

**RECOMMITTING, RECONNECTING AND RECONCILING:  
Reviving discipleship, nurturing believers, and reuniting with the missing**

The mission of God is “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10 NKJV). Jesus commissioned His followers as instruments of God’s mission, charging us to “Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19-20 NRSV). While God calls on the Church to seek the lost and to baptize the converted, He desires that the lost be saved and He commanded us to make disciples. The follower of Jesus is to become a member of an active community (e.g., Acts 2:42-46, 4:32-35), be fruitful (John 15:1-8), attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:12), and be part of the “people of God,” foretold in the third angel’s message, “who keep His commands and remain faithful to Jesus” (Rev. 14:12). Creating disciples is thus central to God’s plan and vision for restoring humanity.

Tragically, since the mid-1960s, while an extraordinary number of people joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a third of those baptized have left the Church, including a disproportionately large number of young adults. We acknowledge the findings of the research presented at the Summit on Nurture and Retention (2013) that, while most converts are convicted by distinctive Adventist doctrines, a large majority of those who separate from the church do so because of personal factors, rather than doctrinal reasons, and frequently without deliberate rejection of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

We recognize that Christ’s love for the Church also needs to be manifested within the Church by His followers. True discipleship entails not only Biblical teaching (Matt. 28:20), but also a passionate commitment to loving our fellow believers unconditionally. This was the heart of Christ’s message to His disciples as He faced the Cross (John 15:9-13). Christ’s command to them applies to us: that we “love one another”. Ellen White’s powerful insight into this historical scene is still vital for us: “This love is the evidence of their discipleship” (DA 677-78).

We recognize that, for pastors and church members, it is often easier to instruct others in doctrine than to nurture and mentor them in a personal, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that in consequence the church has prioritized persuading people to be baptized over the equally essential task of discipling. We affirm that all believers need to be continually nurtured and mentored in the journey of faith, and that though this task is not easily quantified, it is essential.

We also recognize that the example of the Shepherd, who actively seeks the lost, must be emulated by His Remnant people. Reaching out to those who have lost their way, who have lost connection with the body of Christ, who have been bruised by fellow believers, will align us with the mission of God; welcoming them with open arms will make us participants in the joy of heaven over everyone who is lost and is found (Luke 15:7, 10, 32).

**We affirm that:**

1. The purpose of the Church as the body of Christ is to intentionally disciple members, so that they continue in an active and fruitful relationship with Christ and His Church.
2. Discipleship is based on an ongoing, lifelong relationship with Jesus—the believer commits to “abiding in Christ” (John 15:8) and to being fruitful and sharing Him with others.
3. Responsibility for ensuring that every church member remains part of the body of Christ, and for reconnecting and reconciling with those who do not, is mutually shared by the Church at large, each congregation, and every church member.

**We therefore affirm** that building loving and Christ-like relationships within the local church must be an urgent necessity for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We recommit ourselves to God's vision of mission, which is founded on discipling, believing that this will enable us better to fulfill the prophetic mission of the Remnant Church.