

ROGER HERNÁNDEZ

RAMP

RESEARCH | AVOID | MEET | PREPARE

RECONNECTING
KEYS

© 2021
by Roger Hernandez

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.
Published in the United States by Quality Printing.

Cover design by: **Vrinca Producciones-Georgy Rodriguez**

Photo credit: **Vrinca**

Book design by: **Guillermo Pimentel**

Edited by: **Tim Lale**

ISBN: **March 2021**

Dedication To my mom.

Thanks for never stop praying for me.
I came back.

CONTENTS

Introduction - The Road to Loma Linda: A Parable.....	5
Chapter 1 - Research	13
Chapter 2 - Avoid	23
Chapter 3 - Meet	32
Chapter 4 - Prepare	42
Appendix - By Dan Serns.....	52
Appendix 2 - Getting Started with a Reconnection Ministry - Courtesy of Tim Goff	60
Sample Letter	69

I N T R O D U C T I O N

THE ROAD TO LOMA LINDA

A P a r a b l e

A convoy of cars was traveling from Tennessee toward Loma Linda on Little Debbie Highway. They had prepared for the long trip by fueling up and packing their cars with the essentials, and they drove off. Along the way, almost half of the cars from the convoy got off the highway. Around 43 percent to be exact.

Here are some of their stories.

John and Mary led a section of the convoy of cars. They had good driving skills and terrible communication. Their marriage was in trouble. Although they tried to hide the contempt, putdowns, and aggressive behavior, dysfunction always floats to the top. As they drove, they started to argue once more. The tension in the car grew untenable.

Between putdowns they thought of the rest of the convoy. Some of the other cars had tinted windows so you couldn't see inside, but theirs didn't. What would the other people think of them? Would they change their opinion of them? The questions only lasted for a brief interlude to the pandemonium, and then the arguing continued. They fought about the speed limit, the weaving in and out of traffic, and the type of music they would listen to as they drove. Words hurt like walking on broken glass. They were in the midst of an all-out war. The fight was so intense that they didn't notice Nosey Joel looking into their car as he drove alongside. He was shaking his head in clear disappointment. Soon after, a phone call came in, asking if they would take a different spot in the convoy. They could no longer lead.

John and Mary decided they had had enough of each other and of Nosey Joel. They got off the highway. To their surprise, no one came along behind them or called to see what had happened to them. John got an Uber ride home, and Mary started driving in the side streets toward a coworker's house. The convoy moved on, and so did they.

Ty was a novice driver. He had recently gotten his license after attending some classes about the dangers of the open road. He wanted to be a good driver, he really did! He knew the basics and was committed to the process of growing in his ability. Ty also joined the convoy, but others were impatient with his driving skills. They thought if he had been a better driver, they would already be closer to Loma Linda. Someone was heard on the two-way radio saying, "It seems they give

licenses to anybody these days. These newbies mess it up for all of us. They're slowing us down!" As they came to a dangerous curve, someone cut off Ty and ran him off the road. Shaken and concerned about what had just happened, he wondered if driving the side streets was not a better option. He kept driving, but he was no longer following the convoy.

Maria had been driving for a while by herself, but she desired companionship, friendship, and connection. Driving by herself wasn't her choice; it was just hard to get people into her car. As she scoped out the convoy, she didn't see many options to add passengers to her vehicle. It seemed that there weren't many people her age and that most occupants had their own circle of friends.

After attempting to convince someone to ride with her, she gave up. The lack of connection made her decision easier. She drove away from the convoy. No one noticed she wasn't tracking with the group.

There were others.

Terrance got car-sick and had to pull over, and by the time he recovered, the convoy was long gone.

Vladimir and Zella got distracted and got off on the wrong exit. They made a quick stop at the mall and ended staying in the area overnight. They soon forgot there was even a convoy.

Constance got tired of what she called "pointless driving," because even though she was in a car, it was by her parents' choice. She never really wanted to go to Loma Linda in the first place.

Some went back to Tennessee.**Others didn't believe in driving at all.**

The allure of the side streets was too much for Jack and Jackie. I mean, who has time to drive if we can just chill?

Around 47 percent of the cars that left Tennessee eventually veered off Little Debbie Highway, away from the convoy.

Before you parse this parable and tell me about all the drivers I missed or how they don't make drivers like they used to, remember this is a parable. It's imperfect. It's incomplete. But in many places it is a reality.

Let's address the elephant in the room for a moment. Around 43 to 47 percent of our members decide at one point or another to disconnect from local church engagement.¹ Let that number sink in for a minute. Forty-three out of a hundred. Gone. Drove off, veered off, or bumped off.

Let me ask you a question. In what other area of your life is this ratio acceptable?

Would you go to a hospital that had forty-three deaths for every hundred live births?

Would you dine regularly at a restaurant where forty-three out of a hundred meals gave you diarrhea?

Would you buy a car from a company that, for every hundred cars, produced forty-three lemons?

1. "In this century, the ratio of people lost versus new converts is 43 per 100." Ansel Oliver, "At First Retention Summit, Leaders Look at Reality of Church Exodus," Adventist News Network, November 19, 2013.

Would you let a mechanic fix your car who disabled forty-three out a hundred cars he touched?

Yet, this is our reality. We must take an honest look at the data and ask hard questions.

This is not an Adventist problem; this is a Christianity problem. Look around America, and the prognosis for the church can seem bleak:

“According to the Churchless data, in the 1990s, 30% of the American population was un-churched. Today, two decades later, that percentage has risen to more than four in 10 Americans (43%).”²

Millions of people who used to attend church now don’t, across all denominations. Ours is no exception. Do lots of people still get baptized? Sure. Do many disconnect after doing so? Regretfully, yes. We can do better. We must.

The resource you have in your hand is one attempt at solutions. It’s called RAMP. A ramp is what you use to get back on the highway. What if churches created opportunities instead of opposition, ramps instead of resistance? What if we let members know they can get back on the highway? What if we build bridges and not walls? What if we ran after them and not ran them off?

This resource is not the end-all or know-it-all. It’s one of several you can use. It’s made with you in mind.

2. “George Barna and David Kinnamon on the Rise of the Churchless,” barna.com, January 8, 2015.

It is for churches that want to be intentional about connecting with people who have left.

RAMP is a four-part process.

1. Research

Where are they? More than half of the people who stop attending said no one visited or contacted them. How do we contact them? We begin with prayer, but we don't stop there. We ask the hard questions, and we start with us. Why did they leave? Is it because of life hardship, theological differences, preference for watching at home, a toxic atmosphere, or just lost interest? Not all leave for the same reason. It's wise not to address them as a group but as individuals.

2. Avoid

Are you avoiding the big mistakes? Here are some of the most common:

- a.** Asking for money with no connection
- b.** Assuming that because they were resistant to coming back in the past, they will always be
- c.** Assuming you can/should bring back everyone
- d.** Thinking that guilt and fear are good strategies for reconnecting people with the church

3. Meet

When is the best time to ask members to come back? How can we use important dates to invite them back? How can you leverage natural special days to create multiple on-ramps, like Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, concerts, picnics? Special programs make transitioning back easier.

4. **P**repare

How will you greet them when they return? Inviting them back to the same drama they left might be counterproductive. Educate your church in how to receive prodigals.

So what do you say? Are you ready to get on the path of reconnecting people with your local congregation?

Loma Linda and those awesome Veja-Links await.

Let's build a RAMP.

RAMP Q:

1. Why do you think people have disconnected from your local church?

2. When you read that 43 percent of people eventually disconnect from the local church, does that reflect the reality of where you live now? Is it less? Is it more?

3. If you think back on strategies or ideas to reconnect people to the local church, what have you personally seen that has worked? How were you involved?

4. What would be some practical ways our local church can build ramps so the disconnected can become reconnected? Mention three good ideas.

5. Who can we pray for right now who used to attend but doesn't anymore? Spend time right now praying for them.

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH

We Need to Know
What We Don't Know
We Don't Know

“Whatever happened to Jack and Mary? Haven’t seen them in a while. Why do you think they haven’t come to church lately? Oh well, happy Sabbath!” This is a conversation I’ve heard in church over the years. Key to that specific inquiry is the word Why.

Three letters: Why?

Those letters can unlock significant responses. Why did John and Mary, or Ty, Maria and Vladimir not continue the journey? Why do people who intended to stay not stay?

Since this is such a foundational question, I asked Monte Sahlin for his perspective. Sahlin is an Adventist researcher, and this was his response:

The quick answer as to “why” is largely related to life changes. A large portion of Adventist young adults drop out when they finish college or grad school and move to a new city to start their first professional position. (I think something similar happens with blue-collar young adults who get a job right out of academy, but I have never been able to get enough interviews from that segment to nail down this hunch.) They visit one or two churches and find little or no young adults in most congregations and stop going to church at that point. Finding people they could potentially date is a major issue here.

Another major dropout point is after a divorce. This is usually people in their 30s, 40s, or 50s. The same thing happens with people who lose their jobs and become unemployed, and those who lose a spouse or child in an early death. Part of the issue is that friends at church don’t really know what to say or do to be helpful. The vast majority of the people I have interviewed tell me that the pastor did not contact them or visit them, and most of the people they knew at church only repeated “the standard speech” but did not continue normal social activities.

The first step in building a ramp so people can reconnect is research. It is also the most avoided and least fun, at least for people who aren’t task oriented. Maybe that’s why we avoid it!

The leader’s first job is to define reality, and reality is based on research, not opinions or personal perspectives. Facts are our friends. How can we develop a

strategy if we are unaware of the research?

Here are some helpful questions to ask.

Why?

Grouping everyone who is not attending church into a single category named “missing” is lazy and unhelpful. People disconnect for many reasons. That is why your local research is important. Chances are, someone knows them and their whys.

The goal of the reconnection ministry is to seek out members who are no longer regularly attending and love them back into active communion with the body of Christ. Form this ministry with your church leadership team plus members who have a heart for redemptive ministry.

There are many reasons members may be perceived as missing.

- Some may be non-attending but not missing.
- Some may have moved locally or moved out of town, but they are not missing.
- Some may have drifted from their devotion to Jesus, but they are not missing.
- Some may be homebound, so they are not missing.
- Some may be discouraged or hurt by other members. These are not missing.
- Some may be disillusioned by the struggles and political climate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but they are not missing.

Regardless of the reasons, Jesus leaves no question about the responsibility of the church to seek out those who have drifted from fellowship. In the age of social media, is someone really missing?

Let's break down some of the reasons listed above:

1. Life hardship. Divorce—lack of suitable partner, so they look elsewhere; addiction; or caring for an ailing parent are among the reasons why people stop attending.

2. Theology. People who join our church through baptism, transfer, or profession of faith have written and unwritten expectations regarding Adventist beliefs. Some people might have stopped attending because they:

- a. believe that Adventists are legalists and a cult
- b. believe that we have compromised the truth and are too liberal
- c. believe no more; they are agnostic or atheists and they no longer believe in God at all

3. Prefer watching services at home. According to some estimates from the Barna research organization, 20 percent of your faithful church attenders won't come back after the COVID pandemic. Even if that percentage changes, one thing we do know is that COVID has fundamentally changed the way some people look at church attendance in the church building. Some prefer watching at home or on-demand at a time other than Sabbath morning.

One important note: people don't always watch their hometown church, because of the preponderance of options online.

4. Toxic people. This type has two sub-categories: category 1 is composed of people who have a toxic personality and left church because they were confronted. They love small groups, because every church they have ever attended ends up being smaller as a result of their toxicity. They no longer attend your church, and unless they change, it's a wise idea to keep it that way. Category 2 consists of people who got caught up in the fray. They saw church conflict and left because they didn't care for it. Instead of embracing drama, they avoided it.

5. They moved. Different state, country, or church. They just never bothered to let you know. They are not in your community.

6. They died. Some funeralized members are still on your church rolls. I guarantee it. Who are the people in this category?

Key point: not all leave for the same reason. It's wise not to label those who have left as a single group but to address them as individuals.

Where?

The people who are members of your church but don't attend are out there somewhere. Here are some tools you can use to find them.

1. eAdventist.org

I have found that the membership list at the local church very seldom (if ever) matches the eAdventist membership list for the same church. Every pastor and church board should take time for the tedious but necessary task of making sure that the members you think you have, you in fact have.

2. Peoplefinder.com

Super helpful, super easy, super cheap.

3. TOM (That One Member)

Every church has one. That One Member who knows everyone and has been there for a while. Recruit TOM so he or she can help you identify the non-attenders.

4. More ways

The goal for all non-attending members is to find each one and love them back into communion with the body of Christ. A member should only be considered missing when efforts to locate them fail. The church manual requires congregations to actively search for a minimum of two years before the church in business session may vote them as missing on the membership records.

My friend Tim Goff suggests these practical steps.

- Pray earnestly—God works miracles.
- Review the full list of members, praying for each one.
- Build a church family tree—note their family, friends, and associates for more information.

- Identify those with incomplete or inaccurate contact information.
- Use the internet—people-finder sites and social media for locating people.
- Identify non-attenders and infrequent attenders.
- Identify those whose addresses are unknown.
- Reach out to the church membership—list names in the bulletin, church newsletter, from the pulpit, and so on, asking if they know any way to locate the member.

The church should exhaust all available resources to locate that member. This comes after trying to contact them with all of the information available.

Who?

We suggest that the research be done with the church board plus additional members. By delegating everything to subcommittees, we can send the message that this is “their job.” On a Sunday or Sabbath afternoon, they can go through the list of members in both eAdventist.org and your local membership list. Divide the members into these categories:

A (attends) Even if it’s infrequent, they show up.

NAI (not attend, identified) Does not attend, but we know where they are.

NAM (not attend, missing) Does not attend, and we don’t know where they are.

You will find a sample form in the Appendix that you can use for this process.

Conclusion

More than half of people who stop attending said no one visited or contacted them. You can change that this month.

There are some benefits to doing a membership audit. One, you may find some people who aren't members but you thought were. And two, you will start operating in reality.

Understand that some will end up leaving the road for good. But it should not be 47 percent. We need to reconnect the people whom God misses the most, because they matter to Him, and they should matter to us.

That's our "why."

RAMP Q

1. How surprising was it to you that many who disconnect do so because they don't find meaningful connection at the local church? How can we minister better to people who are going through a divorce or separation, for example?

2. When was the last membership audit in your church? More than 60 percent of people who left said no one ever contacted them. How can we change this? List three practical steps.

3. The chapter suggests the following reasons someone may not be attending.

- Some may be non-attending but not missing.
- Some may have moved locally or moved out of town, but they are not missing.
- Some may have drifted from their devotion to Jesus, but they are not missing.
- Some may be homebound, so they are not missing.
- Some may be discouraged or hurt by other members. These are not missing.
- Some may be disillusioned by the struggles

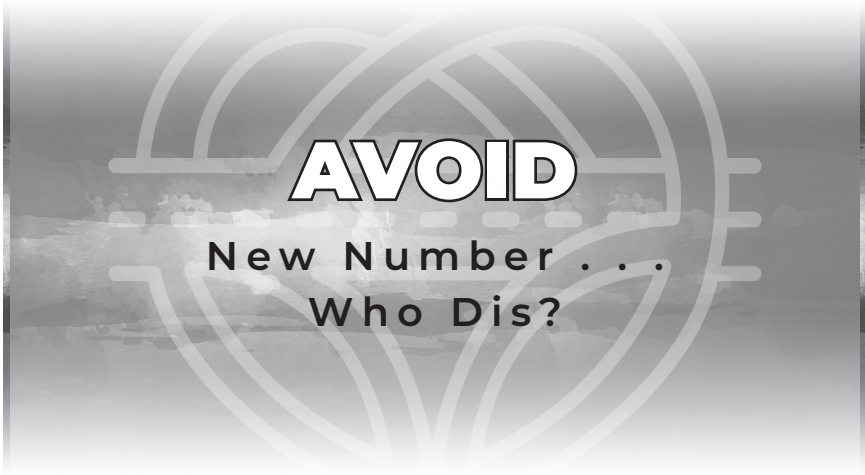
and political climate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but they are not missing.

Are there any others you can think of?

4. We can start by listing people who are your family members and close friends. Would you list two or three people we need to pray more intensely for and try to reconnect with?

5. Who will comprise the research committee in your church? Do you agree it should be the board plus TOM, or do you have a better idea? Either way, just do something! (Please look at the Appendix for the form you will use to address the people you want to see re-connected.)

C H A P T E R 2



I hate moving. It makes sense because I have moved more than thirty times in my life. One of the most annoying parts of the process is changing recurring bills to a new address. Updating credit cards, bank accounts, electricity, gas, and water is a hassle.

In a sea of change, the one constant through the past fifteen years that has not changed is my cell phone number. I have an Oregon area code, even though I live and work in the Southern Union Conference (southeastern United States). Sometimes I get phone calls from Oregon from friends and strangers.

These phone calls are divided into three categories:

- People who think I am still a pastor in Hillsboro, Oregon, and need my assistance. I steer those toward the current pastor.
- People who want to know how I am doing, and I recognize them as friends. I welcome those.
- Telemarketers.

Of the three, which one do you think I despise? If you said telemarketers, you are a winner. Telemarketers seem interested in you not because they care but because they want to sell you something. They have a product—a car warranty, three nights in Vegas—that they want you to pay them for. They don't have much success with me. Why? They make requests without relationship. I do not like that.

Requests made before (or instead of) relationships usually do not have a great success rate in the church either. If we are going to be effective reconnecting Mary and Paul, we must be intentional about avoiding the following mistakes.

1. Starting vs. perfect. Many churches mean well. They want to eventually get around to the work of conducting a membership audit. They don't do it for a simple reason. They don't have all the time necessary to complete the process, so they attempt none of it.

Let me give you an example. Let's say your church has 100 non-attending members. You desire to reconnect with them, but it's hard to find the time. A perfectionistic mentality would tell you unless you can meet

and get through all the names on a Sunday morning, it's not worth going through any of them.

That mentality must die. It's a mistake. Start with what you can do. Maybe you go through ten names this month. Do the ten. Why? Ten is more than zero. Then do ten next month. If you never start, you will never finish. A suggestion for those who feel they don't have the time: take thirty minutes in the next board meeting to go through the people whose last names start with the letters A, B, and C. It's not perfect, but it is a start. Don't avoid doing some work because you can't do all the work.

2. Asking vs. connecting. One familiar complaint from people who stopped attending was that churches never reached out except to ask for money. Whenever the church contacted them, it was to ask for support in an upcoming building campaign or another fund-raising event. Nothing says we don't care about you more clearly than asking for money without a relationship.

Another big no-no is contacting people years after they have left and immediately getting to the only question you really wanted to ask: "So, you still want to be a member or what?" Instead, strive for connection. Minister, listen, engage. You can build a ramp, and they have to decide to take it.

3. Once resistant vs. forever resistant. We assume that because people were resistant to coming back at some point in the past, they will always be. Life chang-

es. Things happens. Life happens! I have seen many people who used to be rebellious, disinterested, or wounded change their perspective and attitude as life circumstances changed.

It usually takes love, understanding, and patience for them to decide to take the ramp. Use past experiences as helpful information but never to give up on people who might now be open to reconnecting.

4. You can/should bring back everyone vs. being intentional about who you invite back.

Jesus was the Son of God, and Judas still decided to reject Him. Not everyone you connect with will want to return or should return. Strike a balance: do research on everyone, but understand that not everyone will or should return.

Let me give you an example. Terry Painter (not his real name) was a disgruntled member; we will call him T-Pain for short. When I arrived at the church, I quickly realized he was a handful. Toxic interactions, anti-biblical Shepherd's Rod theology, and a nasty attitude characterized him. We lovingly confronted his sin and narcissistic tendencies, because at some point we need to have difficult conversations with people like T-Pain. This strategy made T-Pain explode and leave the church. He is still a member, but we are not interested in the reign of terror he led. If he were allowed to return without repentance, the damage would continue.

5. Guilt and fear vs. love and freedom. It's hard to

look at the world and believe we aren't living in the last days. So please understand my point. When we are trying to reconnect with people, using scare tactics is counterproductive. Serving is better than scaring, especially if the person who disconnected did so because they had a bad experience with unbalanced religion. Ellen White brings a balanced perspective to this approach, as she often does:

The shortness of time is frequently urged as an incentive for seeking righteousness and making Christ our friend. This should not be the great motive with us; for it savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God should be held before us, that we may be compelled to right action through fear? It ought not to be so. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life. He says to us, I am the Lord thy God; walk with Me, and I will fill thy path with light. Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, proposes to elevate to companionship with Himself those who come to Him with their burdens, their weaknesses, and their cares. He will count them as His children, and finally give them an inheritance of more value than the empires of kings, a crown of glory richer than has ever decked the brow of the most exalted earthly monarch (Signs of the Times, March 17, 1887).

6. One-time initiative vs. ongoing strategy. This resource was not created to be a one-time stop-gap measure, a half-hearted attempt at reconnecting so we can say we tried and move on to better things. As long as we are here on earth, we will have people go off

the gospel highway who will need a ramp back onto the gospel highway. They will need multiple ramps from Tennessee to Loma Linda. If we schedule into our church calendar the events and intentional reconnecting methods explained in this resource we will see better results over time.

7. Cautions vs. uninformed. The church should exhaust all available resources to locate a member. This comes after trying to contact them with all of the information available.

Cautions about removing them:

- Members who are non-attending but are in a known location are not missing members and should not be removed from membership by a “missing” vote.
- Members do not need to come before the church in any capacity to reaffirm their faith in order to maintain their membership.
- Take careful note regarding what constitutes a “test of fellowship.”
- Removing members for “insurance” reasons is not an acceptable practice.
- Note that two years is the minimum time frame for removing members from church membership when all forms of location are exhausted.
- Members can only be removed in a duly called church business session.
- Consider hosting redemptive seminars offered by the local conference or union.

Let's go back to the parable in the beginning of this book. John, who was part of the convoy, noticed a car driven by Martin that was on the side of the road with a flat tire. He pulled over, helped with the flat tire, and asked if there was anything else he could do.

Martin said, "My car has been giving me trouble lately. Mind if I tag along?"

"Sure," John said. "Here is my number if you run into trouble on the highway. Put it into your cell. It's five zero three . . ."

RAMP Q

1. Many churches mean well. They want to eventually get around to the work of conducting a membership audit. How can we get rid of the perfectionistic mentality that because we don't have all the time necessary to do the work, we do none of it? What will you do this month?

2. The wrong question to ask a member, right off the bat, is: "So, you still want to be a member?" What are some other methods that emphasize relationship as we minister, listen, and engage?

3. Why is it important not to assume that because people were resistant to coming back at some point in the past, they will always be? What are some life changes that may contribute to them having a different perspective on reconnecting?

4. This question is tough. Our natural inclination is to reclaim everyone. Why is it important to be careful

with people like T-Pain? What benchmarks would they need to have (if any) before being reintegrated into local church life? What policies and practices would be helpful?

5. We have said that trying to reconnect people using scare tactics is counterproductive. Agree? Disagree? Why?

6. Note that two years is the minimum time frame for removing members from church membership when all forms of location are exhausted. Members can only be removed in a duly called church business session. Why is following the church manual and applying it fairly a crucial thing to do to reduce misunderstandings? Look at the list in point 7 above for further discussion.

CHAPTER 3



Allow me to tell you how I met my wife. Back in the 1990s I was attending Washington Adventist University (then Columbia Union College), and I had just recently broken up with a girl I believed I would marry. It was mutual. She said she didn't want to be with me, and I said OK. The new semester was about to start, and on a Sunday afternoon in the cafeteria my good friend Jose Cortes Jr. introduced me to a girl named Kathy. We ate together that afternoon. Both of us knew Jose but not each other. It was the beginning of a great friendship that developed into a great relationship and blossomed into a wonderful marriage.

Jose couldn't manufacture love, but he did set up the date.

This chapter will look at some practical ways to connect with the people who are not attending your congregation at the moment. Its important to know what you can and can't do.

You can't force them to get on the highway, but you can build the ramps.

You can't force them to get on the highway, but you can let them know where the ramps are.

You can't force them to get on the highway, but you can make the ramp accessible and well marked.

You can't force them to get on the highway, but you can curtail aggressive drivers so their experience is more pleasant.

You can't make them fall in love, but you can set up dates.

Let's review what we have been reading in previous chapters. We talked about beginning the reconnecting ministry by categorizing members according to their needs and circumstances.

- Review the full list of members, praying for each one
- Identify those with incomplete or inaccurate contact information
- Identify non-attenders and infrequent attenders
- Assign members to reach out to them in accordance with those needs

Reach out to every member who is not regularly attending. Minister to them with love and care. Widen the search process if necessary. Use any and all of the following to locate them:

- Contact family
- Contact friends
- Ask church members
- Use peoplefinders.com
- Use social media
- Request info using the church bulletin, newsletter, and pulpit

Remember that the goal is to find each member and love them back into communion with the body of Christ.

Now try this

Here are seven ways to love and connect. As you peruse the suggestions, think of this phrase: process over pressure. It's a marathon and not a sprint.

1. Personal connection

When a member is located, initiate calls, text messages, emails, and visits, leading with love and fellowship. Some prefer meeting in a neutral space; others will allow an in-home personal visit.

- If there is receptivity, celebrate.
- If they are attending another congregation, celebrate with them on finding a spiritual community that fits their needs and explore the transfer process with their new congregation.
- When there is resistance, pray and patiently

form a process of visitation. Consider invitations to fellowship, small groups, or social events.

- Consider the reasons people give for why they may be resistant to returning. This is a time for very careful listening.

2. Food

Food is a great equalizer. Once you have identified that person who is not attending, sharing a meal or a hot healthy drink with them at a nearby shop is a good way to reconnect. A word to the wise:

- Don't jump to the "when are you coming back" question too quickly.
- Inquire about needs, struggles, or dreams they are dealing with or dreaming about. When we are engaging someone who has disconnected from the local church, we strive to be "other-centered." It's not about you fulfilling your agenda, but rather letting the Holy Spirit reveal His. Often if we let people off the hook, they tend to lean in and share about the disconnection.

3. Special events

During the church year, some special events to which you can invite non-attenders are natural on-ramps. The key is to be intentional about it. Once they attend and get over the awkwardness of the long layoff from church, it will be easier for them to return. Discuss with your leadership team how you can make these events to be intentional re-entry points:

- First Sabbath of the New Year

- Valentine's Day banquet
- Easter season
- Mother's Day
- Father's Day
- Veterans Day/Memorial Day
- VBS
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas
- December 31st

Those are ten events for inviting someone. In the Appendix you will find an invitation sample for an event you may want to organize.

4. Social events

Every story is different. Sometimes people have real wounds from church hurt. In those cases a social interaction that does not involve meeting in the sanctuary of the local church is appropriate. These are bridge events that will serve to establish connections. Remember, the bridge does not force people to cross it, but it does provide an invitation, an opportunity. Here are some events you might consider:

- Banquets. A meal, but with more people. In a church we led, February was a special month. We organized a banquet for families. We usually had it in a restaurant or another non-church location, and it helped us because our disconnected members felt more comfortable going to Moe's than the musty fellowship hall.
- Parties. Similar to banquets, but in a house. We celebrate a birthday, graduation, or another life

accomplishment for someone we love, and we invite people to join us.

- **Socials.** Board games, group games, bonfire, the possibilities are endless. Some of the best times I have had as a human have been at well-organized church socials.
- **Sports.** Church leagues are hit-or-miss, but in the churches I have pastored we have had great success using sports to connect with people. We played pick-up soccer and flag football in the back of the Adventist school and provided low-risk interaction. I have a friend who organized a soccer “school” for kids, and the parents were invited to bring their children. Some reconnected with the church this way, because the children had the option to play games weeknights and Sundays instead of the community league that was on Saturday morning.
- **Outings.** Camping, beach day, roller-coasters, hiking, exercise club are some of the options.

5. Post-card, letter and email, texting service

All of these are very inexpensive ways of connecting with non-attenders. If you are sending a newsletter from the church, be sure to include helpful content, not just a written informercial—no one likes that. Ask yourself: What value will this add to someone who is not attending right now? If the answer is “not much,” then start over. The value in communicating through email or text is the non-threatening and inexpensive way to share valuable content. Strive for consistency. I sometimes see people post their church newsletter

in their webpage and leave it there for three months with no updates. Please don't. It sends a message that your website is dated and so are you.

- www.mailchimp.com for email
- www.Cheapesttexting.com for texting

6. Specific programming targeted to them

Depending on the size of the congregation and the number of people who are not attending, this idea might work for you. I have seen it done in both the local church and city-wide events.

- On the local church level, they might send a letter/postcard out to all the non-attending members saying simply, "We miss you" and invite them to an event that the church prepared just for them. Be clear about what it is and isn't, and then keep that promise.
- This also can be done in a city, as a city-wide event. A city in Brazil prepared a concert and a message for people who had disconnected from church, and around 5,000 attended, including church members. A significant number of those who weren't attending church got reconnected after the event. This takes more planning, but pooling resources helps with the volunteer base needed to run a high-quality program.

7. Sorry

Since we know that a significant percentage of people who have disconnected have experienced church hurt, the word sorry is a significant step in the recon-

nection process. We lose nothing by apologizing, and we might lose everything if we don't. Letting people vent is sometimes necessary for the healing to take place from previous negative experiences. Resist the urge to use defensive phrases like "It wasn't that bad" or "No church is perfect," and even worse, "It happened to me too, and I didn't leave!" Just listen, affirm their pain, and apologize. Many of them have never heard anyone apologize. You will find it a worthwhile endeavor.

The rest of the love story

Kathy and I have been married for decades now. It's been a life-changing experience, and we love each other and our family. We have traveled the world, and we wake up every day loving what we do.

All of that was made possible by an introduction in the nineties on a Sunday afternoon in a cafeteria.

We can't make people get on the highway, but we can build on-ramps.

Let's meet them where they are and start that process.

RAMP Q

You can't force people to get on the highway, but you can build ramps.

1. Personal connection is crucial. What has kept your church from being more intentional in this area?

2. Food is a great equalizer. Once you have identified that person who is not attending, sharing a meal or a hot healthy drink at a nearby shop is a good way to reconnect. Why is it wise not to jump to the “when are you coming back” question?

3. Of the special events mentioned in the chapter, which three will you commit to in order to be more intentional this year? How will you do that?

4. Social events are bridge events that serve to establish connections. Of the ones mentioned in the chapter, which two do you believe will have the most success and why?

5. Post card, letter and email, and texting service are all ways to stay connected. What service do you use?

6. Specific programming to reconnect people is key. How will an event like this work in your city?

7. Why is “sorry” so important, and how do we say it without sounding patronizing?

CHAPTER 4

PREPARE

Cutting Down on Aggressive Driving

One thing I noticed about driving in Atlanta (it might be different where you live) is the inability of drivers who are already on the highway to be kind enough to allow us to merge into the flow of traffic. It's annoying, it's dangerous, and it's common.

That also happens in churches sometimes. Not yours, of course, but in others. We need to do better at preparing drivers on the gospel highway to allow others to merge with ease.

Aggressive driving was one of the culprits of 43 percent of baptized members getting off the highway.

Forty-three out of a hundred. Let that number sink in for a minute.

So what are we going to do about it?

Recently, I received a message from a desperate mother. She pleaded with me to speak with her children, who had grown up in the church but were now gone—all three of them.

As a parent I can sympathize with her. The worst thing that could happen to me, counting death as an option, is to reach heaven without my kids. It makes me sad just thinking about the possibility. So I understand the pain this mother feels. As I meditated on her request, I became doubly sad.

One, because a mother is wanting her children to come back to church. Two, because the church is probably not ready to receive them. Why would they go back to that same church with mostly the same people who caused them to leave?

The same church that has no relevant worship, that fights about responsibilities, that majors in minors, and that has very few remaining young adults? A church that is more concerned about dress, diet, and drums than about developing a person into a disciple? Infighting. Politics. Legalism. Why in the world would the kids want to go back to the same thing they left?

If you are going to be intentional about keeping and reclaiming, the atmosphere and the culture of the church must change. That does not mean you change the doctrines or the biblical principles. It means that the church culture lives out the principle of trying to

be as holy as Jesus, but not any holier. When churches forget about the gospel, they start making methods into messiahs. Jesus is attractive. Churches tend to drift inwardly. It's like walking on a treadmill. If you are not intentional about moving forward, you go backward. There is no standing still. Everything your church does right now is either moving you closer to your goal or moving you away from it.

I have two brothers who are disconnected from the church. It would make me really happy if they decided to return. I had hoped they would never leave, but they did. Why did it happen? While you cannot guarantee that all will stay, you can certainly increase the probabilities. Even Jesus lost one, even though He did everything He could to keep Judas. What can we do this week?

Stop

The problem many times is not that the church members are not friendly. The problem is that we are friendly with our own. We have good friends to whom we gravitate and sit next to in worship, talk to at the end, and invite over after church. Stop being friendly with only your friends.

Start

Intentionally (there is that word again) look for people who are new. Engage them in conversation. Sit next to them, introduce yourself, and welcome them. I know you're not on the hospitality committee, but do it anyway. The effect when people greet, smile, and welcome a person is amazing. Even if you don't become

BFFs, they will leave with a positive impression.

Say

Say their name. Learn it and say it. Nothing deflates a new member more than to be asked if he or she is a guest a year after being baptized. Look past the jewelry and makeup or whatever and see the person. These are not hard things to do.

Don't be like the woman I met on a recent preaching assignment. I was visiting a church on a Saturday night. My teenage daughter was with me. (She was in church on a Saturday night. Not at the movies. Not at a sleepover. Not hanging with her crew. She was at church!) After the two-hour service, a woman approached her and said, "I see that you are wearing makeup. I prefer the natural look."

My daughter, without missing a beat, responded, "I don't always wear makeup, only on Sabbaths because it's a special day."

Silence

Don't keep silent. Say nice things to people. Compliment them on their positive traits, on the fact that they are in worship. Resist the urge to criticize or correct all the time. No one died and appointed you Elijah. You are neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, so relax. Love people for who they are. It's our job to fish them and keep them in the boat. It's God's job to clean them. Create such a positive experience for believers that, even if they leave, their memories of the Father's house are so overwhelmingly positive that they will

have no choice but to return.

The Reclaiming Twins

From Scripture and inspired writings, we can glean two principles:

- 1. Excellence**
- 2. Intentionality**

Let's look at each individually.

Excellence. Someone has said that excellence honors God and inspires people. I am concerned about the lack of excellence in many of our religious operations. We seem to not only allow mediocrity, but in some cases, even encourage it. Case in point: a church member decides that they would like to sing.

They have no talent, but that does not seem to be a deterrent. They insist on singing. The time comes for his or her special music. As they sing, the plastic plants in the foyer shrivel, the babies cry, and three cats commit suicide. When they are done, what does the church say? You guessed it. They say "Amen," reinforcing in the singer that mediocrity is acceptable.

Contrast that attitude with what Ellen White said:

A minister should not give out hymns to be sung until it has first been ascertained that they are familiar to those who sing. . . . Singing is a part of the worship of God, but in the bungling manner in which it is often conducted, it is no credit to the truth, and no honor to God.

There should be system and order in this as well as every other part of the Lord's work. Organize a company of the best singers, whose voices can lead the congregation, and then let all who will, unite with them. Those who sing should make an effort to sing in harmony; they should devote some time to practice, that they may employ this talent to the glory of God (Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, July 24, 1883).

According to her, everyone can and should sing, but only the best should lead. Is that the case in your church? Are the best people in the best positions to best receive the ones God misses the most?

What I often hear when saints justify mediocrity in church goes something like this: "They're doing it with the best of intentions." "They have a sincere heart, and that's all that really matters." "They're spiritual people." Really? Do you apply that logic to the rest of your life? Do you use a mechanic because he has a good heart, even though he can't tell the difference between a wrench and a screwdriver?

Do you eat food by a well-intentioned chef who can't cook? Will you let a heart surgeon who really loves the Lord operate on you even though she hasn't gone to medical school? Will you allow a pilot to take you on your next vacation who can't fly planes although he keeps up with his devotional life and prays an hour every day? He's doing it sincerely, you know! One of the biggest culprits of lack of excellence in the church is signified by these two words: mismatched saints. People are serving outside their area of giftedness.

Here are three commonsense recommendations for improving in this area.

1. 100 vs. 1. When we have a mismatch, and assuming we have better options sitting in the pews, we often hesitate to make a move because of the fear of hurting the one. What about the other hundred? Who cares for them? What about the people who are just getting back on the highway? It seems unfair to save the one but sacrifice the hundred.

2. Lead. True leadership is taking people forward, not keeping everyone happy. Someone has said that the “secret for success I do not know, but the secret for failure is trying to keep everyone happy.” I know confrontation is difficult, especially for some pastors, who entered the ministry because they wanted to help people.

One of the most dangerous things you can do as a pastor is take away power from someone. It must be done prayerfully, respectfully, and intentionally.

3. Teach. Every message should be intentional in moving the congregation in these directions:

- Deeper in their relationship with Christ
- Higher in their level of excellence
- Stronger in their unity with each other.

Intentionality. If we are going to be intentional about helping people as they merge back in, here are some questions you must consider.

Concerning what we say:

- Do you keep the service positive? Is the Sabbath School director happy about the members who are there or complaining about the ones that aren't?
- When offering time comes around, does the appeal paint a picture of vision and progress, or is it a list of complaints about bills, past dues, and lack of commitment from members? People give to, are attracted to, and are inspired by a positive vision, not a litany of complaints.
- Is Christ the center of every message? Remember that a preaching emphasis on sin produces sinners. A preaching emphasis on Christ produces Christians. That does not mean we shy away from hard truths, but it does mean we share those truths from the perspective of the gospel and the cross. "Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world" (Gospel Workers, 156).
- Is the Second Coming shared as a blessed hope or used as a fear motivator to change behavior?

I would suggest three simple action steps:

1. **Drive safely.** Don't smother them.
2. **Drive aware they exist.** Don't ignore them. People don't like to be ignored. Shake their hands. Provide

opportunities in the worship service for people to interact. Have a fellowship meal afterwards. Give them a \$5 gas card so they can return. Let them know, from the first interaction to the last goodbye, that they are loved.

3. Don't forget them. Send them a postcard, email, or gift. Let them know how valuable they are.

We can't force people to get on the highway, but we can be ready when they do.

RAMP Q

1. In what ways have you experienced "aggressive driving" at a local church? How do we lovingly confront the aggressive drivers in our midst?

2. Mention one specific step you can take in your local congregation to implement the four "S" steps:

Stop.

Start.

Say.

Silence.

3. Why are the reconnecting twins so important? Which one is your strongest, and which one is your weakest as a church?

a. Excellence

b. Intentionality

4. How do we intentionally assign people to gift-based ministry versus just placing them at nominat-

ing committee time to fill a spot that is open?

5. What specific steps can we start doing this week to implement these three steps?

- a. Don't smother them:
- b. Don't ignore them:
- c. Don't forget them:

APPENDIX

Dan Serns

“**D**emas has forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10, NKJV).

How tragic! Paul’s close friend and fellow worker (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:24) abandoned Paul at the time Paul needed him most. Not only that, but Demas abandoned the message and mission of Jesus. Sometimes we’ll lose people to the church family permanently, no matter how hard we try to keep or reclaim them. Jesus lost Judas (Matthew 10:4). The apostle John said some never really were part of the church family (1 John 2:19). Some must receive healthy biblical church discipline¹ with the hope they will repent and return.

1. Dan Serns, “Why Not Try This? Deal with a Church Discipline Issue that Needs Attention,” May 31, 2007, <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2007/05/31/deal-with-a-church-discipline-issue-that-needs-attention/>.

But the best biblical models for reclaiming are probably found in Luke 15.

1. **The Lost Sheep** (vv. 1–7). The sheep wandered away. It was lost. It was scared. It didn't know what to do.
2. **The Lost Coin** (vv. 8–10). The coin was lost in the house. It didn't know it was lost.
3. **The Lost Son(s)** (vv. 11–32). The younger son hated being in the house, so he left, went to a far country, and wasted his life and resources.

As a pastor and church leader I have tried reclaiming people with the following:

1. Strengthen the Church Family by putting in place healthy systems for . . .

- A. Preaching.** Since we like a variety of speakers, of ten developing teams of new and young preachers, we make sure each speaker has a healthy attitude¹ when they stand up to preach, that the messages are Christ-centered, Bible based, practical, and have a call to action², and are simple but powerful.³

1. Dan Serns, "Why Not Try This? Check Your Attitude When You Stand Up to Preach," February 28, 2007, <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2007/02/28/check-your-attitude-when-you-stand-up-to-preach/>.

2. Dan Serns, "Why Not Try This? Apply the '4Q' Test to Your Sermons," March 31, 2006, <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2006/03/31/apply-the-4q-test-to-your-sermons/>.

3. Dan Serns, "Adventist Preaching Interview," May 26, 2020, <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2020/05/26/adventist-preaching-interview/>.

B. Mentoring Relationships. The church leaders need to be developed as mentors for group leaders, starting in huddles at church board meetings.⁴ As new groups are added, the group leaders are mentored and they mentor⁵ those in their groups.

C. Entry/Re-entry into the Church Family. If we bring people into the church family in a healthy way,⁶ clearly identifying what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist in the last days,⁷ mentoring them after membership,⁸ they are far more likely to stay and to become involved in the mission Jesus gave us.

2. Distribute Spiritual Growth Packets. Here's what worked for us and why.

A. Why give packets?

i. Help member families strengthen their relationship with the Lord.

4. Dan Serns, "Church Board Meetings — Ministry Models," May 2, 2017, <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2017/05/02/church-board-meetings/>.

5. Dan Serns, "Group Leaders Who Thrive and Multiply," August 3, 2020, <https://5danserns.wordpress.com/2020/08/03/group-leaders-who-thrive-and-multiply/>.

6. Dan Serns, "New Member Orientation — Ministry Models," <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2017/07/05/new-member-orientation/>.

7. Dan Serns, "Baptism Preparation — Ministry Models," <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2017/01/03/baptism-preparation/>.

8. Dan Serns, "Why Not Try This? Mentor New Members," <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2019/08/11/mentor-new-members/>.

- ii. Connect with all member families whether attending or not. It is an opportunity to contact inactive members in a friendly, encouraging way, listening to their stories and pointing them to Jesus while inviting them to reconnect with other believers.
 - iii. Help connect with guests.
 - iv. The packets are especially helpful when the resources are coordinated with the preaching theme(s).
- B.** Who to give packets to?
- i. Every family on the church membership list.
 - ii. Guests.
- C.** How often and how to give out packets?
- i. At least once a year but preferably quarterly.
 - ii. For 2 weeks—packets in the lobby for people to pick up on their own and to take to distribute (usually organized alphabetically).
 - iii. The following 2 weeks—organize packets by geography and ask Sabbath School class members to distribute. Mail to out-

of-towners.

- iv. Have extra packets for guests. Ask them to fill out the info card and exchange it for a spiritual growth packet.
- v. Have extra missionary books in stacks of 5 for people to use to start a group.

D. What to include in the packet?

- i. Missionary book on the same theme as sermons that quarter
- ii. Letter from pastor/elder, including positive updates
- iii. Bible reading bookmarks (see *Epic Journey Through the Bible*¹)
- iv. Response card (to help out-of-towners and inactives connect)
- v. Item from church school
- vi. Stewardship commitment card and tithe and offering envelope

3. Add groups,² especially ministry, mission, and Sabbath School groups.

1. Texas Conference, "Epic Journey Through the Bible," <http://texasevangelism.com/epic/>.

2. Dan Serns, "Group Leaders Who Thrive and Multiply," <https://danserns.wordpress.com/2020/08/03/group-leaders-who-thrive-and-multiply/>.

Each group becomes a landing place for new and reclaimed members.

Inspired Insights on Reclaiming

“When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan’s constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ.

The pleasures of the world, life’s cares and perplexities and sorrows, the faults of others, or your own faults and imperfections—to any or all of these he will seek to divert the mind. Do not be misled by his devices” (Steps to Christ, 71).

“Without unceasing prayer, without diligent watching, we are in danger of growing careless, and of deviating from the right path. Our backsliding may be so gradual that we may fancy ourselves in a good spiritual condition when we are surely on the enemy’s ground. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy-seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain supplies of grace and power to resist temptation” (Signs of the Times, December 23, 1889, par. 5).

“It would be vastly better for their children, for themselves, and for the cause of God, if they would remain in the smaller churches, where their help is needed, instead of going to the larger churches, where, because they are not needed, there is a constant temptation to

fall into spiritual inactivity” (Testimonies for the Church, 6:198).

“Those who profess to believe the truth, but feel no burden for the souls of others, will be continually back-sliding, and it will require time and strength on the part of the minister to keep them from making shipwreck of faith, when they should be laboring with all their might to present the way of life and salvation to their friends and neighbors.

Hundreds of men and women who at the present time are professedly engaged in the work of God, are not doing one-tenth that they might do if they would only improve all the powers God has given them. Some are doing literally nothing for the truth, and by their example of indifference are bringing others into the same position of uselessness, and thus are scattering from Christ.

This latter class includes by far the greater number. They are thinking and planning only for themselves. Fathers and mothers with their little ones around them make their little circle their world. Every power of their being is centered on ‘me and mine,’ and they are becoming narrower and more circumscribed every year of their lives.

They do not open their hearts to the grace and love of Christ, and liberalize their nature and ennoble their being by placing themselves in sympathy with their fellow-men” (Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, June 10, 1880, para. 6).

“When one who has wandered far in sin seeks to return to God, he will encounter criticism and distrust. There are those who will doubt whether his repentance is genuine, or will whisper, ‘He has no stability; I do not believe that he will hold out.’ These persons are doing not the work of God but the work of Satan, who is the accuser of the brethren.

Through their criticisms the wicked one hopes to discourage that soul, and to drive him still farther from hope and from God. Let the repenting sinner contemplate the rejoicing in heaven over the return of the one that was lost. Let him rest in the love of God and in no case be disheartened by the scorn and suspicion of the Pharisees” (Christ’s Object Lessons, 190).

Happily married and father of three great kids, Dan Serns is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor who invites everyone to accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord, embrace all the teachings of the Bible, and join a vibrant Adventist group.

A P P E N D I X 2

GETTING STARTED

with a
Reconnection
Ministry

Courtesy of: **Tim Goff**

The goal of the reconnection ministry is to seek out members who are no longer regularly attending, and love them back into active communion with the body of Christ. Form this ministry with members who have a heart for redemptive ministry.

There are many reasons members may be perceived as missing.

- Some may be non-attending but not missing.
- Some may have moved locally or moved out of town, but they are not missing.
- Some may have drifted from their devotion to Jesus, but they are not missing.
- Some may be homebound so they are not missing.

- Some may be discouraged or hurt by other members. These are not missing.
- Some may be disillusioned by the struggles and political climate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but they are not missing.

Regardless of the reasons, Jesus leaves no question about the responsibility of the church to seek out those who have drifted from fellowship.

Identify

Begin the reconnecting ministry by categorizing members according to their needs and circumstances.

1. Review the full list of members, praying for each one.
2. Identify those with incomplete or inaccurate contact information.
3. Identify non-attenders and infrequent attenders.
4. Assign members to reach out to them in accordance with those needs.

Connect

Reach out to every member who is not regularly attending. Minister to them with love and care. Widen the search process if necessary. Use any and all of the following to locate them:

- Contact Family
- Contact Friends
- Ask Church Members
- Use Peoplefinders.com

- Use Social Media
- Request info using the church Bulletin, Newsletter, and Pulpit

Remember that the goal is to find each member and love them back into communion with the Body of Christ.

Love

When a member is located, initiate calls, text messages, emails, and visits; leading with love and fellowship.

- If there is receptivity celebrate.
- If they are attending another congregation, celebrate with them on finding a spiritual community that fits their needs and explore the transfer process with their new congregation.
- When there is resistance, pray and patiently form a process of visitation. Consider invitations to fellowship, small groups, or social events.
- Consider the reasons people give for why they may be resistant to returning. This is a time for very careful listening.
- Should there be spiritual or lifestyle issues to address, the Church manual should be followed very carefully.
- If disciplinary action is needed, seek their salvation as we would one that attends our meetings for the first time.
- After a reasonable season of prayer, and if the person expresses an unwillingness to reform, then some consideration should be offered to

the individual regarding their membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Note, it is better for a person to remove themselves than for the church to do it.

Process for Missing Members

The goal for all non-attending members is to find each one and love them back into communion with the Body of Christ. A member should only be considered “missing” when efforts to locate them fail.

Identifying Missing Members

The church manual requires congregations to actively search for a minimum of two years before the church in business session may vote them as missing on the membership records.

1. Pray earnestly— God works miracles.
2. Review the full list of members, praying for each one.
3. Build a church family tree – Note their family, friends, and associates for more information.
4. Identify those with incomplete or inaccurate contact information.
5. Use the internet – People finder sites and social media for locating people.
6. Identify non-attenders and infrequent attenders.
7. Identify those who’s addresses are unknown.
8. Reach out to the church membership – List names in the bulletin, church newsletter, from the pulpit, etc. if they know any way to locate the member.

The church should exhaust all available resources to locate that member. This comes after trying to contact them with all of the information available.

Cautions

- Members who are non-attending, but are in a known location are not missing members and should not be removed from membership by a missing vote.
- Members do not need to come before the church in any capacity to reaffirm their faith in order to maintain their membership.
- Take careful note regarding what constitutes a “test of fellowship.”
- Removing members for “insurance” reasons is not an acceptable practice.
- Note that two years is the minimum time frame for removing members from church membership when all forms of location are exhausted.
- Members can only be removed in a duly called Church Business session.
- Consider hosting redemptive seminars offered by the Florida Conference.

Locating a Missing Member

Name of Member _____

Last Known Address _____

Last Known Phone Number _____

Last Known Email Address _____

1. Use all of these methods to prayerfully locate the missing member

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phone | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home Address | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family of Member | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friends of Member | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People Finder | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletin/Newsletter
Announcement | Date Attempted _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pulpit
Announcements | Date Attempted _____ |

2. After efforts to locate the member fail, enter the date here _____. The member should not be voted as missing for a minimum of 2 years from this date.

3. Over the next 2 years, continue to locate the missing member. The goal is to reconnect, not empty

Locating a Missing Member - Connections

Name of Member _____

Connections

Name _____

Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Member Yes/No at _____

Additional Info _____

Name _____

Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Member Yes/No at _____

Additional Info _____

Name _____

Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Member Yes/No at _____

Additional Info _____

Name _____

Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Member Yes/No at _____

Additional Info _____

S A M P L E L E T T E R

Hello _____

I just wanted to take a moment to let you know we have missed you. We understand that there are many reasons why a person or family stops attending church. Among those can be illness, hurt, disagreement, life/career changes or personal issues.

We want to respect your wishes and your choices. At the same time, we want you to know that we miss you and wish you would reconnect with our church family. And that is what we are. A Family. Imperfect. Yet, a family.

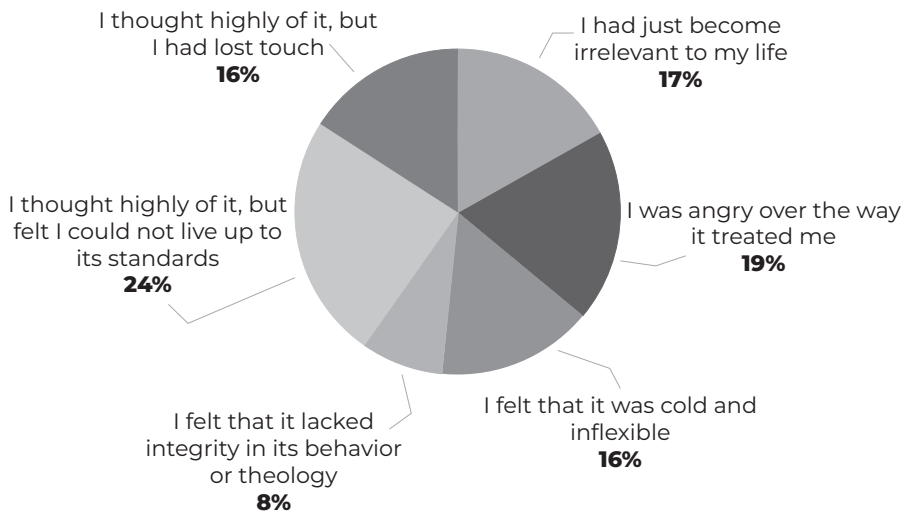
We want to let you know there is a great opportunity to reconnect coming up. In two weeks, _____ we are having a wonderful program that involves our children and adults in a special presentation. We would love for you to join us at that time or any other time.

I just want to make sure you know that we will regularly be reaching out to all members. If there are any issues you'd like to talk about or anything we can do to make this reconnection a reality, please contact me

_____ .

Sincerely,

**What did you think of the Adventist church at the time you left it?
Former Members**



(NAD Secretariat 2021)