrition. And so, in many accounts, ended the first planting of Christianity in Africa” (p. 89). Walls (2007) further adds, “after all, the church of Roman Africa disappeared well over a millennium ago; it was in terminal decline before the Arabs got there; and, fairly certainly, it never brought the faith across the Sahara” (p. 89).

Christian missionaries appeared in the 1400s. Ajibade (2010) states, “Towards the end of the 15th century, the Portuguese Catholics brought the Christian faith to Africa south of the Sahara” (p. 3). Portuguese explorers came for access to commodities such as fabrics, spices, and gold as well as a quest for a faster route to reach South Asia (Ross 2002). Missionaries were also commissioned by the Pope. But, after the Portuguese explorers' attention was averted to areas of conquest beyond Africa, the Portuguese missionary work largely died.

However, Providence brought hope to the people of Africa. Walls (2007) states:

The birth of the missionary movement in Britain coincided with the development of the public campaign against the Atlantic slave trade. Supporters of the movement were usually supporters of the other, and parliamentary leaders against the slave trade were evangelical humanitarians who were mostly enthusiastic supporters of missions. (p. 95).

Walker, (cited in Abodunde 2017) commenting on the formation of a body to help the anti-slave campaign chaired by the Prince Consort, Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria said, the “Society for the Extinction of Slave Trade and the Civilization of Africa which at its first meeting on June 1, 1840, had in attendance men of widely different religious and political perspectives” (p.30). The cause for the abolition of slavery fostered ministry to African people.

The antislavery cause also empowered African people to become missionaries to their continent of origin. Walls (2007) writes:

The first African center for the new missionary movement, Sierra Leone, was explicitly associated with the antislavery campaign. Its original basis was found in Afro-America: 1,100 people of African birth or descent who had fought and taken up arms against their masters in the American War of Independence, and thereafter been transported to Nova Scotia, traveled to Sierra Leone in 1792. (p. 95)

Further, according to Walls (1996):

The first real success story of the missionary movement in Africa was based on the conversion of slaves from a slave ship intercepted at sea, enroute to the Americas, and brought to Sierra Leone by the British navy. (p. 95)

There is something symbolic in the fact that the first church in tropical Africa in modern times was not a missionary creation at all. It arrived ready-made, a body of people of African birth or descent who had come to faith in Christ as plantation slaves or as soldiers in the British army during the American War of Independence or as farmers or squatters in Nova Scotia after it. (p. 85)

Additionally, Walls (1996) concludes:

They brought their own preachers with them, and their churches had been functioning for nearly twenty years in Sierra Leone when the first missionaries arrived. Sierra Leone sent out missionaries to other parts of West Africa. (p.87).

Walls (2007) also stresses that Africans were planting churches at their own initiative. “A century ago and more, groups of African Christians, frustrated by missionary control, established churches that would be free from domination by the missionaries” (p. 91).

Church Planting in West Africa

According to Santos (2015) “Church planting is extremely effective to make disciples and to fulfil God’s mission” (p.16). Church planting is essential in West Africa. Walls (2007) describe how church planting was started specifically in West Africa by Portuguese traders. The intent of the Portuguese church plants was to widen the influence of Portugal and the Catholic church. “The Portuguese presences stretched along the coast of West and Central South and Southeast Africa. Where there was Portuguese presence, there was a church presence, and the church was, by agreement, under the supervision of the king of Portugal” (p. 92). Through the presence of the Portuguese traders the church came to West Africa.

According to Dauda and Gbule (2000) “The first church in West Africa was established in 1482 in Elmina (Gold Coast)” (p. 1). In that year, Duada and Gbule maintained that “about six Hundred (600) Portuguese explorers arrived at Elemina and their leader was Don Digat the bo d’ Azambuja.” He further asserted that “the Portuguese party held the first church service under a mango tree.” At this point, it is important to state that “the early Portuguese missionaries notably Digbo and his party labored to convert the people of the Gold Coast but in vain.” This is because “the Chief’s initial romance with Christianity was not borne out of genuine religious conversion. “He was avidly interested in Portuguese goods, such as cloth, beads, firearms, cowries, and iron rods (Owete, 2012).

Years afterward, Hastings (1976) reports that “Around 1630, some French Capuchins came to convert the people of the Gold Coast to Christianity. They settled near the Portuguese factory at Axim. Initially, there was success and it seemed as if Christianity would be firmly established.” However, after some years, the Portuguese forced out the Capuchins following a disagreement (Owete 2012). Thus, with the impact made from these efforts over the years and the eventual planting and development of a church in Elmnia, the face of Christianity wore a new look. No wonder Imokhai (1982) reports that “beginning with the king Alphonso, King John II, King Manuel, and King John III, Lisbon launched a pioneering missionary enterprise in the Kingdoms of Benin and Itsekiri (Warri) Nigeria” (p. 3). Imokhai (1982) further submits that “about 1472, Portuguese priests from the Diocese of Lisbon, who technically speaking were not missionaries, were sent by the kings of Portugal along with the Portuguese merchants to evangelize and trade with Benin kingdom” (p. 3). Eregare (2013) argues that “Christianity migrated to Delta State (Benin) as a result of contact with the Portuguese in the fifteenth century” (p. 18). This means that contact with the Portuguese was the beginning of Christianity in the Benin kingdom.

Consequently, Owete (2012) avers that “Benin Kingdom, situated in the rain forest zone, was not immediately accessible to the Portuguese, so both the missionaries and the merchants had to approach Benin via the Warri creeks and the Benin from Ughosston on foot; and thus, were constantly exposed to danger and the pestilence of tropical diseases” (p. 17). This may be where Ilega and Onu (2008) stood when they posited that “the early Christian missionaries faced numerous problems in their attempt to plant Christianity in Nigeria” (pp. 10-13). Among these problems that surfaced among

early missionaries in church planting in Africa, Ilega and Onu (2008) notes that an “unrealistic approach, poor knowledge, inadequate missionaries, language, communication, and malaria attacks were factors that challenged the easy planting of the Church in Africa.

That notwithstanding, Odili and Oviomagho (2012) are of the position that the first attempt “to plant the Church after Benin was in Ukwailand. The attempt, according to them, “came because of the Niger Expedition of 1841.” This was a consequence of “Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, whose desire was to establish legitimate trade in hinterland as a means of checking slave trade” (p. 57). This means that church planting became a means of stopping the exportation of human beings from Africa.

In conclusion, the work of scholars shows that Christianity and church planting in West Africa were first launched and established in Elminia in the Gold Coast. This was the first church plant in West Africa. Church planting came to Nigeria in the 15th Century A.D. through Benin and Warri. Although, at this time, Christianity would not gain a permanent foothold in Benin and Warri (Adamolekun 2012). Evangelism was conducted in both small and large groups, which in the views of Odili and Oviomagho (2012), led to the planting of churches in Ukwailand, Delta State. The origin of church planting in the Niger Delta emerged from Ukwailand and today has become a strong movement in Nigeria.

Church Planting in Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populated country in Africa and home to various ethnic groups, became a burgeoning place for church planting. According to Okegbeile (September 23, 2012), Roman Catholic priests in the 15th century accompanied traders to the West Africa

coast and established churches in Benin for traders and new converts. However, this church disappeared when the Portuguese authority arrived in Badagry (Lagos). The first service of a church plant was held under an Agia tree. Later, a bamboo house was built and became the first church building in Nigeria.

Christmas Eve of 1842 saw the arrival of Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). With the emergence of independent churches in Nigeria in the late 19th century, Nigeria experienced a contextualization of Christianity. This included the 1930 OyeIlesa revival led by Apostle Ayodele Babalola of the Christ Apostolic Church. This was followed by the rise of the Aladura movement in Yorubaland and the apostolic movement. The emergence of the Evangelical, Charismatic, and Pentecostal movements led to the planting of various expressions of protestant churches in Nigeria.

Walls (2007) asserts that “The largest, Nigeria, had more linguistic, cultural, historical, and religious diversity than the whole of Europe put together: 250 language groups, several main culture areas, former Islamic states, and other communities with vigorous Christian traditions” (p. 105). Although Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa it faces many church-planting challenges. However, in spite of these challenges, the churches that were planted in early Nigerian history contributed to the country's development and self-rule. Walls (2007) indicates that the “large numbers of the activists of independence, the people who supplied the motive power, were Christians active in their churches.” Walls (1996), notes that they were seminal figures. “Time after time a seminal figure was a new court clerk who was a Christian or a worker on the new railway, or a tailor, carrying his sewing machine on his head, or some other trades Or

perhaps the initial impetus came from that villager who had gone elsewhere to school, work, to trade, in more than one case to jail and upon returning home brought the things they had found in their travels” (p. 81). Ordinary people planted churches in Nigeria.

According to Walls (1989), In Igbo land Nigeria, the “military defeat by the British, the desirable goods and capabilities in the power of the whites and the association of all this with the power of the book now on offer to them declared the inferiority of traditional religious channels.” People abandon traditional religion when it ceases to provide value.

Bible typology was close to African life. He adds, “In most of Africa, God has a personal name, and this is a vernacular one. God is thus the part of the African past; indeed, as Katonda (East Africa) or Nyame (Ghana) or Olorun (Yoruba, Nigeria), he is part of the Ganda, the Aran,” (p. 96). Since the idea of “God” was not strange, it aided the introduction of the supreme God. In observing some of the reasons why there was receptivity toward churches planted in Nigeria, Walls (1996) notes:

. . . the results of evangelical preaching have been much more widespread, and much more dynamic, than may be at first apparent. . . . certainly, the high place given to Scriptures and the recognition of immediacy in personal experience, have been regular features of African Christianity. (p.100)

Some characteristics of African culture naturally resonated with biblical beliefs and fit readily into the African mindset.

In Nigeria, some individuals were not satisfied with the autocratic style of the missionaries, where they constantly believed they knew more than everyone else around the Nigerian table. The practice of those missionaries favoured the making of major decisions for mission projects based on the formula from Europe. This led to the planting of other churches by these individuals, either to prove they can do what the Europeans

were doing, or it was God's mysterious way of expanding His work. Walls (2007) observes, "A century ago and more, groups of African Christians, frustrated by missionary control, established Churches that would be free of missionaries (p. 91).

Numerous people in Nigeria could not be reached by one style. Snook (December 2010) adds to the need for different styles in planting churches in Nigeria when she says, ". . . the reason for planting churches is simple: there are people who have not yet been reached by the gospel. Church plants can reach new people with the message of Christ because they are flexible, adaptable, hungry for growth, and willing to experiment with new ways of being the church in order to grow" (pp. 111-116). When church leadership emphasizes evangelism and different outreach models, there is increase in membership (Corkum, 2009).

Pentecostal and Apostolic Churches in Nigeria

We shall now explore how Pentecostal churches have been planted as compared to the Adventist churches in Nigeria. Adeboye (2007), referring to the expansion of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, observes, "The most remarkable of these has been the Pentecostal explosion of the last fifteen years, in which the Redeemed Christian Church of God (hereafter RCCG) has featured most prominently." According to Adeboye and Mfon (2004), the vision of RCCG is "to plant a church of the RCCG within five minutes of every home worldwide" (p.208). They followed this vision to the letter. Although the RCCG church was formed in 1952; thirty-eight years after the Seventh-day Adventist Church came to Nigeria (1914), by 2004, the RCCG had about 7000 churches in Nigeria (p. 208) while the Seventh-day Adventist Church had 747 (GC, 2004). Adeboye (2007) opines, "Perhaps, a crucial factor in the Pentecostal explosion of the 1990s was the

message of hope and power offered by those churches in the midst of the hardships created by the military regimes of General Gbadamosi Babangida (1985-1993) and General Sanni Abacha (1993-1998)” (p.31). Whenever a church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, speaks to the needs of the people, membership grows and churches are planted. These churches planted more churches as they addressed the needs and concerns of the people through a practical demonstration of Christ’s ministry.

The apostolic churches meet the needs of the community through fellowship, love, healing, and miracles (Acts 3:1-26; 4:20-22; 5:12-14; 8:5-12; 9:32-35; 13:11, 12). These Pentecostal churches were preaching hope at a time when the country was under the Structural Adjustment Program of General Gbadamosi Babangida. The widely held corruption led to distrust, poverty, and sickness. These circumstances made people receptive to the miracles and healing ministry of the Pentecostal churches. It is not enough to do evangelism or to plant a single congregation. Christians have not done their job unless a movement of fully indigenous, mission-minded, multiplying churches is planted in a people group. They may then evangelize their people, city, or nation (McClung, 2008).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church grew in Elele of Rivers State, Nigeria because the government hospital which was operated by the Adventist Church. This hospital met the needs of the community through love and healing. Thus, churches were planted. The Western Churches like Methodist, Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventists, etc. experienced church growth and church planting through building schools. This also meets an urgent need for most Nigerians, before and after the country’s independence from the British in 1960 (Aloa 2004). Byrd (2009), notes, “Successful contemporary

evangelism comprises meeting people's felt needs and expressing love towards them in a relevant way. This means taking the ministry of the church beyond the four walls of the church" (p.89).

Most Pentecostal churches in Nigeria also began planting more churches when they began targeting the universities. University graduates influence their homes and family members. This influence is heightened since, in most Nigerian homes, there is only one university graduate. A person with a degree has a higher chance for securing employment. Employment may bring money, power, and influence which may be used for the advancement of God's work. Some churches in Nigeria were planted by members who transferred to different cities for employment or as graduates from Nigerian universities, serving in the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC). The NYSC requires of all Nigerian graduates a compulsory one-year of service to the nation (Ojo, 1988, p. 18).

It is obvious from the above explanation that churches were planted in Nigeria as the churches met felt needs - educational, health, emotional, spiritual, or physical necessities.

Church Planting by Seventh-day Adventists in Nigeria

The Seventh-day Adventist Church came to Nigeria, a part of West Africa, through the work of David C. Babcock in Western Nigeria. According to Babalola (2004) "the history of Adventism in West Africa dates back to 1888 when Mr. Dolphin obtained a tract concerning the true Sabbath of the Lord which is the Seventh-day Sabbath" (p. 15). He adds again, "and so, in 1894, the first set of the Adventist Missionaries landed in Gold Coast. Brother E.L. Sanford and K.G. Rudolphin were warmly received at Apan on February 22, 1894" (p.15).

Babalola (2002) emphasizes that “Babcock and C.E.F. Thompson, a Jamaican who joined the Adventist Church in Sierra Leone, with the co-operation of brethren Ackah, Bonney, Daharty, Garbrah, and Sakey, developed the Seventh-day Adventist work among the Nazima people of the Axim area. In 1910, Babcock baptized about fifty believers organizing churches at Axim and Kikam” (p.87). Babalola’s point is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church came from Ghana to Nigeria.

According to Babalola (2002) before the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria other missionaries were already there. Notable missionary pioneers were Thomas B. Freeman of the Methodist Church Mission “who arrived in Badagry on the 24th of September 1842, followed by the Rev H Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the same year. The Presbyterian Church began in Calabar led by Reverend Hope Waddell on the 10th of April 1846.” Thomas Bowen of the Southern Baptist Mission was begun on the 18th of September 1863, and the Catholic Church was founded in Lagos by Father Francis Borghero on the same day. While the African Church was established in Lagos in the year 1901 (p.85).

Through the effort of David C. Babcock and his team, the work began in Western Nigeria (Yoruba land). According to Agboola (1987):

It is clear that Yorubaland was already a Christian mission field before the arrival of the Adventist missionaries in 1914. In fact, the Adventist missionaries came after the other Christian missionaries had been in the country for over fifty years. The Adventist missionaries had been described by an elderly Adventist evangelist as one of the latecomers. (p. 1)

As soon as Babcock and his team arrived, Agboola (1987) states, a “whole team then began to preach the Adventist message at Eremu” (p.2). Alao (2004) observed that they encountered many problems but Agboola (1987) notes, “it would have been less difficult,

perhaps, if” not for “the Muslims who dominated this part of Yoruba land. Nevertheless, the Adventist work grew encouragingly in the immediate surroundings of Eremu” (p.10). Thus, the first official Seventh-day Adventist Church was born in Eremu, Nigeria. Agboola (1987) describes what happened, saying, “. . . separate companies did not exist around Eremu. All the believers in the surrounding smaller villages came to the big church at Eremu to worship. However, there were few companies at centers such as Ile – Ife, Lagos, Abeokuta, Iwo, Inisha and Ikirun. To move the conversation further Agboola submits, “Elder Babcock had three major Churches established before his unceremonious exit. These are Sao, Ipoti, and Eremu” (p.23).

Among these churches, Babalola (2002) notes, “Sao then becomes the mother church from which the gospel spread to other neighboring towns and villages. Babcock said that the calls were coming from many towns and asking him to come and help them. He also reported the invitation he received from the king of a very large town through the clerk of the court that he wished to see him about the opening of his work in his town” (p.88). Babalola ‘s point is that churches were also planted at the invitation of the community leaders. Alao (2004) commented on how McClement (the one that took over the work from Babcock) said, “One area of interest of McClements was the pioneering of churches through Bible Evangelism. Meanwhile, as he was shuttling between Sao and Ipoti in 1922, he met with a delegation from Oke-Ila community in Osun state Nigeria. The delegates appealed to McClements and his team to come and establish an Adventist Church in the town” (p.23).

According to Alao (2004) “Later, Sao became the training ground for both pastors and teachers. The center became a vocational school because in addition to their formal

training, pastors and teachers were taught carpentry, bricklaying, woodwork, and painting” (p.23). Speaking about the call from the Oke-Ila community, Alao (2004) reports that, “The Church members at Ipoti responded positively by sending two members regularly on Fridays to Sundays. The Bible studies and teachings went on until McClements came in 1922 and conducted public preaching where many converts joined the group (p. 23). Today, Oke-Ila has become a stronghold of the Adventist Church with schools and a church building. In Agboola’s (1987) view, “. . . as a group in Yoruba land accepted the Adventist message a request for a school was made. Hence the number of Adventist schools was almost the same as that of the churches in the country” (p.38).

Amanze, Fagbe, and Akintunde (2011) affirm that Jesse Clifford and his wife, who first served the African church in Sierra Leone and Ghana, arrived in the old Eastern Region of Nigeria in 1923 (p. 51). They established an Adventist Nursery/Primary school for evangelism and the persons won were trained to win more people. Thus, churches were planted (p. 52). According to Aloa (20014) a land was bought and “Pastor Clifford quickly arranged for the clearing of the site to facilitate the construction of a church building and a dwelling place. The residential house was a simple house of sticks plastered with mud and a roof of palm leaves. Also, a church capable of seating 50 persons was constructed of the same materials” (p.24). The product of these schools has planted churches in many places in Eastern Nigeria. Amanze et al. (2011) noted that the formation of schools played a very strong role in planting Adventist churches in Eastern Nigeria by Jesse Clifford, the pioneer of the Adventist work in Eastern Nigeria (p. 51). Nwaka (2012) agrees with the role of the schools in the evangelization of the Igbo land when he said, “The use of schools in the service of evangelization thus constituted the

most effective instrument in winning adherents to mission churches.” Speaking of one of the churches in Eastern Nigeria and their ability to plant other churches, T. A. Chukwu (personal communication, September 29, 2015) noted that the Seventh-day Adventist Church Obukegi, located in the rural Rivers State of Nigeria, from 1929 to 1940, planted churches at Odido, Amah, Erema, Ihugbogo, Ibewa, Obiozomini, Egbeda, and Awara. Amanze, Fagbe, and Akintunde (2011) affirm that church planting in Nigeria was done with sacrifice (pp.42-44, 47). These sacrifices included, but were not limited to, the donation of personal land for church projects, rejection by the family because of their professed faith in Christ, being driven away by an entire community because of believers’ decision not to participate in certain cultural practices, and sometimes the ultimate price of dying for faith in Christ.

Aloa (2004) and Amanze et al. (2011) agree that John Jacob Hyde arrived in Nigeria from Ghana and started his missionary work in Northern Nigeria in 1930. Regarding the planting of Seventh-day Adventist churches in Northern Nigeria by the pioneer missionary John Jacob Hyde, Amanze et al. (2011) assert “To make his missionary work felt in the community, he used educational, health care, and evangelism as entering wedges. Progress comes when basic human needs are meet” (p. 66). And so it was in the early years in Nigeria.

Printing and Publication

Agboola (1987) speaks of other reasons for the planting of churches. He asserts that the mission started along the lines of the colporteur work. “W. T. Hyde purchased a small hand press and began producing vernacular tracts in Ibadan. In 1935 a cylinder press, purchased with the help of the Stanborough press in England, was erected in a

covered garage where full-time printing operations were begun by the Nigerian Advent Press” (p. 39). Literature ministry brought many conversions, among them was Albert Dike who became president of the Eastern Nigeria Mission in 1957 and planted many churches (Amanze et al, p. 58). Other things that helped to plant churches were the Voice of Prophecy Bible School and health ministry which climaxed in the building of the hospital at Ife. The Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to plant more churches.

Like Harvard University, Yale University, and Princeton University which were formed for mission expansion (Ng, 1999, pp. 72-73), the Adventist Seminary of West Africa, born in 1957, started to enable mission expansion in Nigeria. It has now become Babcock University, one of Nigeria’s best universities. And the mission expansion and church planting efforts continue to this day.

Contextualization in Africa

When we speak of contextualization, some think it is watering down the gospel, lowering standards to accommodate sinners but according to Kelly (2007), “Sound contextualization means translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel itself” (p. 89). According to Heideman (1997), others misunderstand it to be veiled language for power structures which are "designed to maintain the traditional authority of missionaries and leaders of Western Christianity, with its roots in the Trinitarian dogma established in the fourth century.” However, Dei (2019) states, “Theological contextualization” represents the search for the meaning of the Christian message in thought, behaviors, and emotional patterns that resonate with familiar symbolisms found in the worldview of the recipient’s cultural situation. In other words, theology should be

developed and taught in ways that resonate and create appropriate meaning within the recipients' culture.

Wells (as cited in Kelly, 2007) moves the conversation further by saying, “Contextualization is not merely a practical application of biblical doctrine but a translation of that doctrine into a conceptuality that meshes with the reality of the social structures and patterns of life dominant in our contemporary life” (p. 90).

To have an effective contextualization, one must understand the pattern of life dominant in that region. For Africa, Warri (2010) notes, “the community stands by the individuals to help and assist, leaving little room for loneliness. The individual’s problems are the community’s problems. However, this type of social structure does not allow for much individual freedom or personal choice. One can see that such social structure brings about a challenge to Christianity which is exercised on an individual basis” (p. 203). Warri (2010) reminds, “spirits and ancestors, for instance, are very active in this world, and not being in harmony with them can spell doom for an individual. Therefore, the first response of a traditional African to any calamity is not to do a physical analysis of the situation but a spiritual diagnosis of the spirit powers that have been offended” (p. 204).

As a guide to understanding Africa today, Nigeria becomes a helpful case study. Since, is the largest country in that continent, it becomes a mirror for the rest of the continent. Paden (2008) states, “at the grassroots level, there are three major economic issues: jobs, educational opportunity, and health-and-welfare concerns” (p. 67). Taking the conversation deeper, he adds, “compounded by the perception that corruption is rampant at all levels and politics are never stable” (p. 70). He argues, “there are three

obvious approaches to fight corruption in Nigeria: encouraging official will and action, establishing leadership by example, and engaging in civic culture” (p. 71). Similarly, Maier (2000) notes, “we have millions of people who have no food, no water, no education, no health care, but there is one thing common to them, religion” (p.148). He again adds, “What matters to most Nigerians is the six P’s, which are pursued at all cost—position, power, possession, plaudit, popularity and pleasure” (p.267). One must use the needs of the people to contextualize the gospel without the gospel losing any essential quality.

According to Kelly (2007), “The truths of the gospel are not the product of any culture, and they stand in judgment over all human cultures. If you forget the first truth – that there is no culture-less presentation of the gospel – you will think there is only one true way to communicate it, and you are on your way to a rigid, culturally bound conservatism” (p.93). Mission is to be structured to reach the needs of the people. According to Nkansah-Obrempong (2017), “The church exists to minister to people and their needs. Christian ministry includes sacrificial ministry to people in need. The church mission in Africa must include these three elements, where healing encompasses the concept of Shalom, wholeness, and wellbeing.” Some of the missionaries to Africa, like David Livingstone, increased their effectiveness as they understood the culture of the people (Ray, 1976, p. 5). Kelly (2007) states, “when Chinese churches and ministers who had experienced God’s rural ministries entered the mushrooming cities of China and tried to minister and communicate the gospel in the same way that had been blessed in the countryside, they saw less fruitfulness” (p.89). This comment by Kelly, urges the reader

to understand the church's context for ministry as a key in to effectively expand the gospel.

Babalola (2010) points out, "Most African churches are dissatisfied with the nature of most of the mission churches. They seek a church that will minister to their needs and deliver them from powers they cannot control. To them, a church that affords them the opportunity for help, and offers relief, is the church people want to attend" in spite of their sense of being guarded. (p. 68). Babalola (2010) adds, "Intimacy with God and service to humanity are both essential for church planting" (p. 79). When God's people fail to represent the compassion and healing presence of God, it becomes an occasion for misrepresentation of the character of God. By attempting to bless the community in wholistic ways, hearts are be opened to the gospel. And this approach reflects the worldview of African religions which, at its core, aims to enhance the well-being of people and the communities in which they reside (Bauer, 2010, p. 175).

Mbuvi (2002) compares Jesus' ministry with ministry in Africa. ". . . for as Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, cast out demons, forgave the sins of prostitute, and gave them a new chance in life, so he continues to do the same on the African continent" (p. 291). Commenting on the need to adapt methods according to the context, White (1946) posits, "there must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unity must and will be preserved" (p. 105). White (1973) adds, "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed his sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then he bade them, 'follow me' " (p. 143). Byrd

(2009) argues that people stay away from churches that think only of themselves, but are delightfully surprised when churches that are sincerely willing to help them.

Contemporary evangelism requires ministry to local needs (p. 90).

On how to have effective contextualization in Africa, Nwaomah (2004) asserts, “. . . we should seek the Holy Spirit on contextualizing our approaches and not our human feelings” (p. 39). In Cauley’s (2010) view, “. . . for spiritual thirst to be quenched the church may need to surrender doctrine to the creativity of the Holy Spirit in the culture of chaos, while maintaining biblical authority, so that the Holy Spirit rebirths doctrine that is lived through the followers of Jesus in the 21st century” (p. 60).

Rastara (2010) challenges, “I believe that it’s time for spiritually matured and well-informed missiologist and theologians to establish a think-tank where reflection and a thorough review of the situation in Africa can be undertaken in order to objectively identify the root causes of the problem in African Adventism” (p.49). White’s (1947) statement concurs with Rastara’s opinion when she wrote: “There are people of all classes to be met, and the work is difficult. But we shall encourage all who have tact and ability to understand the situation to give themselves to the work” (p. 37).

According to Shumba (2010), “It seems the Seventh-day Adventist Church has focused most of its attention on teaching the doctrine of the church rather than working to continue the process of discipleship and nurture, whereby new believers become a new creation living under the Lordship of the Jesus Christ,”(p.49). Bruce (2010) points out, “National church leaders need to do much more to encourage local hymn writers to put into local music form the great themes of the Bible, to use local instruments, to find local

cultural forms that can carry the biblical messages. North Atlantic hymn tunes are not required to worship and praise God” (p. 176).

When any religion loses its power or relevance, it is eventually abandoned for another religious expression that will meet felt needs. Our Christian religion, and in particular the Adventist message, must meet desired needs or it may lose relevancy and become abandoned.

Insights from Church Planting in North America

Regarding the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America and how the church may reach that large population, Kidder (2015) observes:

. . . reaching this burgeoning population is not impossible. In the past century, the number of Adventist churches in North America has grown by 1.03 percent per year. This number fits church growth expert Lyle Schaller’s 1 Percent Rule. He says that denominations cannot avoid declining by maintaining the number of churches they currently have. Because of the growth of the population – just to maintain the current ratio of their churches per the population of their territory, they must add (an additional) 1 percent more each year (than they currently do). To grow faster than the general population, they must, every year, plant 2 to 3 percent more churches than currently exist. (p. 112)

Even though this study was in the North American context, the author believes this principle is widely applicable.

Based upon this research, the Adventist church in Nigeria must also plant 2 to 3% more churches than currently exist, to maintain the vibrancy of the denomination as a mission-focused movement. If the Rivers West Conference is to follow this rule, planting a number equal to 2 to 3% of the total existing churches, will mean six churches must be planted annually. The current annual average, over the past 5 years, regarding the number of new churches being planted, is four churches each year. This will require increasing church planting by at least 50%.

Russell Burrill conducted research about church planting while serving as professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at Andrews University (1999). In his book, *Rekindling a Church Planting Movement*, Burrill presents a persuasive argument that embracing church planting as a movement is a necessary way to revive the Adventist Church. If the church only focuses upon revitalizing existing congregations, it will miss an opportunity to complete the gospel commission efficaciously, economically, and rapidly.

Summary and Conclusion

Passion from within the church for soul winning and church planting is the key to unlocking the best methods to plant more Seventh-day Adventist churches, especially when it is linked to contextualization and meeting the needs of people whom we desire to reach. Since the movement's founding, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has focused upon gathering people from every corner of the globe into God's end-time "Remnant Church". The name Seventh-day Adventists underscores this aim.

Further studies on the success and failure of churches which have been planted in Nigeria, delineating the factors which have influenced either the church plants' success and or demise, may be beneficial.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERVENTION

As noted in the literature review, church planting in Nigeria among Seventh-day Adventists has been low compared to the fastest growing church planting denominations. Church planting is the fastest way of growing membership. This fact should be known and practiced by all our churches, pastors, and members. The Adventist churches which are called to take the Three-Angel Messages to the entire world, must receive more training to think critically and theologically about church planting. Doing so will enable the Church to better fulfill its mission.

In the Rivers-West Conference, there is no clear church-planting initiative and/or policy for fostering and sustaining church growth in Nigeria. New churches are not readily reproducing by planting other churches. As the Literature Review pointed out, the current rate of church planting today in the Conference will not allow us to compete favorably in membership with other growing churches. The need for a guide, as well as training on church planting, is compelling.

This chapter is an attempt to enable churches, pastors, and members to plant vibrant, reproducing churches. The first section describes the development of church planting and the context from which the intervention grew. It is built upon a theology of church planting (Chapter 2) and the practical insight gained from the review of relevant literature (Chapter 3). The second section describes the intervention, including methodology, structure, and content. The third section outlines the research methodology and protocol.

Context of the Intervention

Rivers-West Conference (RWC) started as an Administrative Unit in March 2012 and grew out of the old Rivers Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, now called the Port-Harcourt Conference. RWC became organized as a Conference in 2013 and dedicated the Conference office in 2015. Since that time, the Conference has conducted church planting through the districts (groups of churches), conference departments like Adventist Women's Ministry (AWM), Men's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and the Evangelism department. The Conference Evangelism department planted two churches in 2013 (Omoku town), three churches in 2014 (Ahoada town), and three in 2015 (Abua town) (Appendix D). And because of cultism, youth restiveness, and violence in these areas, no church was planted in 2016. The AWM did not plant any church in 2015 or 2016. The youth department planted an unhealthy church in 2016 and was characterized by a lack of (a) empowering leadership; (b) gift-oriented ministry; (c) passionate spirituality; (d) functional structure; (e) inspiring worship service; (f) holistic small group; (g) need-oriented evangelism; and (h) loving relationships (Schwarz, 1996, p. 79) among volunteers and members. This new church conducted sporadic monthly church services on Sabbaths, due to shifting of worship venues and no dedicated leader at Akinima in the Engeni clan. The Men's Ministry planned to revive this church in 2016 but did not succeed. The men planted a church in 2015 at Onbo, in the Ekepeye clan, but planted no church in 2016.

The Chorale music ministry, a music group in our conference formed in 2014 whose vision is to plant churches, planted a church in 2015 in Mbiama, Rivers State. The Chorale planted another church in Johnkroma (JK4) in 2016 and added another church in

Ubeta district in 2017 in Rivers State. There is no evidence that any of these planted churches have initiated another church plant.

Description of the Intervention

Church leaders and key church members were interviewed for becoming volunteers at the church plant at Ayum in the Odual clan of Rivers State. This was done to ascertain the challenges faced by the church planters, church leaders, and key church members in planting a church. In order to have full representation, the volunteer interviews were in the five major ethnic groups (Abua, Ahoada, Egbema, Engeni, and Ogba) in the Rivers-West Conference. Both youth and adults served as volunteers. When one does nothing to improve an existing structure it becomes increasingly ineffective. Although improving or changing a system brings its threats and challenges, proactive leadership requires it. An emphasis on church planting motivates the membership to be involved in mission.

God's presence, guidance, and blessing is sure as leaders and volunteers are surrender wholly to God and make God's mission a priority. According to White (1988) "When we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to cooperate with One who knows no failure" (p. 383).

Proposed Vision for Church Planting in the Rivers West-Conference

The Bible says, "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Prov 29:18). The outcome we were praying for was to start a new church in Anyu. Consequently, a church planting vision was essential. According to Barna (1992), "Unless God's people have a

clear understanding of where they are headed, the probability of a successful journey is severely limited. . . You are likely to experience confusion, weariness, dissipation, and impotence” (p. 11). It is therefore essential to have a vision. “Vision is a picture held in your mind’s eye of the way things could or should be in the days ahead. Vision connotes a visual reality, a portrait of conditions that do not exist currently” (p. 29). If the Conference and churches cannot have a clear vision of how to plant healthy churches that plant other churches, the organization and congregations will be in confusion and unable to fulfil the heavenly mandate. Consequently, the church will die (Wilson, 2008, p. 57).

This vision must be specific, detailed, and tailored to meet the present and future reality of the Conference. According to Allen (2017), “In a little less than ten years, the apostle Paul established churches in four provinces of the Roman Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Before AD 47, no churches existed in these provinces” (p. xiii). Therefore, it is also possible that churches may be planted in all the “provinces” or communities in Rivers-West Conference before the next ten years.

To be successful over the long term, it is essential to have a vision for church planting that can outlive any administration of the Conference. Collins and Porras (2002) note that:

All individual leaders, no matter how charismatic or visionary, eventually die, and all visionary products and services- all ‘great ideas’- eventually become obsolete. Yet visionary companies prosper over long periods, through multiple product life cycles and multiple generations of active leaders. (pp. 1-2)

To have multiple generations of active leaders that can become church planters we have to be intentional with our plans over several generations of leaders.

Stetzer (2006) reminds readers, “Studies show that if a denomination wants to reach more people, the number of new churches it begins each year must equal at least 3% of the denomination’s existing churches” (p. 76). It is obvious that there have been challenges and mistakes have been made in planting healthy churches that can plant other churches. What is an appropriate way to relate to these challenges and mistakes? Maxwell (2013) answers by saying, “Success lies not in eliminating our troubles and mistakes but in growing through and with them” (p. 27). Since the Conference does not presently have a clear vision for church planting, the Conference administrators will propose to the Executive Committee to plant twelve churches annually for twelve years which will be about a 10% increase in the present number of churches. This will be called “Vision 12.” Each region of the Conference will be encouraged to plant four churches annually. Churches will collaborate to start and support new church plants and provide resources. Since all visions meet resistance, resiliency on the part of the Conference is essential. (Collins and Porras, 2002, p. 4).

There was a vision by the RWC to plant churches in communities where there are no Seventh-day Adventist churches; and to plant new churches in connection with existing churches in the cities. However, not many churches have been planted to align with the counsel that growing denominations should plant at least 3% of their existing churches annually (Stetzer, 2006, p. 76).

Therefore, to actualize a church planting habit in the RWC, Vision 12 is being proposed with the following recommendations:

1. To plant twelve churches annually in the three major ethnic groups that represents Rivers-West Conference namely: Abua, Ekpeye, and Ogba in twelve years.

2. The Conference shall have a church planting committee chaired by the Conference President with the Global Mission Director as the secretary, and three other persons.
3. The annual church plant locations, budget, strategy, human resources, and outcomes for measuring success shall be presented to the Conference Executive Committee in the month of December, preceding the start of the new year.
4. Each ethnic group shall appoint a local, volunteer church-planting coordinator and assistant, whom has passion for church planting, and will work with the Conference committee to actualize the church plant; including determining the areas for planting a church and recruiting volunteers.
5. Four churches shall be planted in the Conference each quarter.
6. There shall be a quarterly evaluation of Vision 12 and a report presented to the Executive Committee every quarter.

Establishing a Church Planting Habit

As “Vision 12” is adopted by the Conference, the following steps will be followed to cultivate a church planting culture.

1. Invitation to all stakeholders in the Conference: pastors, executive committee members, and the laity to study and understand “Vision 12.” This will be facilitated by a document that will be developed and presented on how to initiate and achieve the vision. The document will be produced in Word and PowerPoint for the purpose of educating members regarding how Vision 12 can become a reality. Barna (1992) advises, “Vision has no force, power or impact unless it spreads from the visionary to the visionless” (p. 52).

2. Short videos will also be made to explain how to implement the vision and meet the challenges that shall be encountered. These videos will be sent to groups of church members. As members hear this vision through multiple ways, their understanding will increase. A basic law of learning is repetition. According to Maxwell (2010), “The first time you say something, it’s heard. The second time, it’s recognized, and the third time, it’s learned. That’s much more optimistic, but it still emphasizes the value of repetition” (p. 161). We must continually repeat “Vision 12.”
3. Presentations on this vision will be made in major quarterly gatherings of the Women, Men, and Youth ministries of the Conference.
4. Presentations on “Vision 12” will be done in selected districts of the Conference.
5. The Conference shall vote to financially support these church plants. This may be called “plant money” and shall be collected from the annual budget or other sources such as fundraising events and personal donations.
6. The Conference shall appoint a church plant coordinator who will work with church planters. The chief responsibility of this coordinator will be to organize training and coaching sessions for new church plants, at least one year from the start. And the support period may be extended as the need arises. This person will further select supervisors from the different regions of the Conference who are committed to the mission and who may recruit others to do the same. When this results in planting churches, momentum for church

planting will be built around the Conference, leading to a culture of church planting.

7. The church plant coordinator, who will be under the payroll of the Conference and will organize an annual rally for the new church plants. During Conference constituency sessions, recognition may be given to those who have contributed to the success of the church plants.

Church Mission Weekend

A “Church Mission” weekend will be organized. The attendees shall be a team of 10 – 12 persons drawn from each church or district. According to Gibbs and Coffey (as cited in Tutsch, 2008) “where there is an absence of training, usually there is a lack of effective evangelistic outreach” (p. 75). They will be trained on the mission of the church and how the Holy Spirit works. The working of the Holy Spirit was the force behind the explosive growth in the book of Acts. Referring to the work of the Apostles, Macena (2017) agrees:

The remarkable advance of the church at that time only happened because they searched, claimed, pursued, and allowed the power of the Holy Spirit to work and guide! That was it! The key to church growth is not found in human strength but in divine strength. (p. 4)

Elaborating on the importance of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church, White (1988) teaches, “Learning, talents, eloquence, even natural or acquired endowments, may be possessed, but without the presence of the Holy Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner be won to Christ” (p. 328). Web (2017) suggests, “The challenge for each believer is to make sure that they are not only communicating facts about the Lord. Yes, the facts are important, but they must be shared in ways that will enable people to

enter into a relationship with their Savior. Thus, we will not be trying to do the spirit's work; we will be doing His bidding" (p. 18).

Speaking about abandoning methods that are no longer relevant today, Breen (2016) writes, "What inevitably happens for churches searching for the 'as long as it works' answer is that eventually, it stops working as well as it once did. However, because they lack the foundational information for forming the original practices, the churches are unable to successfully innovate what they are doing" (p. 59). It is essential that evangelistic teams learn innovation skills, as well as critical thinking. Future leaders must be continual learners and willing to experiment, adapt, and learn from mistakes.

Research has confirmed that one person cannot start and grow a church to maturity, it takes a team (Barna, 2001, p. 18). Mission teams need to be safe places for building community, where trust is experienced. Also, teams will be collaborative and value the talents of individual team member. Finally, teams may provide healthy accountability.

Conference administrator and departmental leaders may become resources for local leaders and teams. Conference leaders may assist churches in discovering how and when to initiate a church plant, the availability of resources, how to obtain funds for mission projects, and other factors for an effective outreach strategy. Supporting these outreach project teams will bring support to local church teams as well as satisfaction to conference leaders.

From 2015 to 2020, when churches were planted, there was an increase in church growth. The highest year for growth was 2018 when seven churches were planted,

yielding a growth rate of 7.28%. The lowest year was 2019 when no church was planted – a growth rate of 0.99%.

In 2015 RWC baptized 441 persons while in 2018 they baptized 1237 persons. When the Conference planted more churches, they had more baptisms (GC Annual Charts and Statistics 2015-2020: RWC). As in the book of Acts where the church grew numerically, geographically, and across boundaries, so as churches were planted in RWC, there was growth numerically and geographically, and across boundaries. Geographical growth extended to Abua Road in Ahoada in Ahoada district and New Layout in Erema in Erema district. Growth across boundaries has been witnessed and in Engeni and Odual clan of Rivers State.

Church Planting by Individuals

The church mission weekend will be anchored by prayer, so that it may be discovered where God is leading the people to do His work. Some individuals may be motivated to plant churches. God called individuals, such as Philip, to preach in Samaria as he was empowered by the Holy Spirit. According to Stetzer and Im (2016), “Early church history reflects that several of the apostles set out in different directions to plant churches. This must have been a lonely endeavor and reminds us of the importance of bringing a team to plant or developing one soon upon arrival” (p. 43). Individuals have planted churches in RWC but those individuals who plant churches in the future will be encouraged to recruit others and form a team.

Aquila and Priscilla Model

What shall be called the “Aquila and Priscilla” model, will be encouraged. This model is where couples locate to a territory and start a new church. Aquila and Priscilla traveled to many cities preaching the gospel and supported themselves by finding work. There was a church in their home both at Ephesus and Rome (Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19). They may have been instrumental in the starting these churches (p. 44). Self-supporting missionaries removes the limitation of funding for new workers. This model demonstrates that church planting can be done by persons who are not on the Conference payroll.

Church Planting by Teams

From both the Old and the New Testament God has used teams to advance His work. Elijah had Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19-21), Elisha had his team (2 Kgs 6:1-7), John the Baptist had a team (John 3:25-26, Matt 11:2, 3; Luke 7:18), and Jesus Christ had the twelve disciples (Matt 10:1-5). Paul had a team in the book of Acts. Barnabas, Silvanus, Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Epaphras, Aristarchus, Gaius, Jason, Aquila, and Priscilla helped to plant and establish churches. (Stetzer & Im, 2016, p. 44). Plans succeed with an abundance of counselors (Prov 15:22, 24:6). Sutter (2008), “People with good balance of spiritual gifts working together bear much more fruits than one person working by himself” (p. 35). We are wiser together than alone.

A church planting team of about 10-12 persons shall be gathered from each church and district to help focus on mission. More trained workers will make the work more fruitful; training others in the process of planting (2 Tim 2:2). According to Scoggins (2013), “Like the elders in Acts 20:28, a church team is mutually responsible

for its members. Each has the responsibility of watching out for the others. Although there may be a team leader (as Paul seems to have been), the leader does not exact autocratic authority over the team members” (p.13). Each person possesses gifts (Rom 12:6), and these gifts complement one another.

The leader of the team should create an atmosphere of collaboration. Collins (2001) says, “creating a climate where the truth is heard involves four basic practices: lead with questions, not answers; engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion; conduct autopsies, without blame; build red flag mechanisms that turns information into information that cannot be ignored” (p. 88). Building trust and loyalty among team members is essential (Janzen, 1993). In a team, one person’s weaknesses may be compensated for by the strength of others. Effective partnerships, along with resources and funding shall be among the discussion items during the training.

Churches Plant Churches

In the New Testament, churches commissioned people to plant churches. A good example is the Antioch church sending out Paul and Barnabas to preach and plant (Acts 13:1, 2). Stetzer and Im (2016) believe that “having a supportive sponsor or mother church makes a big difference and it’s the best way to plant a daughter church” (p. 47). Further, Stetzer and Im state, the “mother, partner, or sponsor church tends to be involved at different levels, such as sending out a core group of members who work as a team or providing other resources including a mentoring or accountability relationship for (a) encouragement, (b) financial support, (c) facilities, and (d) leadership” (p. 45). When church planting becomes the priority of our existing churches, the mandate God gave to the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be fulfilled.

Corkum (2009) observes, “Churches that become effective parent churches are mission-focused and are lay-led by a mission-driven pastor. It is difficult to have a mission-focused church seeking to establish new churches if they don't have a mission-led pastor” (p. 93). Mother or sponsoring churches tend to fare better spiritually than churches that don't plant a church. The pastors and lay leaders in the Rivers West Conference shall be trained to be mission focused.

Organizational and Departmental Church Planting

The early Advent movement sent people from Battle Creek to preach in across the world. Currently, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in collaboration with the Divisions, is allocating funds for Global Mission which will be used to plant churches globally. This fund provided support to plant three churches in the Bayelsa Mission in Nigeria between 2015 and 2017.

Organizations should have an annual church planting budget, as well as supporting church planting through training and coaching. For church planting to succeed in our region, conference support is unavoidable. The Chorale Music Ministry, the Adventist Men Ministry, the Women Ministry, and the Youth Ministry will be involved in the training for planting churches that may plant other churches. We can identify individuals in an organization that have the potential to plant churches by using the “passion audit” (Malphurs 2011, pp. 203-205). The questionnaire includes the following:

Directions: Answer each of the following questions as best as you can.

1. Do you have a burning conviction that a particular ministry is the place where God wants you to serve him? If so, what is it?

2. Does your spiritual gift, gift-mix, or gift-cluster point to a particular ministry? If so, what is it?
3. Do you have a burning, gut-level desire to reach a particular group of people or involve yourself in a certain ministry? If so, what people or what ministry?
4. Do you have a strong desire to pursue a particular issue as your ministry (for example, pro-life issues, poverty, and child abuse victims)? Does the issue stir you emotionally?
5. Does the thought of pursuing a particular subject (for example, apologetics, cults, theology, the law, leadership, and the arts) excite you?
6. If God were to appear before you and grant you one wish for your ministry for the rest of your life, what would it be?
7. What ministry opportunity do you care deeply and feel strongly about?
8. What do you dream about for the Savior?
9. During your free moments, what in terms of ministry do you find yourself doing naturally?
10. What do you really want to do with the rest of your life?

Prayerfully and carefully review your answer to the above questions. As you consider your answers, what do you think your passions might be? Ask someone else who knows you well if he or she agrees. Write your passions(s) below:

Another tool we shall use shall be Ridley's thirteen behavioral characteristics for church planters, they include:

1. Has capacity to cast vision – The ability to imagine the future, persuade other persons to become involved in that dream, and bring the vision into reality.
2. Is intrinsically motivated – Approaches ministry as a self-starter and commits to excellence through hard work and determination.
3. Creates ownership of ministry – Instills in others a sense of personal responsibility for the growth and success of the ministry and trains leaders.
4. Relates to the unchurched – Develops rapport and breaks through barriers with unchurched people, encouraging them to examine and commit themselves to a personal walk with God. As an additional outcome, new believers learn to lead others to salvation in Jesus Christ.
5. Has spouse cooperation – Demonstrates a marital partnership in which the church-planting couple agree on ministry priorities, each partner's role and involvement, and the integration and balance of ministry with family life.
6. Effectively builds relationships – Takes initiative in meeting people and deepening relationships as a basis for more effective ministry.
7. Is committed to church growth – Values congregational development as a means for increasing the number and quality of disciples. Through this community, they strive for increased numerical growth in the context of spiritual and relational growth.
8. Responsiveness to the community – Demonstrates abilities to adapt one's ministry to the culture and needs of the target-area residents.

9. Uses the giftedness of others – Equips and releases other people to minister on the basis of their spiritual giftedness.
10. Flexibility and adaptability – Can adjust to change and ambiguity, shift priorities when necessary, and handle multiple tasks at the same time. This leader can adjust to surprises and emergencies.
11. Builds group cohesiveness – Enables the group to work collaboratively toward common goals and skillfully manages divisiveness and disunifying elements.
12. Demonstrates resilience – Ability to sustain himself or herself emotionally, spiritually, and physically through setbacks, losses, disappointments, and failures.
13. Exercises faith – Translates personal convictions into personal and ministry decisions and resulting actions.

Methodology

A qualitative research method that is used in anthropology, sociology, religion, and other fields involves collecting data from various sources. These sources will include interviews, observations, and documents. Other types of sources will include email communication, photos, artifacts, and correspondence. In this project, data shall be collected basically through interviews, documents, field notes, and observations. Existing documents on church planting in the conferences and churches shall be collected. Interviews shall reveal things we cannot directly observe, and individuals shall express themselves in their own words.

According to Cameron and Duce (2013) “Interviews are one of the most widely used qualitative methods in practical theology. They capture the specific values and

meanings an interviewee attaches to a given topic or set of practices” (p. 82). These interview questions shall be semi-structured since it is more open-ended. In-person interviews to evaluate volunteers in the church planting will also be implemented. They shall be asked these questions:

1. How did you start planting church(es)?
2. How did you receive training for church planting?
3. Have you been to a church planting seminar?
4. How helpful was reading books on church planting?
5. Who mentored you on church planting?
6. How optimistic were you about the church planting project?
7. What was the important preparation you made for church planting?
8. What could have been done to prepare you better for church planting?

Summary

The methodology in this chapter is an attempt to close the gap in Rivers West Conference churches and members. That gap is defined as lower motivation to plant additional new churches. The first section describes the development of church planting in our conference and the context in which the intervention was developed. It highlights how it was built on the theology of church planting (Chapter 2) and the practical insight gained from the review of literature (Chapter 3). The second section describes the intervention, including the course methodology, structure, and content, as well as the need to create a vision and culture for church planting. It was noted that for any organization to develop a church planting movement, church planting must be made a priority.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE OF THE INTERVENTION IMPLEMENTATION

In the space of the last three years after understanding the reason why we do not have a strategy for planting a growing Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Rivers West Conference, I began the process of planting a church. This is a narrative of the church planting that was held at Odual, a tribe in Abua/Odual Local Government of Rivers State, Nigeria. Emelego is the largest community in the Odual clan and the headquarters of a political ward in Abua/Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. It is part of Rivers West Senatorial Zone. A visit was done with a team of three persons to ascertain the condition of the clan seven months before the campaign.

On arrival to Obedum, the first community of the Odual clan from the Bayelsa State route, it was evident that we needed a guide. We parked our vehicle and intended to hire a motorcycle because of the poor road conditions but one of the community members advised us otherwise and volunteered to take us through the communities to the last one called Emeligo. Initially, we were suspicious of his offer, but he became a very good companion and continued to give us relevant information concerning the communities. The uncertainties of what would lie ahead of us in this journey followed us throughout this church planting process. When we returned to the first community where we started, we showed appreciation to our “guardian angel” by giving him two thousand naira only (\$4) to wash his “clothes”, for which he was very grateful.

This narration is presented under the following headings: The context of the church planting, the mission, which was accomplished, challenges to advancement, cultural challenges, church plant evaluation survey, and summary.

Context of the Church Plant

Planting a church at Odual is a part of the Rivers West Conference vision, to reach “every home in Abua/Odual, Ekpeye/Engeni, and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni for Jesus” (Conference slogan for the past two years as created by the Conference president). Odual is a clan in Abua/Odual Local Government Area that speaks the Odual language. It is surrounded by the river in Abua and accessible through Bayelsa State by land. Odual is further divided into the Adibaam group which consists of Adada, Emelego, Ogboloma, and Okolomade. The Arughunya group consists of Ekunuga, Anyu, Emaarikpoko, Obedum, and Odau. The Odual clan is bounded in the East by the Abua villages of Ogbema, Arukwo, and Ogbogolo; in the West by Oloibiri, Amurukeni in Ogbia(Bayelsa State of Nigeria); in the North by Oruma, Ibelebiri, Kolo in Ogbia; and in the South by Nembe town of Oluasiri, Bassambiri, Ekpoma, and Ogbolomabiri in the Bayelsa State of Nigeria (Odual Language 2018) (Appendix E). Odual is made up of 94% adherents to Christianity with the Anglican Church being the largest denomination. Of this 94%, 8% are evangelicals. It also practices African Traditional Religion (Joshua Project 2019).

The stark reality that there is a lack of care from the government for the Odual clan is heightened at Emeligo. The community of Emeligo is the largest community, which owns a government hospital, but where the hospital has not been operational for decades. The staff is paid but they do not come to work, and none are held accountable. Most of the Odual communities have primary schools. The road that leads to these

communities from the Bayelsa State routes, starting from Obedum, is hardly accessible during the rainy seasons. It takes about three hours to drive from the Conference headquarters to Odual and about two hours to drive from the closest Seventh-day Adventist Church. The river transportation is not safe as theft is very common on its routes.

The inhabitants of these communities are predominantly fish and crop farmers who sell their products either in the Abua central market, Mbima market, or in Bayelsa State. A few members of the community work with the government in the city and return weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly to visit the community, where there exists Orthodox, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. This clan is headed by a king who resides at Emeligo, and each community has a head chief answerable to the king. The Community Development Committee (CDC), the Youth Council, and the Council of Chiefs oversee the governance of each community. Several approaches are available for church planting. It may focus upon a demographic within the population, a geographic area, or an ethnic group. This church plant chose a geographic approach, targeting a particular ethnic group (Odual).

The church plant was held at Anyu, instead of Emeligo, the largest of the nine Odual communities. The reason was the political violence of the 2019 Nigeria presidential, gubernatorial, and House of Assembly elections. The second visit of our team revealed that thugs went to Emeligo to shoot sporadically, causing fear among those that were there and creating fear among our volunteers. This caused us to change our venue to Anyu, the fourth community from the Bayelsa State axis. The chief of the community accepted the request to use the village and we were told that the message will

be conveyed to the community at large when we would visit again. Our next visit revealed that the community at large accepted our proposal to conduct evangelism and affirmed this by giving us a bottle of wine to send to the Conference administration. They also promised to give us a property to build a place of worship when we start and complete the evangelist program. The promise to give us a property was unusual because other communities sell their land when such needs arise.

The potential success of this church plant held the promise of affecting the entire Odual clan. Like other Odual communities, Anyu does not presently have electricity from the government. However, we enjoyed about four (4) hours of electricity from 7 pm to 11 pm for some nights, courtesy of the Chairman of Abua/Odual Local Government Area who is a native of Anyu. He maintained and added fuel to the community generator to produce electricity. Anyu has a Primary and Secondary (High) school, whose buildings badly need maintenance. The lack of good roads and electricity was a major challenge for this church plant because it increased our costs. The team could only charge cell phones when we started the evening session, and some phone batteries could not last until the following evening session. The condition of the road frightened volunteers who were afraid of the insurgency, having been in the area for the past four years.

Our evangelistic program was entitled, “Victory for Odual Land: Anyu for Christ,” started on March 11, 2019. It began by launching a free medical service by the African Medical Missionary Institute. Since there was no functional hospital, the cottage clinic had been converted into a living space for some teachers at the secondary school. The medical missionary work included taking vital signs, conducting hydrotherapy, and nutritional classes for more than one hundred persons. The community chief and other

leaders were very impressed with the medical services. One community member spoke with excitement, “They are treating us free, and everyone is equal before them.” It portrayed us as caring and opened the hearts of many to the preaching of the gospel.

The head chief provided his living room as accommodations for medical volunteers since other accommodations did not come through. And the head chief became the first patient. He benefited from the natural remedies and became among the first persons to surrender to Christ and be baptized and join the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He later stated, “God brought you for me.”

We continued with nightly evangelistic meetings on March 17 and concluded on March 31, 2019, with a total of thirty-one (31) persons baptized. Someone asked, “Why did it take you people this long to come to our clan?” Another remarked, “You have blessed my soul all these days.” There was an average attendance of two hundred and thirty- one (231) persons. The medical team served nutritional tea every night, and almost everyone who attended partook. Although it was intended that other communities of Oduval would also join this program, only one person from the other communities participated. This was due to a lack of transportation and the long distance from the venue.

Mission Accomplished

The mission of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been adopted as the mission of the Rivers West Conference:

To make disciples of all people, communicating the everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Savior and unite with His remnant church, discipling them to serve Him as Lord and prepare them for His soon return.

This same statement is displayed in the lobby of the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference. However, recently, the mission statement has been modified as follows: “Make disciples of Jesus Christ who live as His loving witnesses and proclaim to all people the everlasting gospel of the Three Angels’ Messages in preparation for His soon return (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8).”

In the 2018 annual leadership conference organized by the Eastern Nigeria Union for pastors, elders, and other church leaders, a book titled “Mission Possible” was produced and sold. The profit from these sales was to be used for church planting. In the same program, the Governor of Abia State, Dr. Okezie Ikeazu, who was the Special Guest of Honor and a Seventh-day Adventist member, donated five million naira (\$15,000.00) for church planting for 2018. In addition, a donation from Dr. Adieluwa Frank has made it possible for the Union to send pioneer church planters, and others as pastors, to many conferences. The Rivers West Conference has received two of these pioneers. An outreach programs, to the five ethnic groups in the RWC, resulted in hundreds of baptisms, between 2016 and 2018.

In 2014 the Conference planted two churches in Omoku (Ogba zone), in 2015 three churches were planted at Ahoada (Ekepeye zone), and in 2016 three churches at Abua (Abua zone) were planted. This was part of an effort to plant more churches in the three cities of the Conference, even though an Adventist presence has already been established in those cities. The funds for these church planting projects were made possible by donations from some members as well. Some churches also donated food items for feeding of the volunteers. This was the context that led the Executive

Committee of Rivers West Conference to plant a church in Odual. The need was heightened because Odual has had no Adventist presence.

The twenty-nine volunteers for this church plant were recruited from Africa Medical Missionary Institute, committed members from the four districts that made up the Abua zone, and members from other parts of the Rivers West Conference. The chairman of the organizing committee was from Abua zone. Although he was part of the pre-evangelism visits, because of work-related challenges, the chair only came a day toward the end of the evangelistic meeting. Volunteers were recruited primarily through church announcements. At the same time, the Conference encouraged other departments and local churches to plant new churches. Volunteers, recruited in this way, planted four churches in 2014, five churches in 2015, four churches in 2016, five churches 2017, and seven in 2018. The author, as well as other members, were part of these church plants. Seminars for volunteers included: how to mingle with people in the community, how to win their confidence, how to give Bible studies, and how to handle objections.

After the Rivers West Conference Executive Committee approved the church plant, the conference president, Pastor Chimezie Simeon Obuzor, led a team to visit the Abua zone for prayer and planning of the program. Abua zone is made up of four districts and is the closet region to the church planting venue. The meetings included fasting and prayer and were held once a month for three months. Also, the following agenda for planning was discussed: the vision of the church, the budget, and the strategy for the church plant. Various committees were formed, and reports were received accordingly.

To fund this program, the Abua zone supplied food items accounting for 10% of the budget, two million naira (\$2,000.00). The Conference gave another 10% and the

remaining 80% was given by an individual. An in-kind donation of a fishpond was received, allowing for a source of protein for the volunteers, lasting about one week. A temporary bus and three motorcycles were lent to the project by members. These vehicles allowed the baptismal candidates to be transported and were used for essential errands. The community also lent one hundred plastic chairs and benches and were returned at the conclusion of the program. The community donated the town hall as a temporary worship center and the Conference and local churches gave additional money.

The team members worked together to bring the project to fruition. Conducting door-to-door outreach, daily Bible studies, and prayer for the people, and weekly fasting and prayer, the team made an impact upon the community. They also engaged in community service by clearing selected overgrown grasses, utilizing the generator for pumping community water, and sweeping the walkways. The team divided the community into four groups, with each group having a head, an assistant head, and a secretary. They met daily for prayers, reported the previous day's activities, and suggested ways to improve ministry activities. One volunteer formed a children's choir from children within the community. These children sang for the nightly program and twice for Sabbath worship.

At the end of the public evangelism at Anyu, thirty-one (31) persons were baptized, including the head chief and the assistant head chief of the community. The casting of the church planting vision by RWC and the training of volunteers to become mature disciples, which make other disciples, was a key to the success. The community town hall was secured as the worship center, with a room attached for the children's ministry. Church offices were given to the new members, training was provided on the

duties of each office. Property measuring four hundred feet by four hundred feet (400ft x 400ft) was secured where a church building will be erected. The acquisition of this land was facilitated by the head chief of the community.

One volunteer was appointed as the pastor of this new church, and accommodation was provided for him. He will be paid monthly by the Conference. His work will include bringing new members to Christian maturity, extending the church work to other communities in the Odual clan, and reporting progress monthly to the RWC. To sustain this church plant, RWC developed a one-year plan where officers and directors will visit monthly to train, encourage, and motivate the new members to be faithful and make more disciples.

The church plant at Anyu differed from the church plant by the youth department at Akinima in Engeni clan. The Anyu church plant had twenty-three volunteers, with six months of planning, fasting, and training, and 31 persons were baptized. The church plant at Akinima had over one hundred volunteers, but less than one month of planning, with no fasting and no training, and 2 persons were baptized. Long-term planning, fasting, and training of volunteers leads to better church planting results.

Challenge to Advancement

Although the Conference voted to plant a church in Anyu located in the Odual clan, the budget was approved only three weeks before the start date of the church plant. This affected the availability of funds. An appeal was made to the Eastern Nigeria Union Conference, but the project received no funding support from the evangelism department. Some people also pledged support but did not fulfil their commitment. Therefore, going forward, it is necessary for the RWC to cast a church planting vision and lead pastors and

members to buy in to the vision, and provide funding in advance so that necessary preparations may be made.

The free medical service included natural remedies like instruction on nutrition, exercise, water, sunlight, temperance, air, rest, and trust in God to prevent and heal existing sickness. This was initially thought of as strange by the community, since they were accustomed to orthodox medication and treatments. But this turned out to be the best. The natural remedies could easily be found from within the community. Three out of the four persons that made up the medical team were recalled due to emergencies, reducing the momentum their ministry brought to the project.

The worship center for new believers has not been built. It was hoped that the community would provide the land which was promised before the start date of the evangelistic program so that development could begin. But this property was not given, due to a dispute within the community involving the Redeemed Christian Church and the property donated to them. The church plant received a land donation from one of the newly baptized members, two days before the end of the evangelistic series. Therefore, nothing was done on the property because of the need to remain engaged with concluding the nightly meetings. This left the new believers with the only option of using the community town hall as their worship center. Experience teaches that if the worship center is not built by the end of the evangelistic meetings, the burden of the building project will rest on the shoulders of the new believers. Unfortunately, these new believers are rural dwellers with little income.

One of the two main speakers for the nightly evangelistic meetings had a motorcycle accident. Since the community does not have reliable electricity, at night he

rode into a mound of sand and sustained injuries to his back and shoulder. However, the medical team treated him for two days and he recovered. Three other team members fell sick, either because of living in a new environment or not having adequate rest.

Phone calls from anyone outside of the Anyu community were difficult to receive since there was no reliable phone network provider in the area. An individual had to walk thirty minutes outside the community to make or receive a phone call. Thus, it was difficult to follow up with those who had promised to financial support. Or to report to the Conference office when faced with challenges or for anyone to call the leaders or team for assistance. Some individuals who promised to support financially could not fulfil their pledges and some volunteers could not come.

Cultural Challenges

Only one volunteer could speak the Odual language and could stay with the team for only four days. This reduced effective communication in the nightly preaching since the community preferred their local language and an interpreter. Because core doctrines may be misinterpreted, the team was reluctant to rely on an outside interpreter. This challenge has been observed in the past.

It is more effective to plant a church, when the leader or pastor is also the chairperson of the committee, or, at least, the chairperson has strongly bought into the vision. It is also easier for a district leader, who has the vision of church planting, to plant a church within his district when the Executive Committee chair shares in the vision and has knowledge of church planting.

The distance from Anyu to the community, in which a market was located in another community, was more than thirty minutes by motorcycle, the major source of

transportation. This travel time reduced the time available for outreach for some of the volunteers.

The toilet system was damaged due to long-time neglect by the owner. The reason for neglect was fear from attacks by the insurgency. The odor from this toilet made the house uncomfortable until it was finally fixed.

This new church plant is the first church in the Odual clan to worship on Saturday (Sabbath). It was strange to them. Our health message and doctrine became a major challenge since some of them get their income from fish, including the unclean fish of Deuteronomy 14 and Leviticus 11. These lifestyle changes threatened the faith of would-be members.

Church Plant Evaluation Survey

A survey instrument was administered to the volunteers of the church plant to evaluate the process (see Appendix A). Seventeen out of the twenty-three volunteers participated. This survey was done by distributing questionnaires to the participants. The questions were "yes" or "no", and open-ended.

Out of the respondents, 52.94% said they have been involved in a church plant and 47.05% attended the training for the church plant. Some claimed the information did not reach them. Although the church believes in planting churches, only 11.76% have attended a seminar on church planting before. Almost one third, 32.29%, have read books on church planting and 41.18% do not have anyone that has mentored them on church planting. Nearly a quarter, 23.53%, were mentored by a particular pastor, 11.76% by another pastor, and 23.53% by different persons. The survey reveals that 100% were optimistic about the church plant because the church was entering a new area. They

wanted to see people saved, wanted the SDA church to be in their area, wanted the experience of being a missionary and pioneers of the project, to make new friends, and the joy of preaching. When the volunteers were asked what prepared them for the church plant, their answers included the pre-visitation of the community, the free medical program, encouraging reports from individuals, prayer and planning sessions, Bible study, a seminar on how to mingle, Bible quotations given to volunteers, visitation, and training by mentors. Only one person did not respond to this question. From the survey, the following were reported as ways they may have been better prepared for the church plant: two to three days of training, more sessions for prayer and fasting, reading books, attending seminars on church planting, physical and spiritual equipment, a field survey, and training on winning souls.

Within 2015 and 2020, RWC had the highest church growth rate – 7.8% in 2018. During 2018, seven churches were planted. Port- Harcourt Conference had a growth rate of 13.72%, when the Conference planted 15 churches. Rivers East Conference planted 22 churches the same year and reached a church growth rate of 9.42% in the same year. Ebonyi Conference planted eight churches and had her highest church growth rate of 6.61%. All these conferences are in Eastern Nigeria Union Conference, which had an aggregated growth rate of 9.93% in 2018. This was largely because 65 churches were planted, the highest number of churches planted between 2015 and 2020. Furthermore, the Eastern Nigeria Union had the least growth rate of 2.94% when only seven churches were planted in 2019 (Eastern Nigeria Union Conference, 2013 – present).

From the data above, an increase in church growth rate is directly proportional to an increase in the number of churches planted. One reason that may have contributed to

this increase in the number of churches planted in the Union in 2018 was the emphasis on evangelism through the Year of Evangelism. In addition to the Union producing printed tracks and evangelistic materials in larger quantity, they also financially supported local conferences to run evangelistic endeavors. Whenever there is renewed energy for evangelism fostered in the local church by the Conference or Union, more churches are planted and the church growth rate increases.

Summary

In this chapter, the narration of the church planting is summarized by the following headings: the context of the church plant, mission accomplished, challenges to advancement, cultural challenges, church plant evaluation survey, and summary. There shall be more successful church plants when the above is addressed. The church must follow its mission and take the required action. When the mission of the church is practiced, internal barriers to the mission are eliminated, leaders and evangelistic teams become sensitive to the culture and context, growing churches will be planted, and those churches will plant other churches.

CHAPTER 6

PROJECT EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

Summary of the Project Manuscript

This project sought as its main objective to develop a strategy for planting a growing church in Rivers-West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This goal was accomplished through the implementation of this project. Church planting was presented as the fastest way for growing a church, with a concentration on the role of the Conference and the individual members.

The Conference was encouraged to develop a vision for church planting that involves the participation of Conference officials and church members so that church planting can become a culture of the Conference. During this project, seminars were presented to different groups in the Conference. The Conference voted support of the church plant, a community was selected to implement the church plant, and volunteers were drawn from within the Conference. These volunteers implemented the church planting at Anyu in Abua-Odual Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The questionnaires were distributed to the volunteers, and the researcher's notes and observations were also incorporated.

Description of the Evaluation

What follows is a description of how data from the intervention (Chapter 5) was evaluated and interpreted, along with a report of the resulting conclusions and outcomes.

Evaluation Method

A qualitative research method was employed in this project. This includes organizing and reflecting on the interviews conducted (Chapter 5) and other data collected throughout the three years of this project, while comparing it with the author's notes and observations. Common themes, which emerged from the project process, were identified. This was followed by a final analysis of the data collected.

The interviews were structured with open-ended questions so volunteers might freely share their experiences. Many volunteers were surprised to learn that they do not have a complete understanding of how to plant a church. They expressed that conducting training for an extended period before the launch of church planting process may have prepared them better. The various processes of church planting, combined with their personal engagement, led to the planting of the church.

Interpretation of Data (Chapter 5)

A close analysis of the data revealed several themes. Data collected during the church planting in the Rivers West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists included notes and observations about ingredients for creating a church planting vision.

The Conference system has developed habits that inhibit church planting. For instance, some of the volunteers thought the church planting process would be a vacation trip and when it was not, they asked for permission to be absent for several days. Also,

some of the volunteers expressed concern that though planting a church was God's design, it was difficult. As volunteers wrestled with the negative and positive aspects of church planting, they described their experience in ambivalent terms. They realized the limited knowledge they have regarding church planting. But, as they incorporated the knowledge gained from the various meetings held for the church plant, they gained more confidence in outreach.

The volunteers were optimistic because the Church was entering a new territory. Although the church planting process was demanding, volunteers felt church planting had the potential to increase their spirituality, especially if they were not distracted. As volunteers engaged in visitation, many began to see the hand of God moving. Even those volunteers who had been involved in church planting in the past saw the need to further develop their spiritual gifts and skills. From the interviews, it became clear that many churches may be planted if the Conference fosters a church planting culture by implementing a church planting vision as described in Chapter 5.

However, the scope of this project does not include the process of follow-up to make this church plant reproduce another church. One of the volunteers became the pastor of this new church and the role he will play in the expansion of this church could be the subject of further study.

Conclusions Drawn from the Data (Chapter 5)

Based on the survey and verbal response of the volunteers, the project and its structured intervention had perceived spiritual and professional value. It was evident that much benefit may be derived if a missional culture is developed among members. A

vision for church planting may inspire such a culture. Volunteers discovered that adaptation was needed because of the church plant location.

Volunteers who had no experience in church planting learned that depending on God and cooperating with other team members was of great value, both to the church plant and their personal development. The volunteers noted changes in their experience through the seminars and other activities that took place during the process. It became clear that some level of transformational learning took place as they attempted to connect optimism with the reality of the church planting experience.

The activities of the pastor, appointed by the Rivers-West Conference for follow through, will have a great impact on post-church planting activities but that will be the subject of another study.

Outcomes of the Intervention

Although the qualitative case study approach does not measure results, the project involved three specific outcomes that were accomplished. First, the analysis of the findings of volunteers in Chapter 5 saw the improvement gained from the church planting process and the potential for planting more churches. Second, the Rivers West Conference administration has expressed an increased zeal to plant churches in the eight remaining communities of the Odual clan of Rivers State, Nigeria. The data suggest that the work of the Conference and the willingness of volunteers (church members) is one of the key ingredients to planting more churches.

A third improvement was the corporate casting of a church planting vision in the Rivers-West Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. A budget has been created for

church planting and both church members and departments are now encouraged to plant churches.

Mission Misplacement

The Eastern Nigerian Union Conference has not implemented its strategy for planting churches. The proceeds from the sale of the book on evangelism has not been designated as funds to plant any youth or local churches. And the promise of \$15,000.00 by the Governor of Abia State Nigeria to plant churches has not been fulfilled as of the time of this report (2019). Also, the annual evangelism budget has not been used for church planting because of the debt created by Clifford University, a new Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning operated by our Union. There is no clear direction regarding where the Union is going on church planting.

This may be an indication of the present interest of the Church since people implement what they consider important. Although the Conference has officially said that they want to enter every home in the region, the Executive Committee has not discussed a strategy on how to do it but has been preoccupied with other matters in the Conference. The pioneers within the Conference, paid by the Union, are not assigned to start a new church plant but, rather, are assigned as district pastors. The Conference has had no budget for evangelism over the past three years. This is attributed to low tithe and offerings, because of the insecurity of the region. Also, the policy for creating balanced conference budgets is a factor, forcing the general Conference budget be reduced. Thus, evangelism money has become the way to make up for the shortfall. When the Executive Committee approved the budget, they did not provide for funding the follow up of the church plant in Odual.

Because of these stated reasons by both the Conference and the Union, this church plant's request for funds has been denied. In the past, when the Union sent money to the Conference for a church plant, the Conference added to it. This motivated some churches or individuals to also contribute so that church planting is actualized. This was the case of the church plant in Nembe, Bayelsa State, of which the writer was a volunteer. The Union provided a budget that was supported financially by the Conference, which also encouraged individuals to contribute to the church plant. Apart from the use of funds in the Conference, for things that are considered more important, there are no guidelines on when, who, and how to plant churches. Actions do not follow commitments that are made.

Some volunteers who came for this church plant did not have the required traits of church planters – passion for lost souls, or a willingness to take risks. They became part of the project because their district had to be represented. Because of this, some volunteers responded slowly to training. They became discouraged in the face of difficulties. This was very evident when we could not get a reliable source of water and appropriate accommodations. Some of the volunteers saw the gathering of church planters as an opportunity for a vacation and knowledge of a new area in Rivers State. A volunteer said, “I cannot come out for the program tonight because I am very tired and those I invited two nights ago did not come.” Another said, “These people are very stubborn. There is no need to invite them again!” Some church members, who showed interest in this church planting project, could not come because they claimed that their daily work to feed their family would not allow them. Other local churches that appeared interested in planting churches could not give anything, including food items.

Even though volunteers helped the actualization of the church plant, not many of them were into daily, or weekly witnessing in their local churches. This was manifested by a lack of experience in leading others to Christ. Likely, this caused fewer persons to be led to Christ, which means that the few new converts will struggle more intensely with community pressure.

Systemic Confusion

The Rivers West Conference has an interest in church planting in Odual but does not have an annual budget for this project. This is because of low income to the Conference, further exasperated by a budget shortfall over the previous two years. The Eastern Nigeria Union Treasurer has advised that the budget should reflect not more than the money raised by the conference the previous year. Thus, to balance the budget, six percent of the total annual budget – meant for evangelism, was used to pay salaries.

The Conference was also advised to ask members to give a free-will offering to be used for evangelism (church planting). This offering was collected only once, and the money collected was only enough to print a few tracts. This approach was not effective because the members were also being asked to give free-will offerings to help reduce Conference debt to the higher organization. It has been reported that, because of insurgency in the region, tithe and offerings has been reduced. This has resulted in money, meant for the higher organizations, was used to pay workers' salaries. This debt from the Conference to the higher organization is about fifty million naira only (N50,000000.00) – about one hundred and forty-three thousand dollars (\$143,000.00). Therefore, a dilemma between paying the debt and planting new churches has arisen.

There are multiple factors which lead to this lack of funding for church planting. The author believes that money spent for some departments may be used front-line mission work, such as church planting. Some pastors who may support this church plant have stated, “Why plant another church when the ones already planted are stagnant due to prevailing insecurity and low economy in the country?” For some pastors, promoting the expansion of existing churches is a higher priority. Also, some volunteers who “believe” in church planting have withdrawn engagement feel it requires "too much time".

Also, the dilemma about how approval of volunteers has been an issue. Should it be the local church or the district pastor or both? What if the district pastor does not approve people recommended by the local church? Or the local church complains to the Conference about a volunteer, the district pastor has approved, without informing the pastor? This was recently resolved by the district council recommending the volunteers.

Reflecting on the Role of the Church Planter

According to Kim (2010) “Church planting to a pastor is like childbirth to a mother. Labor pains are great and the joy of having a baby is greater. Although not all women have the experience of becoming a mother, not all pastors have the privilege of planting a church. Like the delivery of a baby, church planting has risks.” Some risks follow all church planters. Some of the volunteers for this church plant were government workers who received permission from their supervisors. Others took their annual leave for the period. Others left their businesses.

It would have been impossible to plant this church without these volunteers. One married volunteer said, “My wife said I have been gone for too long and the children are ‘daddy’ sick.” A volunteer exclaimed, “Why is it so difficult to plant this church? Is it not

the work of God?” This was because of some of the following hardships: No good drinking water in the community. The river, which is a major source of water, is always polluted by human waste and crude oil. There was fear that the church plant would require too much effort and even more effort to sustain it. The distance from the nearest church was a challenge for some of the church planters. The lack of electricity in the community made it difficult to charge phones, making it difficult for church planters to communicate with their family members at home.

There was a sense of frustration arising from not being able to meet some of the needs of the community. We could have built a borehole (a water unit that brings clean water from the ground) to produce better water for the community, but we could not do so because of inadequate funding for the church plant.

All volunteers faced major accommodation challenges. We arrived four days before the start of the evangelistic program, only to discover that the accommodations promised by the community were not ready. We contacted two community members who provided a place to sleep for the night, while we cleared, swept, and cleaned the four bedroom apartment consisting of one sitting room, two toilets, and one kitchen apartment where bats and other insects had made their home for the past four years. The other accommodations were two rooms in the unused cottage clinic of the community and another room within the community where some of the males stayed. The odor from the bats was reduced by spraying insecticide but remained in one apartment until the end of the evangelistic endeavor. Accommodations from various places in the community created coordination challenges. The team could not gather at the same time, meaning that some volunteers were absent from some of the gatherings.

While bringing the equipment, there were mechanical failures associated with the conference van on the trips to Anyu. This meant that on the opening night of the meetings, some of the equipment was not there. This included a raised platform and four additional box speakers needed for the program. Furthermore, some equipment never arrived. For example, the scaffold for the box speakers never arrived. The lifting of the speakers to safety most nights was very difficult. This required four of the volunteers to sleep in the evangelism venue to secure the equipment – an open school field with only a canopy for covering. Sleeping in this venue caused them to consistently be tired every morning, due to inadequate sleep, mosquito bites, and sometimes rain. This inconvenience made it difficult for them to join in the early morning for devotion and other training.

Some volunteers desired an allowance to supplement their expenditures for phone calls to their loved ones at home and food, even though we ate centrally. This desire to be rewarded decreased the spirit of sacrifice that is required for this kind of project. Three volunteers preferred to be busy in the kitchen and thus avoided the “hard work” of visiting, praying, and giving Bible studies to the people in the community.

Summary of Other Conclusions

In addition to the improvement noted above and the conclusions reached from the intervention data (Chapter 5), a summary of the theological, theoretical, and methodological conclusions reached in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will pave the way for the basis of the overarching conclusions.

Theological Conclusions from Chapter 2

A study of the Bible was undertaken to develop a theology of church planting. The goal was to ascertain principles for expanding the kingdom of God through the church planting model. For the church to reproduce itself, it must be mission-driven. The church is God's agency for the redemption of the world. The Antioch church in Acts 11 is a model of a healthy church plant. A church that sends its best, so that other churches may be planted, was the example which the Antioch church set. In this way, Antioch became a mother organization. Healthy church plants plant other churches. Lastly, church planting in the ministry of Paul was highlighted. His secret to a successful church plant was depending upon the Holy Spirit. In this way, the power of Spirit, rather than the knowledge of the preacher, was an essential factor in his success. Paul, himself, also accepted mentorship and utilized innovation and adaptation to lead a person to Jesus. He developed a team, returned to planted churches to encourage them, and organized local leadership to manage the affairs of the local church. New church plants are naturally mission-driven. Therefore, planting new churches by newly planted churches is a rapid way of enlarging the kingdom of God. In addition, the writings of Ellen White were researched to gather understanding from her prophetic guidance.

Literature Review Conclusions from Chapter 3

A review of literature related to church planting in general, and church planting in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, was conducted. This literature, encompassed a wide range of disciplines, theoretical perspectives, and practices, and was organized into eight segments: (church planting in the First Century, church planting in early Adventism, church planting in Africa, church planting in West Africa, church planting in Nigeria,

church planting by Seventh-day Adventists in Nigeria, contextualization in Africa, and insights from the North American context which are applicable across a variety of cultures. From this review, it was concluded that the Seventh-day Adventist Church must change its approach and make church planting a priority. This was the approach of early Adventism. Currently, church expansion among Adventists in Nigeria, is lagging when compared to other growing denominations in Nigeria. It is incumbent upon the Nigerian Adventist Church to have a vision for church planting and a process for implementing it.

Methodological Conclusions from Chapter 4

The writer has participated in seven church planting projects over more than seven years of gospel ministry. As a result of the principles drawn from the theological reflection and the literature review, it is now clear that there must be a wider picture of church planting and a vision and a strategy for establishing healthy church plants (Chapter 4). The theoretical and theological research was brought together in unexpected ways. The conclusions from both biblical study and research, regarding the practice of church planting, became aligned. Heretofore, these conclusions have been set forth. It also became clear that a qualitative case-study research approach best suits the aim of this intervention. The aim was to determine the best strategy for planting a healthy church and encourage Conference leadership, and the general membership, to create a culture where church planting is an essential norm.

Overarching Conclusions

Combining the conclusions from Chapters 2, 3, and 4 with the conclusions in this chapter drawn from the interpretation of data (Chapter 5), it is now possible to make three overarching conclusions from the project.

First, what emerges is that the role of the Holy Spirit in church planting is the biggest factor for success. While the metaphor of planting is from agriculture, in Scripture it is used to describe the sowing of God's Word (Luke 8:5-15). It is God who causes the seed to germinate and bear fruit. The understanding that church planting is dependent upon God is compelling in the above metaphor. In addition, it is the most effective strategy for the expansion of the kingdom of God to fulfil the mission of all congregations.

It is the purpose of God that the church will take His Word to the entire world. Although God can work without human agency, He has chosen the church to be His agency to reach the world. As church leaders see that they have veered from the priority of church planting, they may re-align with winning people to Jesus and starting new churches as the main thing. By annually stating the number of churches to be planted and implementing the plan for the year, church planting may be woven into the fabric of the culture. As this approach is utilized, the Seventh-day Adventist Church may become the fastest growing church in Rivers-West and the entirety of Nigeria.

Second, what became evident throughout this project was that church planting is both a difficult and exciting process. It cannot rest on the shoulders of any one person. It is important to know that even though everyone cannot plant a church, everyone can play a role in an aspect of church planting. If a Conference can cast a vision for church

planting, and it is implemented, the same process of vision casting can be used for other areas of the work, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov 29:18). The book of Acts and the ministry of Paul is a model for modern church planting in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The cooperation between the conference and church members is essential for the success of church planting. This area is also important to the qualitative approach used in this research, as that approach captures the way various volunteers expressed their experience during the church planting period.

Church members want to be involved in things bigger than themselves, and if they are properly encouraged, we shall have an army for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. As church planting is given priority in the church, the Church shall experience growth with no equal heretofore.

Third, what seems inevitable in church planting is planning. The plan of the church to initiate the process, the plan for members to support, the plan for volunteers to accept, the plan for volunteers to visit friends, and the plan to have a post-church plant activity is all part of essential planning. Planning helps the cause of God to do things in better ways. However, not all plans for church planting come to pass because of security threats, etc. However, the planning process becomes a guide to be used for other church projects in the regions; and to know that the Church's collective resistance to obstacles will overcome obstacles by trust in the owner of the work-Jehovah.

Personal Transformation

One other way of assessing this project is to note the impact it had on my life and ministry. I will highlight four ways that this project has influenced me. First, the readiness of my heart during the beginning of this project led to increasing awareness of

my strength, weakness, and spiritual state. As a result of this project, focusing on my spiritual transformation has brought vitality to my ministry and changed my local Conference participation in church planting. Although a strategy is good, the success of church planting or church work depends more on the power of God. I realized that leading any change is difficult but possible and resolved to encourage and support leaders in the higher organization that are leading change.

Second, is God's miraculous provision in the journey of this project. Many times, due to the insecurity and flood in River State in Nigeria, my sources of funding were absent, however, God provided in uncommon ways. This has increased my faith in God, that He will provide for other areas of His work, especially as He provided the funds for the implementation of this project and our media ministry.

Thirdly, the rigor of research and writing has created a process of discovery that will never end for me. It is like receiving a gunshot on your chest while wearing a bullet-proof suit, you have the fear from the sound of the gun and the joy that you were not injured. I have improved in expressing myself in writing, and my ability to balance theological theory and practice.

Fourthly, I am overwhelmed with the wealth of knowledge discovered through the project. I acknowledge that I have learned much in my chosen field, but this has kept me humble in the process because I am continually observing, reading, and learning. I lead by asking questions. This experience of becoming a lifelong learner has led to further questions and learning interests which will be the subject of future studies.

Recommendations

Some recommendations for further action and research have arisen out of this limited intervention and research project.

1. The literature review (Chapter 3) noted the scarcity of church planting scholarships in Nigeria. I recommend that the Unions in Nigeria should create a church planting department that should be reflected in the local church. Some weekends in the church's annual calendar should be dedicated to church planting, including an hour celebration of church planters and the planted churches during the annual camp meeting.

2. I plan to teach more on church planting, write several articles, and a book to contextualize the knowledge I have gained from this project.

3. The Lamb Shelter, a little building without walls for a few worshipers, or a worship center venue should be concluded before the start of the evangelistic series. This will allow the volunteers to focus on the evangelistic series of the church plant.

4. The first visit to the church plant area should be at least two years before the evangelistic series.

5. There should be a process of selecting volunteers through their various spiritual gifts because not everyone can be a church planter.

6. All volunteers shall begin compulsory training for the church plant, at least three months before the evangelistic series. This training will include the history of the community (Oduval people), how to mingle with people, how to conduct a community needs assessment, how to give Bible studies, how to handle the objections of friends, and post-church plant activities.

7. Budget for church planting should include at least two-year post-church plant activities.

Recommendation to the Conference that sponsors a church plant

1. The Conference should set a goal for church planting in every new administrative term. This will determine how many church plants will occur each year and where the venue(s) will be.

2. The Conference should have a budget for the church plants and release such money at least one year before the evangelistic series so that pre-evangelistic activities as outlined in chapter 4 will commence.

3. There should be a mentor, who may be a pastor or mission-driven member. He/she will train and encourage these new members in every new church plant.

4. The Conference should create a network of new church plants. Let there be an interaction between leaders of these various church plants, and a day in the year to celebrate all new church plants.

5. The Conference should create a policy to determine how long after the establishment of a church plant to plant another church.

How the work can improve in Nigeria in the face of financial challenges

1. Members should be encouraged to be faithful.

2. Conference officials and church members should be encouraged to make the sacrifices for the work.

3. There must be constant prayers for miraculous provision.

4. Small groups should become a part of the culture in Nigeria. It is always less expensive to win people this way. Small groups may also become new church plants in the future.

Structuring the work to have more money for the mission

1. Every Conference should use 6% of their annual budget for evangelism and gradually increase this percentage every year.

2. There should be an appeal for individuals to make sacrifices and leaders must be accountable for these funds.

How to support or reward pastors for planting churches

1. Our work in Nigeria should be structured for mission. New Unions, Conferences, districts, and churches should be organized only for mission and not for political expansion. This is possible when the higher approving body makes sure that all the qualifications for their organization are met. There should be a special fund created in each church and local Conference for the church plant.

2. Church planting should be one of the criteria for pastoral ordination.

3. Newly employed pastors should be sent to plant a new church.

4. If every church is encouraged to plant another church in its third to fifth year of establishment, Kingdom expansion will result. Churches that are half-full in their worship center will be encouraged to plant another church. Members who relocate to a region where there is no church may be encouraged to plant another church. This will result in double the present number of churches in Nigeria in ten years.

5. Develop Nigerian churches where families will take one or two years off to plant churches.

6. Develop a Nigerian church where every church has a church planting leader, whose work will include how to plant another church out of the existing church.

How to impact the culture of the entire Conference, churches, members, and pastors

Culture has the power to change our life dramatically. This means that if we change the culture of our entire membership to become missional, more churches will be planted. This can be done through every Conference having a ten-year plan which will include church planting. Leaders will be elected with the mandate to carry out these plans, as they follow the direction of the Holy Spirit. This ten-year plan shall be developed by the stakeholders and voted in a specially called meeting of the Conference (extraordinary meeting, mini-constituency, stakeholders meeting, etc.). This long-term plan will remove from the elected leader(s) the burden of creating a new vision. They will concentrate on how to actualize the plans and combat the competitive spirit which says, “this is our time, they cannot tell us what to do.” When the mission is driven continuously by these leaders, it will become part of the culture and the Conference will be shaped better for the mission.

This plan will obviate every new administration thinking of what to do that is new and unique. Sadly, many times the new administration does not implement what the previous administration has started because of the attitude, “this is our own time, and they cannot tell us what to do.” A long-term plan that is not dependent on who is the leader, will consistently shape the action of the Conference, thereby changing the culture of the membership.

Final Word

Can church planting be considered an essential tool by the church for its mission of expanding the kingdom of God? Yes, and churches should adopt this essential tool because church planting has been demonstrated to be the best method for expanding the Kingdom of God. This methodology provides a proven strategy for growing the number of congregations of believers. And because various locations have different characteristics, the Holy Spirit will be our ultimate guide in determining what we should do for success. In addition, we must learn to collaborate so that we can limit our weaknesses and maximize our strengths; create multiple methodologies for effective planting of more churches. In conclusion, if church leaders and members make church planting a priority both in words and action, the Seventh-day Adventist Church will multiply in both membership and spirituality in a shorter time.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EVALUATING CHURCH PLANTING

1. Have you ever been involved in church planting before now?
2. Did you attend the training conducted for the church plant in the Rivers West Conference, Nigeria?
3. Had you attended a church planting seminar before?
4. Did you read books on church planting? If so, how helpful was the reading for church planting?
5. Who mentored you on church planting?
6. How optimistic were you about the church-planting project?
7. If you were optimistic or skeptical, from what do you attribute your optimism or skepticism?
8. What preparation was most important to you for church planting?
9. What could have been done to prepare you better for church planting?

APPENDIX B

QUESTION AND ANSWER TO INTERVIEW

1. Had you ever been involved in church planting before now?

YES	NO	RESPONSES
9	8	17

2. Did you attend the training conducted for the church plant in the Rivers West Conference, Nigeria?

YES	NO	RESPONSES
8	9	17

3. Had you attended a church planting seminar before?

YES	NO	RESPONSES
2	15	17

4. Did you read books on church planting? If so, how helpful was the reading for church planting?

YES	NO	RESPONSES
6	11	17

5. Who mentored you on church planting?

COUNT	RESPONSES
7	Nobody
1	Pastor Olare and Joseph Ola
1	Pastor Nnanta, Pastor Nation Ajie, Pastor Smart Maduagu
1	Pastor Monday Ugborji, Pastor T. F. Young, Pastor Smart Maduagu
1	Pastor Austine
2	Pastor Kingsley Edwin
4	Pastor Smart Maduagu

6. How optimistic were you about the church planting project?

COUNT	RESPONSES
1	Happiness
1	Very interesting
1	Very passionate
1	Very ok for the progress of the work
1	Very optimistic
1	Quite optimistic
1	Success was seen from the beginning

1	Joyous and excited
3	Very optimistic
2	Excited
2	Highly optimistic
1	Very excited
1	So happy

7. If you were optimistic or skeptical, from what do you attribute your optimism or skepticism?

COUNT	RESPONSES
1	Its an unentered area - our doctrine can be shared to souls who have never heard.
1	For the faith that our church will open at Odual.
1	Because the gospel is coming to Anyu community.
1	Because it is my clan and people who speak the same language with me.
1	The experience of church planting.
1	I love to be among those who want to preach the Word of God.
1	It will help the church have a place of worship and lamb shelter.
1	Because the message needs to be heard.
1	Winning souls.
1	Winning souls for heaven, making new friends, the joy of fulfilling heaven's goal.
1	The seminar was contiguous.
1	The joy of being a missionary.

- 1 Going to an un-entered area gives me joy.
- 1 Gospel will move forward, the knowledge of church planting has increased in me.
- 1 Past experience particularly on visitation.
- 1 To be one of those who obey God's commandment for soul winning.
- 1 New faces or persons to share the gospel with.

8. What preparation was most important to you for church planting?

COUNT

RESPONSES

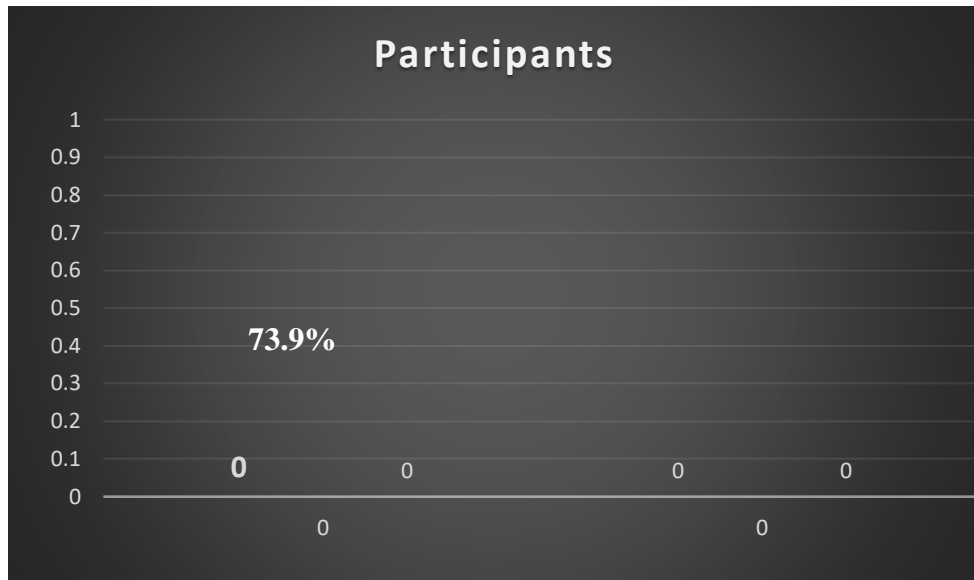
- 1 Encouragement meeting reports.
- 1 Prayer and planning session during the program.
- 2 Lecture on how to mingle with the people.
- 1 Training by mentor.
- 1 Pre-visitation to the community.
- 1 Free medical program by African Medical Missionary Institute.
- 1 The pre-church planting exercises that were carried out.
- 1 Bible Study
- 1 Visitation method.
- 1 Materials that made the work move very fast.
- 1 Bible quotation and how to mingle.

- 1 Nil
- 1 There was a need for the people who had not heard about the Sabbath.
- 1 To hear that the gospel is entering an un-entered area.
- 1 To have souls for Christ.
- 1 Daily meetings with prayer sessions as well as reports.

9. What could have been done to prepare you better for church planting?

COUNT	RESPONSES
1	Two or three days seminar.
1	Prayer.
1	Spiritual and physical equipment.
1	Prayerful, spiritual and a good example for the new converts.
1	Reading books and attending seminars on church planting.
1	Need more mingling, skill like music to teach new converts.
2	More training.
1	Equipping through fasting.
1	Training on winning souls.

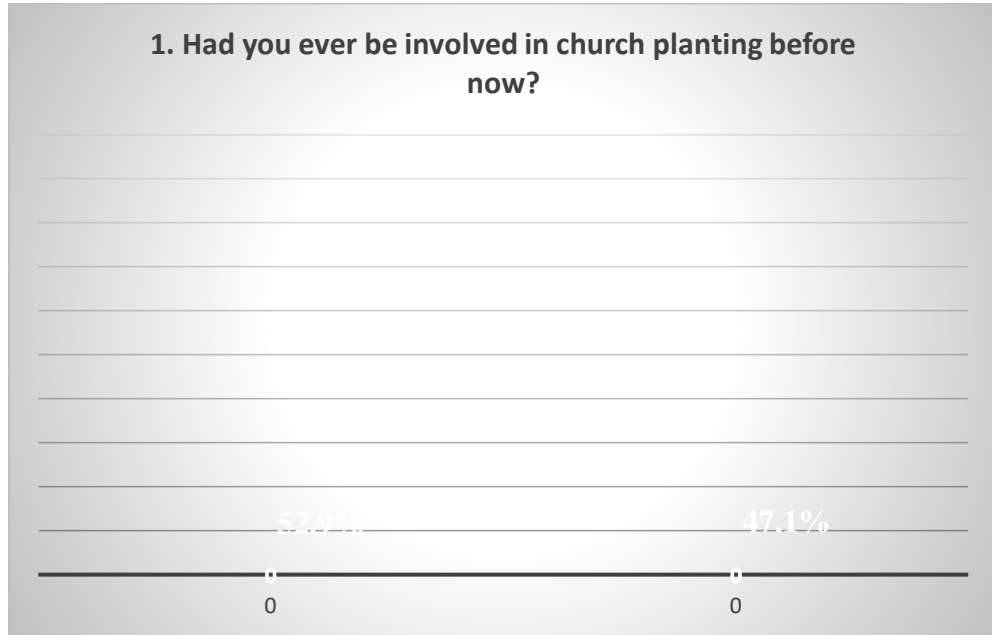
- 1 Field survey.
- 1 Daily preparation of topics to discuss with the prospects.
- 2 More seminars.
- 1 Materials for learning and constant learning and training.
- 1 How to witness to adult and children.



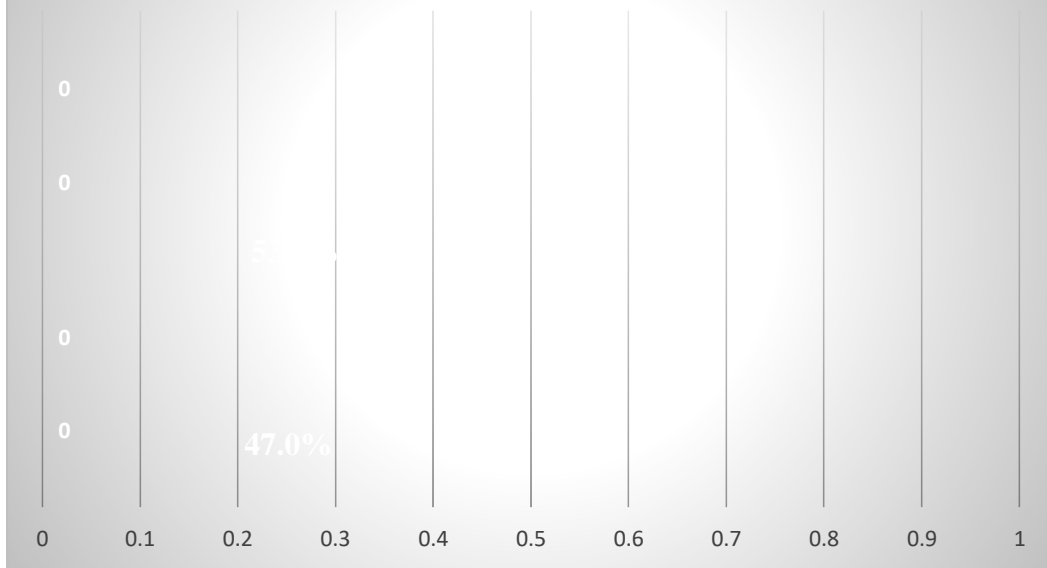
The chart above shows that seventeen (17) participants representing 73.9% of the total population of the twenty-three (23) volunteers participated. This survey was done by passing questionnaires to the participants. These questions were "yes" and "no" and open-ended questions. Such as “had you ever been involved in church planting before now”?

QUESTION AND ANSWER TO INTERVIEW

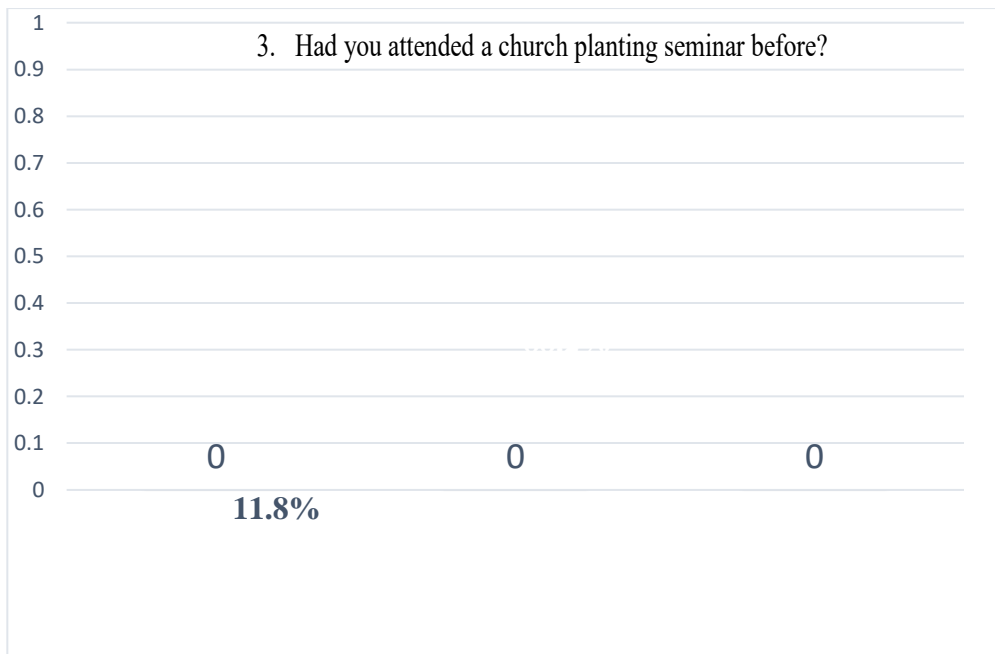
1. Had you ever be involved in church planting before now?



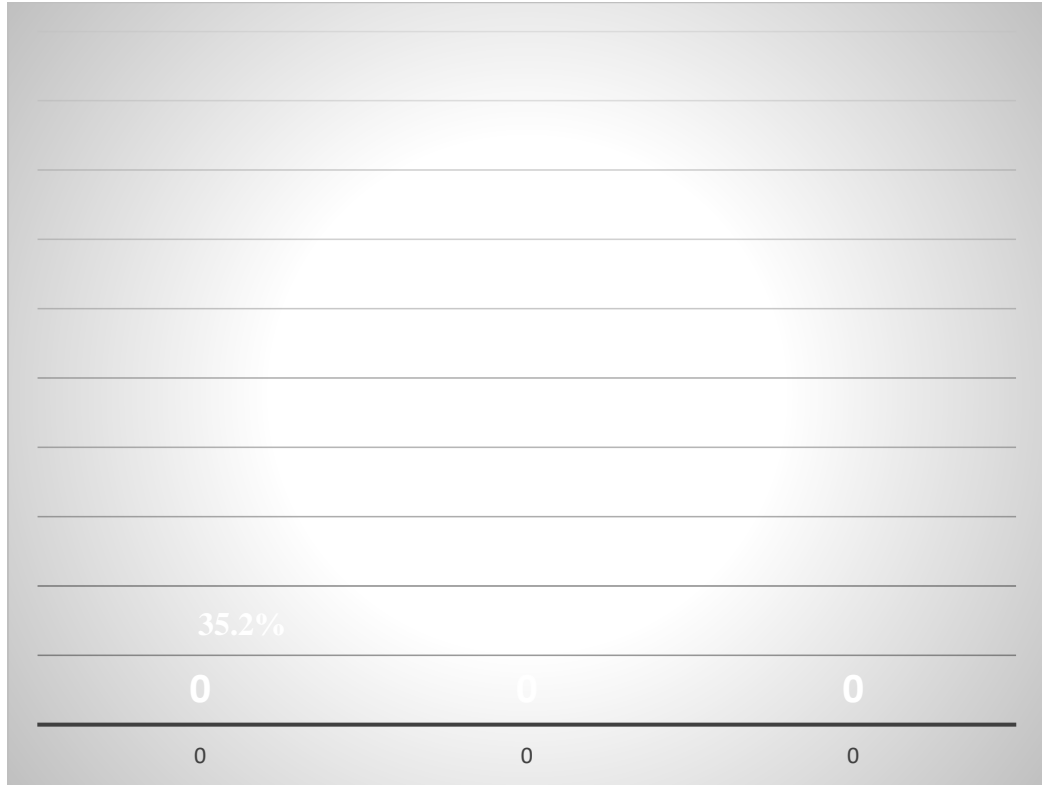
2. Did you attend the training conducted for the church plant in the Rivers West Conference, Nigeria?

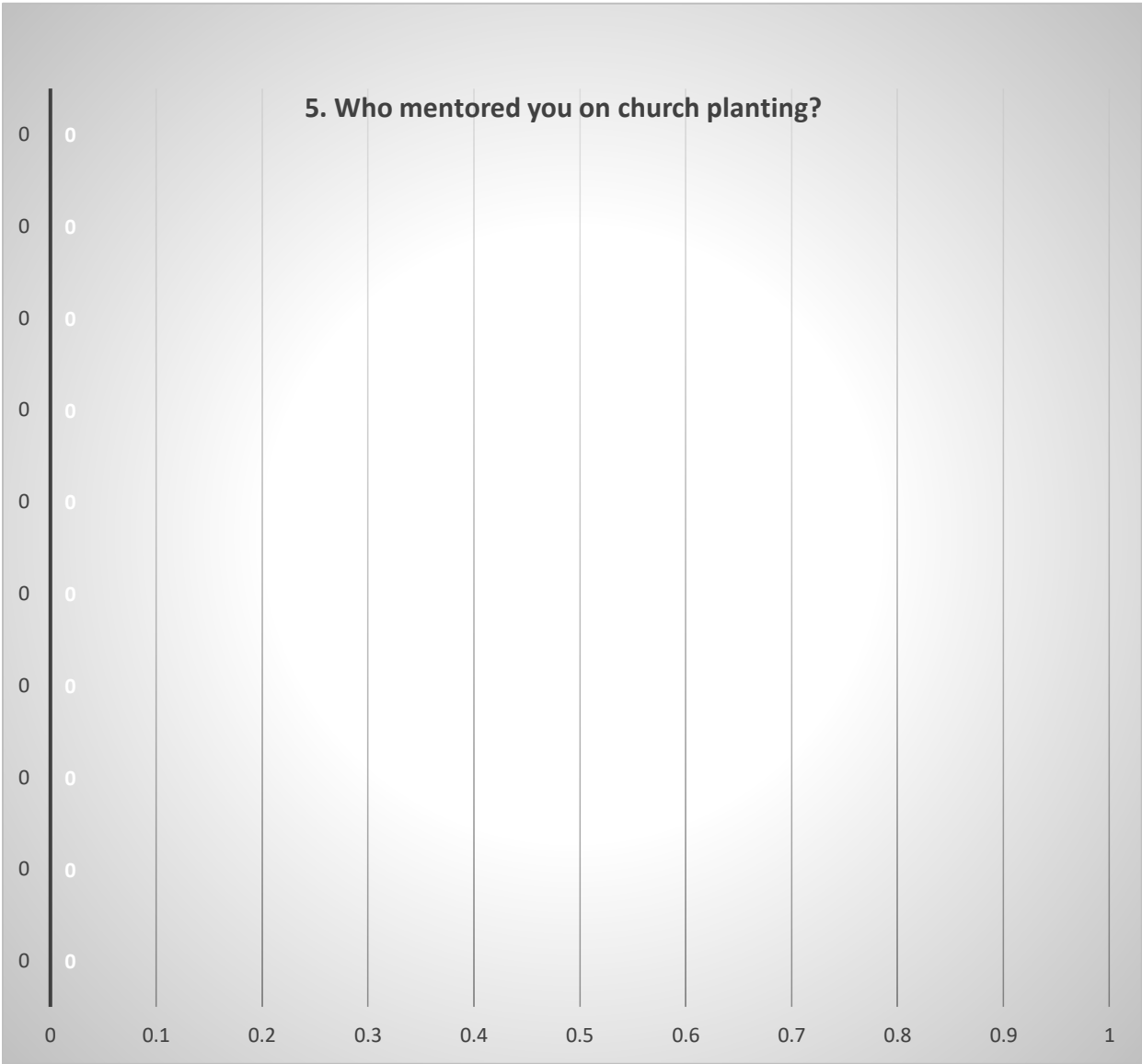


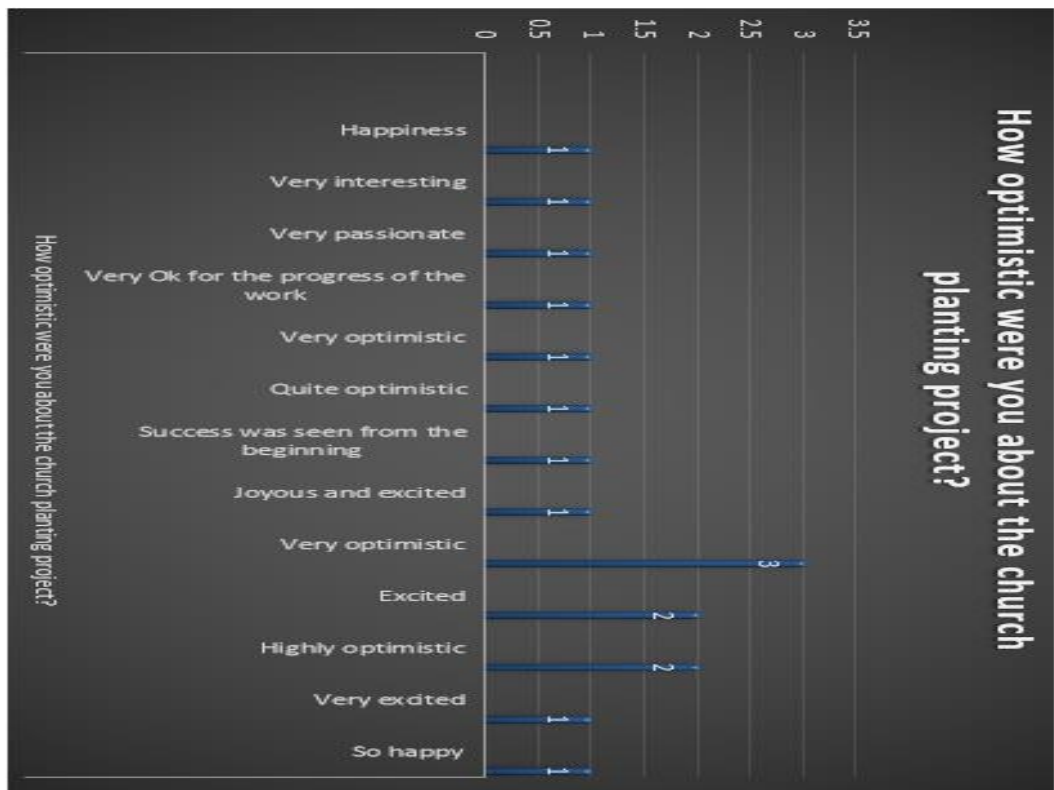
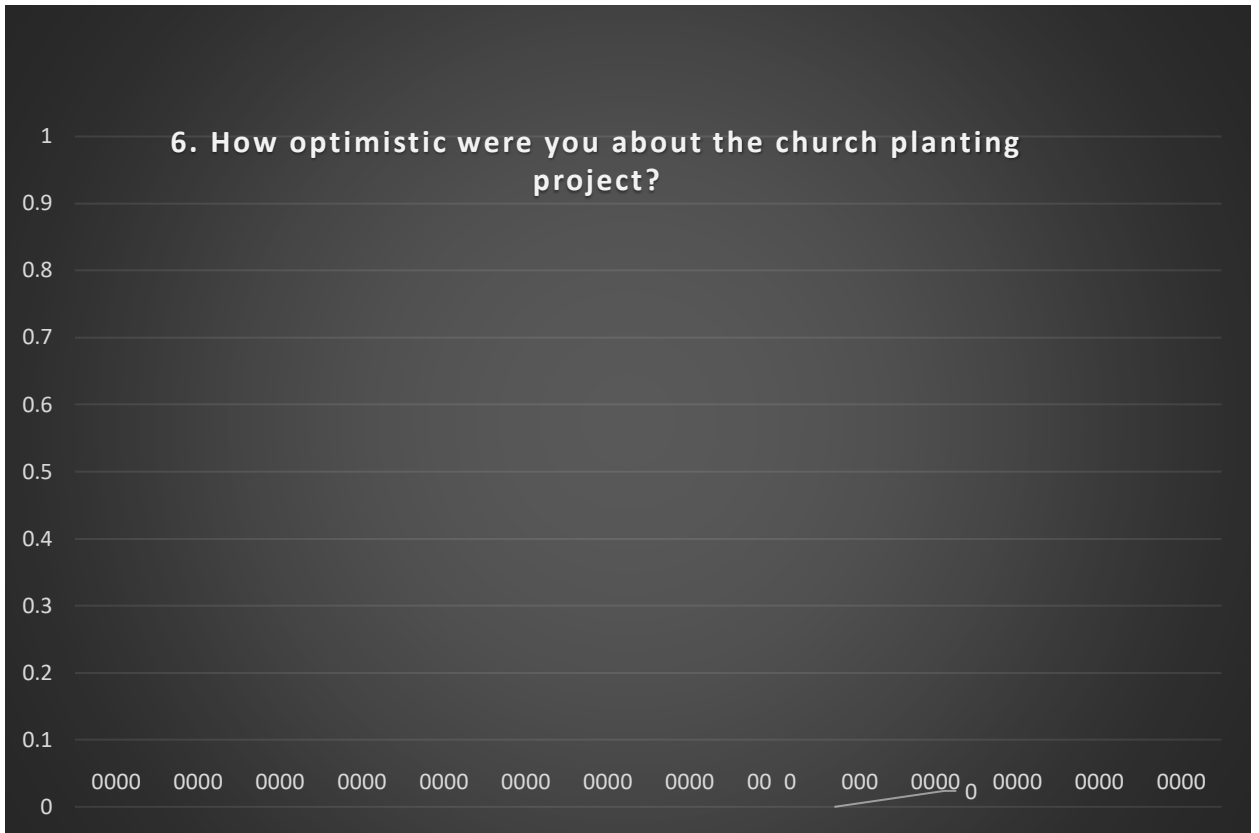
3. Had you attended a church planting seminar before?

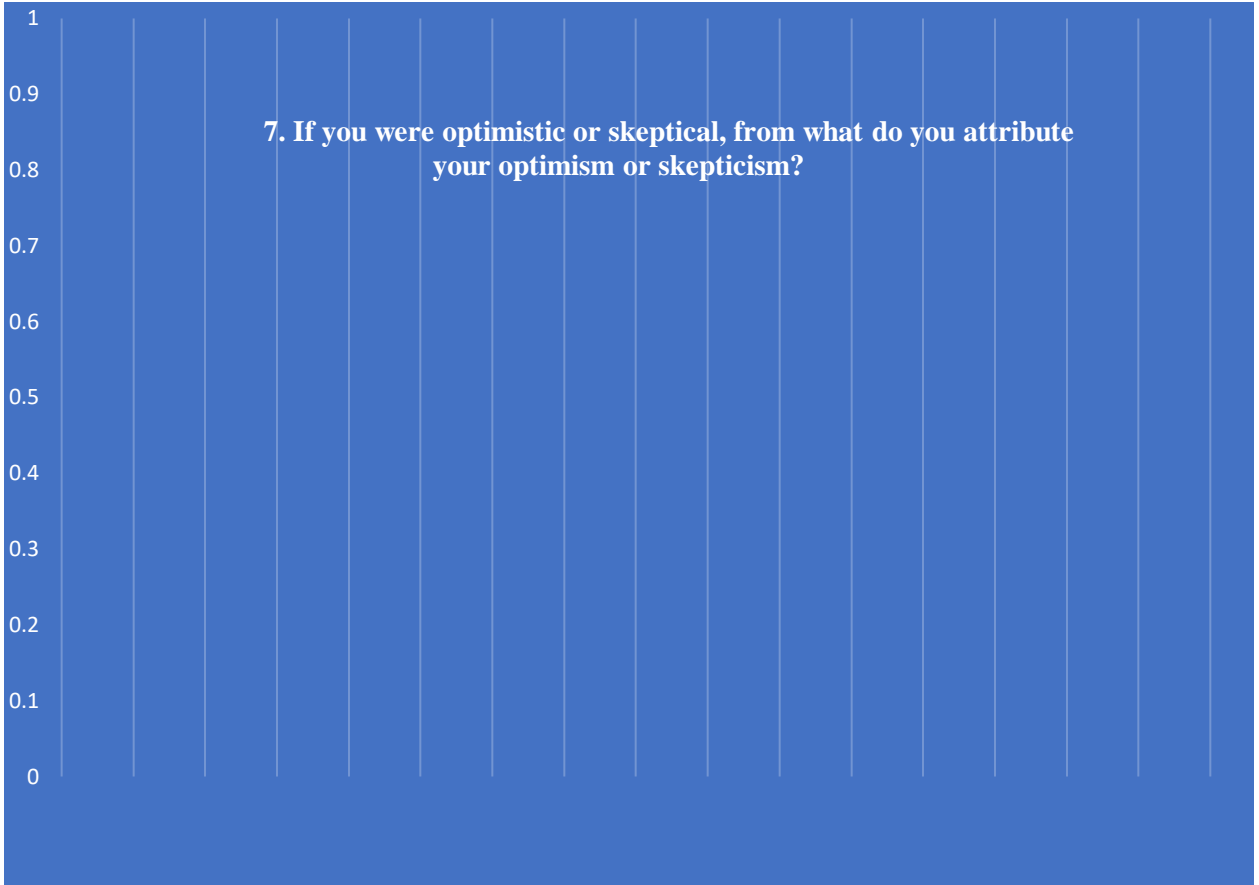


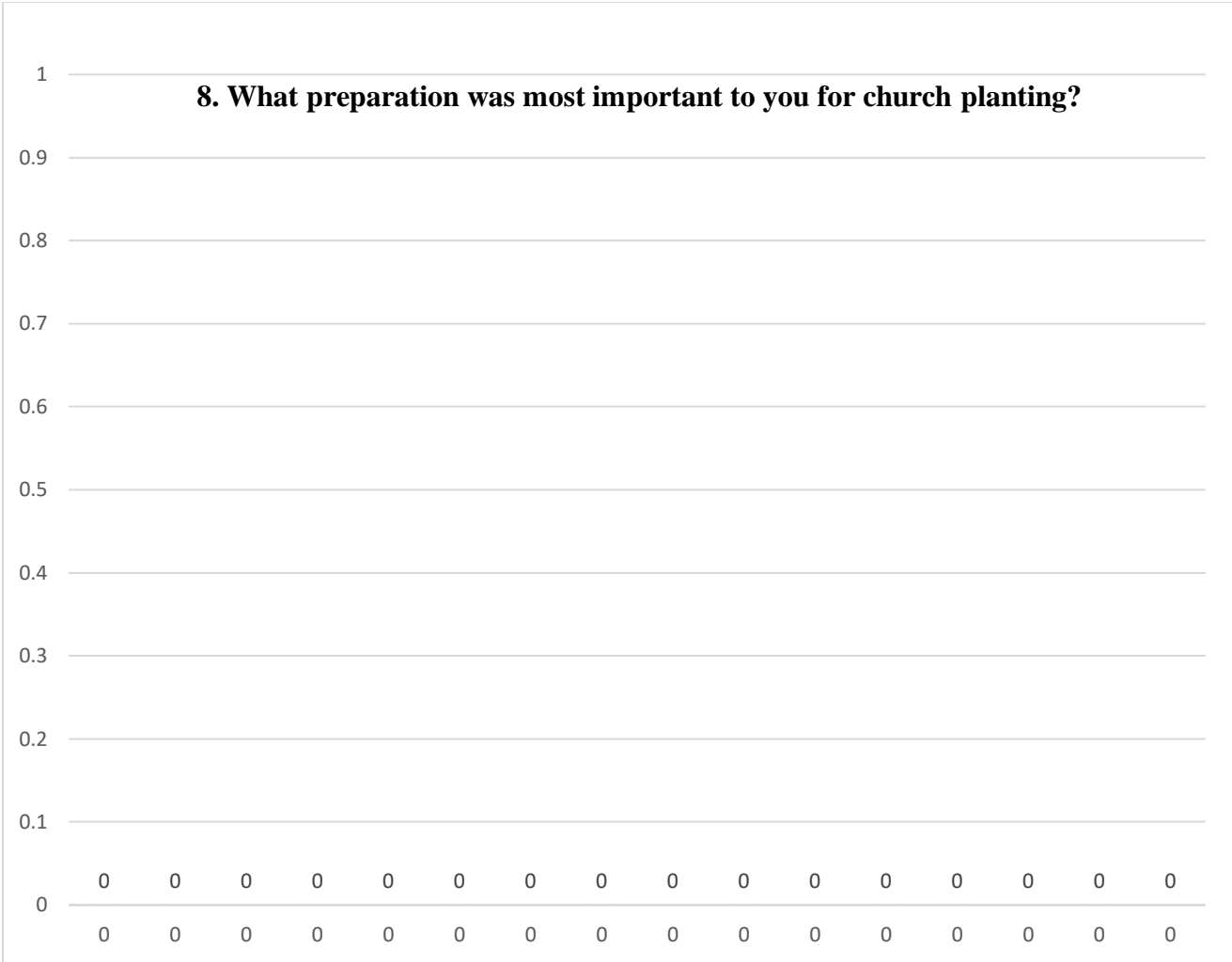
4. Did you read books on church planting? If so, how helpful was the reading for church planting?







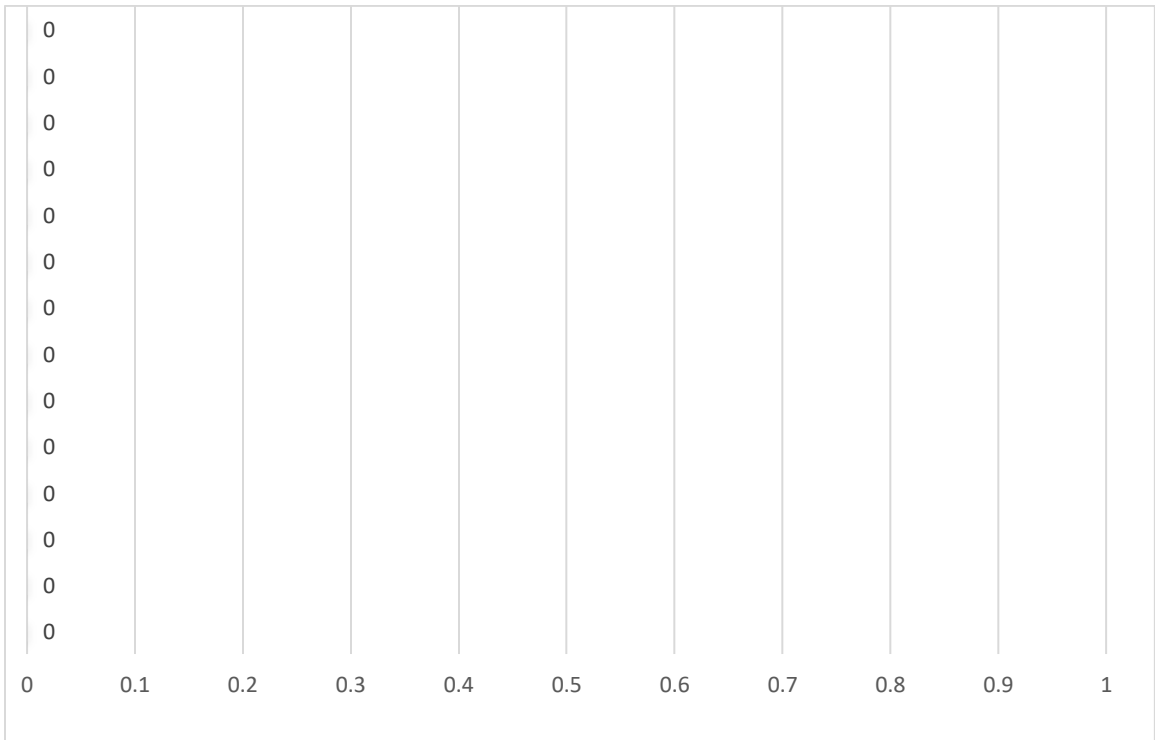




9. What could have been done to prepare you better for church planting?

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What could have been done to prepare you better for church planting?



APPENDIX C

POSTER FOR THE CHURCH PLANT

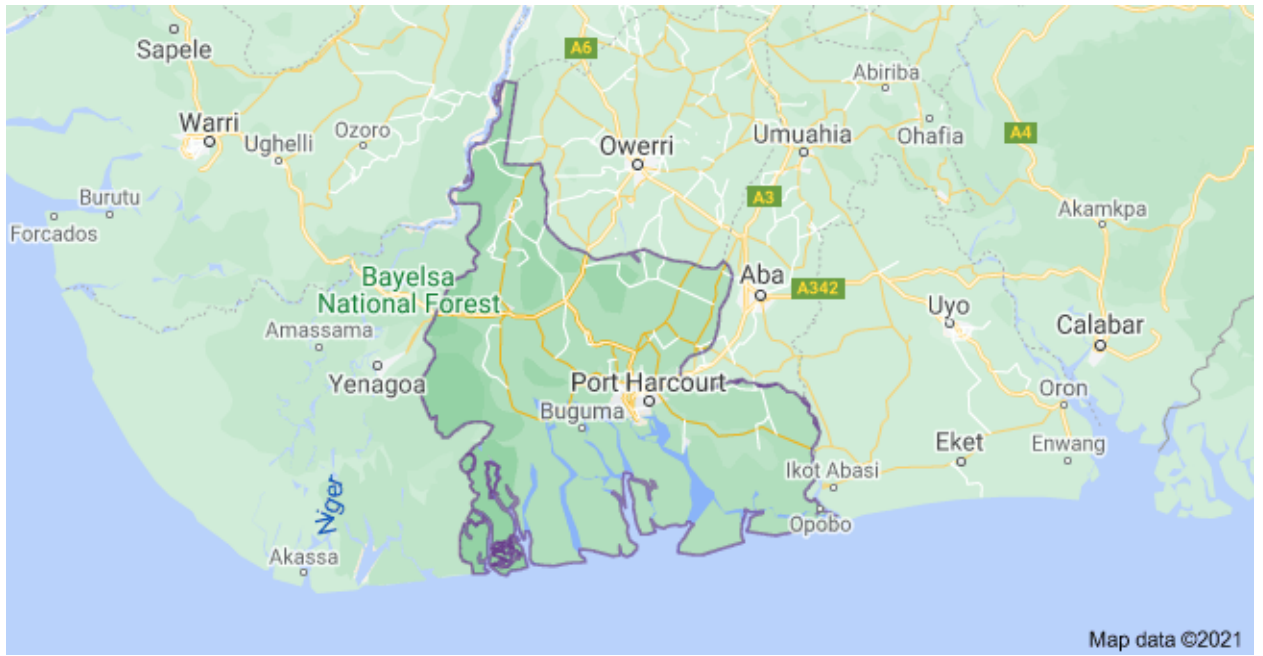


APPENDIX D

ABUA/ODUAL MAP



APPENDIX E
RIVERS STATE MAP



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