



		Situation of members		Analytical Consideration		
<b>APPEARANCE OF THE CHURCH</b>		<b>M</b>	<b>Membership</b> (B+C+D)-(E+H+I+J) : At the end of the year	F+G are not counted here.	<b>(R) Retention Rate</b> = $\frac{(A) Attendance}{(M) Membership}$ < *Attendance Rate > This is Attendance Rate. In order to get true retention rate, you need follow analyses below.	
	<b>Increase</b>	B	<b>Membership</b> At beginning of the year		Membership is the foundation on which any other calculation can be done. R. Rate is to be calculated with the No. that includes B, C and D.	
		C	<b>Baptisms</b> How many baptized / prof. of faith		Danger of backsliding is critical to the new members. Care of nurturing, discipling should be provided through spiritual guardians personally and by the church collectively	
		D	<b>Transfer/Move-in</b> Transferred from another church		Like newly baptized members, these transferred members are also uneasy till they fully get settled in the environment of new church. We are to care them, otherwise they may be in danger also.	
	<b>Attend.</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Attendance</b> Including Guests, non-members: average		This No. of attendance includes not only the members, but also guests or visitors of SDA and non-SDA, however not the children unless they are baptized. If you want to have precise retention rate of your church, you need to be analytical to take attendance record each week, so that you can differentiate members and non-members in attendance.	
		<b>Ag</b>	<b>Guests in Attendance</b> Non-member + non-Adventist		Guests are fluid. But they need special attention, since they may join Bible Class or eventually may want to be baptized, or to become church members by transferring and get actively involved. These people are the hope for future of the church.	
	<b>Decrease</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>Transfer/Move-out</b>	Voted/ Uncertain	Transference is done by taking votes at Business meeting of the church. However, transferring does not happen mechanical and automatically. We need to keep contact with them by extending care till we find that member has been settled securely till their becoming active members there.	
		<b>F</b>	<b>Long Absentee (known)</b>	<b>Care Need Zone</b>	Uncertain	Through diligent contact with deep spiritual care, these people could either come back to the church (that increase the Attendance, the numerator of fraction of R. Rate) or be found to have dropped off the church, be backsliding, be disfellowshipped, or dead (that decrease Membership, denominator of the fraction). Either way, you can increase Ret. Rate of your church, if you attend and care these members by visitations or intimate contacts.
		<b>G</b>	<b>Missing (unknown)</b>		Uncertain	
		<b>H</b>	<b>Backslide/ Drop off</b>		(possible care need)	
<b>I</b>		<b>Disfellowship/ Audit</b>	(possible care need)		Disfellowship is applicable only for being found committing crimes or apparent irrevocable deeds that violate God's commandments. Reinstitution is possible by Christian love. Audit may be needed.	
<b>J</b>		<b>Death</b>	(Family care need)		It's a grave shame to a church if we are not aware of its member's death and unable to care them in that time of critical need. By caring the need of family members left, we may glorify God's name.	
<b>R</b>	<b>Retention Rate</b> R = A / M : Rough and legitimate		(R=A/M) means, Retention Rate will increase, either by to increase the Attendance (numerator of the fraction), or decrease the Membership (denominator of that fraction) which is painful to the church.			
<b>Ra</b>	<b>Retention Rate Analytical</b> Ra = (A-Ag) / {M-(H+I+J)} : Real, analytical		In order to get more accurate Retention Rate, you need to subtract (Ag) from (A), and that decreases R.R. But also you have to see that subtracting members (H), (I), (J) from members of (F), (G) leads you to increase R.R.			
<b>Caring Church</b>		<b>Spiritual Guardian/Friend</b>		These columns are rather in nature of self-check for the church. We propose that spiritual guardians/ friends/ mentors are essential for Christians to grow, being steadfast in the grace of Jesus. We also appeal that Spiritual guardians are the result of intentional spiritual exercise of a church. Effect and result of each of these items listed here are dependent on how we see and accept them. Though we wish all our members become good spiritual guardians for each other, but effectiveness/blessing may be greatly different on how we appreciate and practice them. Also Small Group Leader's Meeting may be done weekly, or monthly with same result, depending on its quality.		
		<b>Leader Training</b>				
		<b>Small Group/Action Unit</b>				
		<b>S. Gr. Leader's Meeting</b>				

# Overview of Retention Project in Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Composed by Teru Fukui, SSPM Director of NSD

Retention Project Coordinator of NSD

## A. Critical Condition of Retention Rate in NSD (A-B are part of report of Dr. Jai Ryong Lee)

### 1. Introduction

The church on this earth was organized to aid man's salvation. In order to achieve its mission, the church has developed numerous mission strategies and implemented them in their respective societies. In the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD), about 20,000 people join the church every year through baptism and profession of faith.

However, the average number of church members who attend church worship services on Sabbath is only about 30% in the organized territories (there is no available statistics for the unorganized territories). We have lost about 70% of our church members: about 165,000 members in organized territories alone. We admit that the church has neglected the work of reclaiming these precious lost members. We need to pay careful attention to them and develop special strategies and implement these to improve the current situation.

### 2. Statistics of Backsliders by Unions/Conferences (Based on Annual Council Report in 2009/2010)

Union	Conference	Members	Attendees	Ratio (%)	Backsliders
K U C	ECKC	68,478	17,591	26%	50,887
	WCKC	70,945	19,549	28%	51,396
	SEKC	28,702	8,313	29%	20,389
	MWKC	25,740	9,438	37%	16,302
	SWKC	18,387	6,810	37%	11,577
	JeJu Field	1,199	403	34%	796
	North Korea	*(866)			
	KUC Total	213,451	62,104	29%	151,347
J U C	EJC	8,059	3,024	38%	5,035
	WJC	5,121	1,822	36%	3,299
	OM	2,179	694	32%	1,485
	JUC Total	15,359	5,540	36%	9,819
C H U M	TWC	5,998	3,785	63%	2,213
	HKMC	4,737	1,660	35%	3,077
	China	*(404,015)			
	CHUM Total	10,735	5,445	51%	5,290
M M F	MMF	1,634	514	31%	1,120
N S D	NSD Total	*(404,881) 241,179	73,603	30%	167,576

## \*Unorganized Territories

### B. Challenges

While the reclaiming of backsliders is one of the greatest challenges in the church, the retaining the newly baptized members demands us also serious attention. It is said that among average 20,000 people who join the Seventh-day Adventist Church every year through baptism or profession of faith in NSD, about 60% of them are leaving the church within one year of their baptism. We are losing too many members! In order to baptize them, the church members have spent an enormous amount of time, energy and finance, but they have been discouraged seeing their evangelistic efforts have become fruitless in such a short time. The sad thing is that this phenomenon has become a trend over the past several decades. This raises a serious question: How can we retain more of newly converted people in the church? Raising the retention rate among the newly baptized could be one of the good solutions to prevent backsliding of our members. Unless the church addresses this problem there is little hope of resolve. Yes, the challenge is enormous but by the grace of God and through the power of the Holy Spirit we can overcome the challenges and claim back the lost sheep into the fold of God.

### C. Issues

There are some important issues that we need to pay attention behind these challenges. Those issues are 1) Culture of Asian Mind, 2) Membership Audit, 3) Institutional churches, 4) Mobility of Society, and 5) Nurturing & Training for Christian Life.

#### 1) Culture of Asian Mind:

Our members don't want to disregard their own home churches where they found their salvation and are baptized. They feel to keep honor them. To them, there is no such thing to move their membership records to other churches when they move, just like family register which many other countries may not have as a system in the society. They honor the kindness of the members of their home churches who have been so good to them, and keep the relationship with those members intact by holding the same membership records without transferring them, when they have to move and change the church and their addresses due to marriage or job changes.

They hope to come back to the same home churches in future when they have to quit the jobs or retire, or at least they wish so when they move.

Besides this, some, though maybe few, feel obliged to keep sending tithe to their own home churches, by keeping their records in the same church.

Permanent family register system is deep rooted in people's mind.

2) Membership Audit:

In our churches of NSD territory, it is said that there are strong tendencies for church leaders to feel it disgrace that the churches lose the number of members from the church against other Christian Church denominations. It is not easy for pastors to do the Membership Audit.

We also agree that clearing the members who have backslidden from the church or lost interest to come to church from the membership may raise the retention rate temporary, but not solve the problem of retention issues. However, our church leaders and pastors need to understand that Membership Audit is not a simple clearing the record by taking off the name of those members, but it is an spiritual endeavor to understand those members, and strengthen their spiritual life, and, if possible, re-establish their relationship between them and Christ, thus to reclaim them back to our church and Christ. Through this process of contacting them, we may be able to raise up our retention rate.

$$\text{Retention Rate} = \frac{\text{Attendance}}{\text{Membership}} \left( \begin{array}{l} + \text{ up} \\ - \text{ down} \end{array} = + \text{ up} \right)$$

3) Institutional churches:

In cases of institutional churches, we have to face with more complex situations for retention issues.

In case of medical institutions, they have to deal with special situations to take care of the need of working shifts, on call, or other peculiar needs of the medical, nutritional staff. Unless we develop good care-giving system, those nurses, or medical or non-medical staff would have more threatening danger to lose the spirituality by working on Sabbath hours and losing spiritual vigor without attending services. However, in case of educational institutions, the retention rate among the graduated students would be probably the worst. Because of the apparent lack of relationship between the schools and students after graduating from the schools, it is not easy for the church to keep track of those students who got baptized after they left schools. If they don't have alumni association, we could guess how even harder it would be. It is said that when they graduate schools, they graduate from the church also. But the future of our church depends on those young people, our churches should deal with this issue with special care and attention in co-operations with Educational, Youth departments, and Alumni associations of the schools, as quickly as possible. For these churches, the issue is how we can keep up the contact with them, give them any necessary support, and provide them care in nurturing,

discipling and training processes of Christian spirituality.

#### 4) Mobility of Society

We are living now in society of high mobility. In a sense, our communities and even churches are becoming fluid. Due to the demands of employments and businesses, people can't help but move very often. They may need to change the kinds or the places of work without enough adjusting time, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. In addition to the fluidity of nuclear family, so called IT– Information Technology– is affecting our societies and people. The lives of people are becoming more and more un-attached and un-related each other. That is strongly affecting our churches and members. If the pastors and leaders of our churches keep paying attention only to giving people baptisms, we are prone to lose the hearts of people. The less attached relationship among our people is said to be one of the major reasons why members leave the churches. When fluidity of the society threatens our churches, people feel more uneasy and solitary, not only physically, but also spiritually, emotionally, and mentally, even if they are unaware of it. Same influence can be felt among the members in the institutional churches who have to work during Sabbath worship hours on shifts, and who don't come back to attend the church after graduation from the school.

#### 5) Nurturing & Training in Christian Life:

In fluidity or mobility of the communities, for churches it is becoming more and more hard to have a consistent time for nurturing and training of member's spirituality. With the flood of information from the secular world, to maintain the spirituality is becoming hard ministries to the church. Nurturing stage of Christian life takes a lot of time and energy. Discipling process of Christian is essential for spiritual growth, and doesn't happen by itself, rather it takes deliberate planning and personal care throughout its process. On top of it, training of a Christian to be a good witness to the Lord takes another deliberate care collectively in a church.

It demands personal care and corporate church ministries for one member of Christian to grow in this fluidity of society today. We can't ask only pastors to accomplish this wide range of ministries. These priestly ministries are entrusted to all Christians by Christ from the beginning (Isa. 43:10, 1Pet. 2:9). We are to prepare our whole body of Christian Brother and Sisterhood to take up these ministries.

Though it looks very discouraging, since our retention rate being very low in our territory of NSD, we can look at the faithfulness of our members, and have great hope for our members that we can have only in grace of Christ.

#### D. "Relational" Proposal

This Proposal of Retention Project aims basically to strengthen the "Relational" ministries of the church. "Relational" means that we connect with the people, our members, person to person, not simply giving them knowledge and teaching, but sharing the experiences personally, making them a Christian in a real life, becoming a good friend each other. And when we think of the responsibilities and the immediate scope of this vision of Retention Issues, we need to trust our local churches to accomplish this never-ending care and ministries of the church. Therefore, when we propose something on this issue, I believe the proposal of our division, NSD, is to be temporal, limited and simple. And we limit our target group to work for raising up the retention rate to Newly Baptized members within 3 years after baptism, because the retention rate among newly baptized members seems to be the most critical. And we also limit the number of churches to venture to join this project to monitoring churches which we deal with later in this article.

The Proposal is 3-year project that consists of 2 fold initiatives. These are "Message Delivery" and "Small Group Training." After 3-year temporal project, each church should decide on their own responsibility before God which direction they should take in order to raise up and maintain their own retention rate, or whether they should keep on the retention project, the course of ministries for raising retention rate, as before or not. As for the 1<sup>st</sup> initiative of "Message Delivery", \*each organization of NSD, Unions, Local Conferences, Institutions, and Local Churches must cooperate in one effort to send weekly spiritual messages to each of newly baptized members in their own localities. However, as for the 2<sup>nd</sup> initiative of "Small Group Training," every church has to decide which kind of Small Group Training Style they need to take for themselves. However, in our Retention Project Training Seminar which we propose to hold, we are going to introduce "Johnny Wong's Style" and "FAST program" as a leader training program, because these have been proved successful during recent year's experiences in their own churches. Each local church is to calculate their retention rate of the newly baptized members for the previous 3 years, and also after finishing 3 years of pilot project. The "Retention" of a member is defined here as being retained as regularly attending member of the church on weekly basis, as an active Christian. (*\*though we planned to propose this way at the beginning, during the course of preparation we decided to prepare the newsletter which is made up by the materials that we choose at NSD, to avoid extra complicated efforts.*)

##### A) Message Delivery Initiative:

This is to give to the newly baptized members a sense of closeness with church life, its circle and leaders through their spiritual messages that are to be delivered weekly. This can be done through Internet or printed format of mails/letters \*that will be made with cooperation

among NSD, Unions, Conferences, Institutions, and Local Churches. NSD is going to provide with materials for making Newsletter weekly. At local church the pastor or coordinator will add their own articles of greeting or some other information to complete the Newsletter weekly. Even if the Newsletter is delivered to them through internet or otherwise, a spiritual guardian should personally contact them. By this close contact through spiritual guardian, church can keep close relationship with that member. This Message Delivery shall be continued for one full year to a given member at least. During that year church and the spiritual guardian will encourage that member to small group care. However, the each local church can decide how long to keep using the Newsletter for that given member.

The importance of contact or touch by spiritual guardian can't be overemphasized, because of the deep impact of this ministry. We may need to change the title of this initiative, not as "Message Delivery," but "Spiritual Guardian" Initiative. The Newsletter, Message Delivery, is simply intended to assist spiritual guardians to visit and contact the newly baptized member by assisting to open a conversation.

B) **Small Group Initiative:**

This is to provide the newly baptized members with opportunities of building close relationship and support within the church. As for Small Group Work, there have been many appeals and seminars for introducing it into their ministries of the church for many years in the past. And some churches have been blessed and grown a lot. However there is a sentiment that many churches have tried it, and tired of it because they did not produce much fruit. And some churches have already given up the concept itself. However, we can't forget the importance of organized work of Small Groups. We need to re-emphasize the un-exchangeable value of Small Group efforts and continue to work for it. (\*see *appendix*)

Without question, in order to make the small group meaningful and fruitful, we can't ignore the responsibility to find and train small group leaders, and to provide the courses or good guides that small group leaders can use for continuing activities. For the training leaders, we propose to utilize "FAST Kit programs."

C) **Procedures:**

1) Selection of Monitoring Churches:

Since it is very difficult to ask all of our churches to follow this Retention Project due to many kinds of situations, we would like to propose this Project as a pilot project in our Division to let many other churches and members see what and how we can accomplish when we follow this proposals. We select 5-10 churches from each Local Conference as

monitoring churches that will have a close communication with NSD/ Union/ Conference for the sake of success and final evaluation of this pilot project.

2) Appointment of Church Coordinator:

The each local church of selected Monitoring Churches shall appoint a coordinator who takes care of the "Retention Project" under the leadership of the church pastor, for both of Message Delivery Initiative and Small Group Initiative.

3) Appointment of Spiritual Guardian:

The local church shall also appoint some church members as spiritual guardians for each newly baptized person. The spiritual guardian is to give a good care to the newly baptized, and visit them at home or working place to pray with them maintaining a good close spiritual relationship. Church pastor and coordinator of local church will take care of these spiritual guardians.

4) Making of Church Newsletter:

The pastor or coordinator of the local church will make weekly Newsletters, utilizing the material of articles downloading from NSD Web-site (or receiving it through e-mail weekly), and adding their own articles of greeting, announcements, or any kind of interest. It must be delivered to the newly baptized member by spiritual guardians. Material of articles could be contributed by \*leaders of Unions, Conferences, or Institutions.

5) NSD provide ready made Newsletter to use:

NSD will prepare materials of small articles for easy Bible studies (28 Fundamental Bible Belief) and devotionals, in lay out format of A4 size, and non-layout format.

6) NSD provide Training Seminar:

NSD will provide a Training Seminar for pastors, coordinators, spiritual guardians, and leaders of small groups in cooperation with Unions and Conferences. Pastors and lay members who are going to cooperate with pastors should receive trainings and care periodically.

7) Choice of the kind of Small Group Works:

Small Group Work is the core of this Retention Project. NSD recommends and introduces Care Group of Johnny Wong style. However, each local church which is selected as a Monitoring Church may choose which kind of small group work they should use, depending on their prudence. Whichever style of Small Group work they will use or vitalize it in the church for caring, disciplining, training, and nurturing members. NSD is going to provide Johnny Wong style Care Group Seminar to learn from it. But it is the church that decides and makes the best use of it.

8) FAST program as leader's training:

As training of leaders and members of Small Group, NSD is going to introduce FAST

program, which is being utilized by Care Group of Johnny Wong and his church with great success. This program was originally developed by FAST Missions, a group started by a SDA minister and dedicated for discipling and training members.

9) 3 years to continue:

Each of the local churches which are selected as Monitoring Churches shall continue this Retention Project, Message Delivery and Small Group Initiative, at least for 3 years to see and compare how much we could improve our potentiality in retention rate among our members.

E. Retention Goals

- 1) After three year of the retention program, the goal is to retain a minimum of 60% of the newly baptized people in the church, or 20% up of retention rate than before.
- 2) After the pilot project, there will be an evaluation of the program and study to improve its strategies

F. Season of Revival & Reformation

Even though we are going to try to implement this through selected Monitoring Churches, any church in NSD shall be encouraged to apply this project on their own. It must be done by their own choice. The Revival and Reformation should start with the choice and dedication of a member and a church, personally depending on pure grace of the Holy Spirit. All those selected Monitoring Churches are the churches that have chosen to do so with the united dedication of the pastor and the members.

But before they decide, let us ask for Revival and Reformation to the Holy Spirit, believing His promises, this is where we need our 777 activated.

G. BE PREPARED

While we will do whatever good advise to vitalize and encourage our churches and members for the Great mission of God, let's remember that we don't know when we may come across the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus in front of us. Be prepared for this by God's grace!

## Appendix (1) from Spirit of Prophecies

### Great Necessity of Small Group Work

#### The formation of small companies

Young men and young women, cannot you form companies, and, as soldiers of Christ, enlist in the work, putting all your tact and skill and talent into the Master's service, that you may save souls from ruin? Let them be companies organized in every church to do this work. . . . Will the young men and young women who really love Jesus organize themselves as workers, not only for those who profess to be Sabbath keepers, but for those who are not of our faith? (Signs of the Times, May 29, 1893)

The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members but for unbelievers also.

(Australasian Union Conference Record, Aug. 15, 1902) (Ev 115.2)

### Aim of Small Group

#### The contact of mind with mind

It is not the highest work of education to communicate knowledge merely, but to impart that vitalizing energy which is received through the contact of mind with mind, and soul with soul. It is only life that can beget life. (DA 250.2)

#### To nurture the love of Christ among us

He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day. He longs to reveal His grace. If His people will remove the obstructions, He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through the human channels. If men in humble life were encouraged to do all the good they could do, if restraining hands were not laid upon them to repress their zeal, there would be a hundred workers for Christ where now there is one. (DA 250.4)

### FAST program --- study of "Word of God", it's memorization

#### The Power of Word of God

In the days of Christ the leaders and teachers of Israel were powerless to resist the work of Satan. They were neglecting the only means by which they could have withstood evil spirits. It was by the word of God that Christ overcame the wicked one. The leaders of Israel professed to be the expositors of God's word, but they had studied it only to sustain their traditions, and enforce their man-made observances. By their interpretation they made it express sentiments that God had never given. Their mystical construction made indistinct that which He had made plain. They

disputed over insignificant technicalities, and practically denied the most essential truths. Thus infidelity was sown broadcast. God's word was robbed of its power, and evil spirits worked their will. (DA 257.3)

The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame,—the power of the word. God does not control our minds without our consent; but if we desire to know and to do His will, His promises are ours: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching." John 8:32; 7:17, R. V. Through faith in these promises, every man may be delivered from the snares of error and the control of sin. (DA 258.5)

## Appendix (2) “Relational” is the Key

### Research shows that relationships are the best form of evangelism

S. Joseph Kidder / Feb. 08, 2012 Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States

Research offers insight into who is the most effective evangelist to take the gospel to your friends and relatives. The answer might surprise you.

It’s you.

A 2004 survey of Seventh-day Adventists in North America showed that most people who joined the church did so because of a friend or relative.

So if relationships are the most effective form of evangelism and ministry, our denomination, then, should focus on developing disciples and teaching relationship-based ministry. This doesn’t cost much money, just an open heart. It’s about authentic relationships, not programs.

I travel around the world training people in evangelism and church growth. I usually begin my seminars by asking the question, “Who is the most effective evangelist?” I always get the same predictable answers – names of TV evangelists: Doug Batchelor, Walter Pearson, Mark Finley, Alejandro Bullón, Dwight Nelson, etc.

But then when I ask how people come to the Lord and the church, I get wildly different answers. Most seminar participants agree that 90 percent of the people in the church are there because of felt needs.

Others insist that visitation brings in another 60 percent. Still others say that the pastor brings in at least 40 percent to 60 percent. Many more believe that public evangelism brings in 50 percent to 90 percent.

That’s why the survey results nearby are such a surprise to many people. Nearly 60 percent of people joined the church because of a friend or relative.

#### Factors influencing people joining the church

Brought up in an Adventist home	59%
A friend or relative	58%
Read books, journals, other literature	49%
Public evangelism meetings	36%
Bible studies in the home	34%
Visits by a pastor	20%
Television or radio programs	20%
Bible correspondence course	19%
Material on the internet	7%
Others	22%

Source: “Instruments Influencing Members to Join the Adventist Church in North America,” Ministry Magazine, July 2008

The survey was sent to a sample of Adventist congregations in North America to be given to attending members on a certain Sabbath. Those surveyed were asked how they were brought into the church. Results are in the nearby chart (respondents could pick more than one, so the percentages total more than 100). It is clear from this survey that the most effective means of evangelism is relationship-based. This study is consistent with all similar studies done in this area.

Christian researchers Win Arn and Thom S. Rainer both agree that friendship is God’s preferred means of reaching people (see their

respective books “The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples” and “Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them”).

The implications are universal in its scope. Remarkably, the results are the same whether I’m traveling in Asia, Africa, North America, Central America or South America, Europe or Australia: Most people come to the Lord through the influence of a web of relationships and friendship.

When people in my seminars see this research that is when people get the “Aha!” moment. They start saying “Well, yes; my mom had the most influence on my religious experience,” or “My neighbor took me to Sabbath school when I was a little girl.” Another person might say, “My grandmother was an Adventist and she prayed for me for years. Finally, I decided to take God seriously.” Someone else remembers that it was a co-worker that invited him to church so many years ago.

The figure I usually hear for the influence of moms, dads, friends, relatives, neighbors and co-workers is usually between 70 percent and 95 percent.

It is obvious from both the formal research and the informal data collected in these groups that the most effective evangelist in the world is the one who takes personal interest in us and shares Jesus in a holistic and attractive way. The absolutely most effective way of reaching people for the Gospel is through personal influence. So what does God do? He takes full-time ministers and disguises them as teachers, police officers, construction workers and nurses. He gives them the necessary gifts, passions, credentials, and then He assigns them to schools, police departments, construction sites and clinics everywhere. Like salt from a saltshaker, God scatters His fulltime ministers everywhere to suit His flavor.

We are all ambassadors of the Gospel. We are all full-time ministers.

*—Dr. S. Joseph Kidder is a professor Christian ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States. This Commentary is an adapted excerpt from his recent book “The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family” (Review and Herald, 2011).*







