

A POWERFUL NEW WAY TO CHANGE THE CHURCH —

Life's Answer Church

A powerful way to change the church—and do it in one generation. Start with new members who have never heard of historic Adventist standards and, then, multiply their numbers till they fill the denomination.

During the 1980s, many faithful believers appealed to conference presidents because their local pastor was leading the members into compromising our historic beliefs and standards. Unless those appealing for help were wealthy, their pleas were generally ignored. They were rewarded for their concerns by being stripped of their church offices and gradually edged out. As a result, many of our most faithful members left the denomination in that decade.

Desperate to find sources of income which would replace the donations that the faithful took with them in the late 1980s, General Conference leaders looked to current trends among Sundaykeepers for solutions. As a result, Celebration churches were initiated, in which bands, loud music, and theatrical skits were used to bring more worldlings into the church. Entertainment became the key to action.

At the time, we extensively wrote on the problem and documented many instances, as well as the training program our pastors were told to attend.

But Celebrationism gradually fell into disrepute, because the older members did not like its inherent theatrical Pentecostalism.

Then, in the mid-1990s, a new method was copied from the Sundaykeepers. It was called church planting.

This consists of Celebration churches, but are

held in new locations—so as not to offend existing church members who worship in different buildings.

This is the new evangelism. It is like the earlier Celebration churches in what occurs during the service, but it has the advantage of lacking any restraints imposed by members. Anything goes, if it will bring in new members.

On page two is the front page of a pilot plan for new Seventh-day Adventist churches and their members.

This plan has several unique qualities of which you should be aware. They are significant in the extreme.

1 - The meetings will be held in a town located some distance from the nearest Adventist church. The text and map on page 2 of the document explains this.

The advantage of this is not only to reach non-Adventists, but also to hold the meetings at a distance so church members will not know what is taking place in those meetings. Church leaders are trying to learn from the 1980s, which so many faithful members left because of what was happening. The ultimate plan is to use new plantings to gradually remake the church into a new image with new members trained into new ways of doing things while not disturbing the older, existing churches.

2 - The meetings will be held on Friday night instead of Sabbath morning.

The advantage of the Friday night meetings is that it will appeal to the class of people who like to spend their weekend evenings partying around, and so are ready for some new place to go.

3 - Morning and afternoon activities will be conducted on Sabbath. These activities will include community service.

The advantage of the Sabbath activities is that it can copy the program which has been conducted at the Loma Linda University Church for nearly a decade, in which the students and grown-ups are sent out on Sabbath afternoons to paint houses; mow lawns; clean up trash; and, in a variety of other ways, show their neighborliness to the Loma Linda/Riverside/San Bernardino area. This is not

Celebration Tactbook 84 pp, Sept 99, \$6.50 + \$2.50. Extensive collection of articles about the inroads of Celebrationism into our churches since the late 1980s.

The Truth about Church Planting 44 pp, Sept 99, \$7.95 + \$2.50. The new NAD "church planting" campaign is designed to increase new young members—by providing them with entertaining messages and music.

1 a secret program, for it has received a number of
2 feature articles over the years in the *Pacific Union*
3 *Recorder*. We have written on it several times.

4 - Adventists not taking part in the outreach
5 will definitely be told not to attend the new-mod-
6 eled meetings. This is crucial to the success of the
7 plan while not offending the existing churches.

8 5 - Along with that, it is important that a ma-
9 jority of those in attendance be non-Adventists. This
will greatly aid in the establishment of new pat-
terns of worship, thinking, and activities. No con-
servative Adventists will be present to influence
their thinking.

6 - All clothing is to be "casual." Nothing for-
mal or "churchy" about these meetings is to be done
that might cause the suspicion that these are
church services. Whether in or out of meetings,
the church planting staff will never dress formally.

7 - It is extremely important that the new mem-
bers be taught certain practices which are not in
the General Conference *Policies*. This includes a
rule that membership will be canceled at the end
of any annual review of the books—if it is found
that tithes and offerings are not regularly being
paid.

Those two points, which no General Confer-
ence Session has ever authorized, are vital—for
they underlie the entire reason for Celebration
churches and church plantings: to bring in more
live bodies which will pay money into the church.

8 - Study materials, used at the meetings, will
include the reading and discussion of non-Adventist
books which explain the dos and don'ts of Chris-
tian experience.

9 - As might be expected, "contemporary" mu-
sic will be an important part of each meeting. Spe-
cial "concerts" will also be held, as a feeder to draw
people to the regular Friday evening meetings.

10 - Last, but not least, the target audience will
be young men in their 20s (*see page four of this*
tract).

The cover page of the 27-page, 8½ x 11 docu-
ment (*as shown on page two of this tract*) says
this:

"Life's Answer Church

"A Network of Home Bible Study Fellowships

"Request for TYPE A Church Planting Grant

"Approved by: The Seventh-day Adventist Church

"Approved by: Minnesota Conference of Seventh-
day Adventists

"Approved by: Mid-American Union Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists"

Written diagonally across the lower part of the
page are the words: "Under Consideration."

The entire document is far too involved to have
been written by the few members of a local church.
It is likely that the North American Division ini-
tially drafted it.

It is part of the NAD "church planting" plan, to
make it appear that the whole idea for each project
was dreamed up by local Adventists.

Page 1 describes the "*Life's Answer Church Op-
erating Plan*" as "a model that will advance the
collective mission of the church at large—in the
Twin Cities, in the Minnesota Conference, in the
Mid-America Union, and in the North American
Division." The plan is ultimately to be used through-
out North America.

We are told, on page 2, that the Northbrook
SDA Church is planned as the pilot church; its
outreach "church planting" will be called the "Life's
Answer Church" and will meet in Maple Grove, Min-
nesota.

Here are a few quotations, from the document,
which will help you sense the way-out aspect of
this project:

Page 1: "The role of the mother congregation is
to foster a culture that intentionally promotes the
creation and development of new Seventh-day
Adventist congregations in its market and to pro-
vide leadership training to new congregations. The
congregation is designed to meet the needs of first
generation unchurched people—not the needs and
worship preferences of current Seventh-day Advent-
ists."

Page 6: "Initially, there will be less than 20 Sev-
enth-day Adventists and they will serve in leader-
ship and support roles. Other Adventists will be
discouraged from attending services unless they
bring explorers [*the code word for non-Adventists,*
as defined on p. 3] with them. The goal is to have
a majority of people who attend be spiritual ex-
plorers or non-Adventists. As such, the congrega-
tions will be characterized as intra-denomina-
tional."

Page 6: "Sabbath services will be held on Fri-
day evening from approximately 7:30 p.m. to 9:30
p.m. rather than at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday morn-
ing. People in the target age group are evening and
night people, not morning people. The dress code
is casual."

Page 9: "Membership will be renewed annually
and those who do not routinely attend, do not sup-
port the body with tithe and offerings, and who
are not involved with missionary service will be
dropped from membership."

On page 11 we are told that basic study mate-
rials will primarily consist of "Bible study lessons"

and two non-Adventist books: “*Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis and “*Basic Christianity* by John R.W. Stott.”

Page 13: “Sabbath Day Activities: As noted on page 6, Sabbath services will be held on Friday evening from approximately 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. rather than at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday morning. During the daylight hours of the Sabbath a variety of practical activities will habitually occur that are designed to ‘spur one another on toward love and good deeds’ and ‘encourage one another’ [*underlining theirs*].”

“From sunrise Sabbath morning to sunset Sabbath evening people involved with Life’s Answers will be involved in service to the community, evangelistic efforts, and social activities that will promote interaction between and among believers and spiritual explorers. These activities will occur at locations where spiritual explorers are present.”

Page 15: “Contemporary Christian Music Concerts. Contemporary Christian music concerts may be conducted at the same location of Life’s Answer Church. These concerts are a nonthreatening way to engage the curiosity of spiritual explorers and bring them into contact with Life’s Answer.”

Here is part of the handwritten letter which accompanied the manuscript, when it was sent to

us:

“I thought you might like to see what is happening in the Twin Cities area. And the saddest part of all, I think, is that the Conference is behind this. We have no place to go for help. We just have to pray. ○

“This was a beautiful church in every way. Then they brought in a new pastor. He is not ordained and this is the first church he has ever had. In about a year and a half the church was sold. No other church in sight.

“Needless to say, with that and his strange sermons, many of us have left. The membership was about 300. Now it has not only gone down, but about one-half are new people they have brought in. Still no church!!

“We are heart sick. But we have found a conservative church. It’s a long way away, but we are happy with it.

“Please pray for the Twin Cities area. They are trying to get into some of the other Adventist churches here. Thank you.”—*Minnesota*.

Repeatedly, the conference office will back the local pastor, even though he destroys the church and drives out the members. We have come to a strange time. Surely, the end is near. —*vf* ○