

## Positioning the Church for the Future

Rapid change describes the future. Seventh-day Adventists seek to communicate the prophetic picture of both the world and God's Church. Current events validate the Biblical record of an end time world in crisis. At this momentous hour God's Church has been entrusted with a mission. Planning and sacrifice are Biblical principles for advancing God's mission. While a world in crisis creates hardship it also provides an unprecedented opportunity for God's Church to express His love. To organize the Church for mission must be the central business of church leadership.

### Issue 1 - Unity: Spiritual and Ecclesiastical

#### Need:

Unity is the over riding concern of the future. Current data projects that by 2020 our church will be a community of more than 50 million people coming from a multiple number of diverse cultures, religions, languages and socio-economic levels. Only about 12.5 percent will have been Adventist in the year 2000. By 2020 diversity will express itself in everything from culture to liturgy. If the above does not describe the Church of 2020, the Church will have been delayed in its mission in the 10/40 Window.

The loyalty and vision of elected church leaders will be critical to future unity. The Church must nurture a leadership culture that understands the Biblical basis of church unity, authority, responsibility, and accountability, and understands and accepts the current application and expectations of such authority as integral to unity.

#### Proposal:

1. To request the Church to define the authority and loyalty characteristics of leadership. (NOTE: This to be accomplished as an assignment of the symposium below with particular emphasis on paragraph 1. i. below.)

It is proposed that the Church plan and schedule a process of events that would serve to build consensus around a clear understanding of a defined biblical leadership culture.

It is further proposed that a symposium be convened just prior to the 2005 General Conference Session that would be attended by all officers of the General Conference, the three senior officers of the divisions, and the presidents of the unions and local conferences/missions who are attendees at the session. It is envisioned that this symposium would serve as the starting point for future regional symposiums in designated regions of the world to provide broad-based instruction to the leadership of the world Church. The symposium should emphasize a shared vision, a common mission, and commitment to a core message. The symposium would include time for, and give consideration to, the following presentations and tasks.

## POSITIONING THE CHURCH FOR THE FUTURE - 2

- a. A keynote address that carefully describes the rationale and objectives for the symposium. The address should include general comments on the projected future of the Church and the relationship between unity and servant leadership authority.
  - b. A paper describing the projected diverse future of the Church.
  - c. A paper on church authority and responsibility as described in the Bible.
  - d. A paper on church authority and responsibility as described in the writings of Ellen G White.
  - e. A paper reviewing current policy statements on church authority, responsibility, and accountability.
  - f. A panel discussion on what emerges from the above.
  - g. Questions and comments from the floor.
  - h. A panel discussion which examines case studies on leadership loyalty.
  - i. The appointment of a writing committee to develop a statement which should answer three questions: 1) What is Biblical church unity, authority, and responsibility; 2) What is the process by which alternate opinions on governance and methodology can be considered; and 3) What is the expected understanding and support of church authority and responsibility by executive officers of the Church?
  - j. Consider an appropriate statement for endorsement by Annual Council or the General Conference Session.
2. To request the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education to assess exiting curriculum on servant leadership authority and responsibility currently being offered with a view to ensuring that the principles emerging from the symposium are an integral part of the curriculum.
  3. To request the Ministerial Association to design and implement a teaching/education program for clergy that establishes the leadership profile that emerges from the symposium.

Issue 2 - Growth and Quality of Life: Contextualized Material

Need:

## POSITIONING THE CHURCH FOR THE FUTURE - 3

Church mission is just beginning to impact the 10/40 Window which represents at least 65 percent of the world population and less than 14 percent of the Seventh-day Adventist membership. A low ratio of Adventists to population is also reflected in selected areas outside the 10/40 Window. Essentially, these areas are new challenges for mission. Additionally, the Church has few recommended models successfully furthering new or first time mission among the peoples of multiple world religions, cultures, languages, and nations.

One of the foundations to successful growth and nurture is contextualized materials. Early Seventh-day Adventist mission teaches us the importance of outreach and nurture materials. It was the first work of the pioneers. Today the Church is sending frontline workers to first time mission areas with little or no contextualized material. Small groups are being formed whose practice of Adventism varies in relation to the limited availability of materials and orientation and, considering availability is very limited, the new believers demonstrate a minimal but varied range of understanding and practice. Many groups of new Adventists will wait years for the first translated page of Ellen G White's writings.

Already the Church is far behind in developing, producing, and teaching the use of contextualized material. As we look to the future growth and nurture of the Church in newly entered areas, immediately attention must be given to teaching material and printed materials which will cultivate growth, nurture, and unity.

### Proposal:

1. To request the world divisions to define a beginning minimal core of materials for each "new work" area that will facilitate growth, nurture, and unity. It is understood that the list of core material may differ from union to union.
2. To develop a proposal, in consultation with the world divisions and the General Conference Secretariat, to reallocate current interdivision employee budgets to the Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, and Post Modern Religious Study Centers which will be charged with the responsibility for developing contextualized materials as directed by the list of materials described in the above paragraph.
3. To request the divisions to determine the acceptability and effectiveness of the materials in the context of the location where the materials would be used. This will be accomplished in consultation with the General Conference Biblical Research Institute and Global Missions prior to publication of the materials.

Issue 3 - Quality of Life, Unity, Growth: Church Programs

### Need:

## POSITIONING THE CHURCH FOR THE FUTURE - 4

Five new “churches” and at least five new congregations are established every day somewhere in the world at this time in the year 2003. With careful intention the Church is succeeding in making believers in the unentered populated areas of the earth. This new growth is now increasingly appearing in the 10/40 Window and other areas with little Seventh-day Adventist history. These new mission areas of anticipated large membership growth are occurring in regions with depressed economies and limited funds resulting in minimal programs and few trained personnel.

Since 1990 membership in the 10/40 Window has increased 240 percent while the rest of the world has increased 87 percent. The infrastructure surrounding this new growth lacks resources, including experienced personnel. Many of these churches and congregations do not conduct Sabbath School, lack knowledge of church operated schools, have no understanding of stewardship, do not offer any type of lay training, and do not conduct prayer meeting. Few, if any, have access to the writings of Ellen G White. They do not participate in most of the programs of the church and have no concept of belonging to a global Church family. Experience has taught us that the departmental programs of the Church are largely designed to stabilize, nurture, disciple, and unify the membership. Considering the Church’s projected membership growth and increased diversity, these programs are vital to quality of life, unity, and growth.

### Proposal:

1. To request divisions, in cooperation with their unions and missions, to evaluate and identify missions whose resources severely limit their ability to implement with quality the major programs of the Church; and to request the General Conference, in cooperation with divisions, to develop a phase-in strategy that would identify and initiate programs to be established in the churches of territories with limited resources.
2. To request General Conference Secretariat to solicit conferences/unions which in harmony with the “donor conference policy” will sponsor an interdivision budget or finance another initiative for the purpose of placing a worker described by Ellen G White as a “generalist” in missions identified by the process described in the above paragraph. A “generalist” will be placed in each identified mission for the purpose of establishing the church’s programs of stability in each local congregation.
3. To request General Conference departments, in cooperation with their counter parts at the divisions, unions, and conferences/missions to develop the minimum amount of materials to be used by the “generalist” in establishing programs in the churches of new work areas. This is to be done in consultation with the division materials review committees.

### Issue 4 - Quality of Life, Unity, and Growth: Leadership Training

#### Need:

## POSITIONING THE CHURCH FOR THE FUTURE - 5

While the need for leadership training has been well established and many efforts ranging from formal leadership training programs in educational institutions to the more recent establishment of the office of leadership have significantly contributed to supplying trained leadership, many areas of the world still operate with less than qualified personnel. By 2020 the Church will largely have a new membership far more diverse than currently expressed. The Church must develop a cadre of leadership to serve all levels of the Church. Leadership positions at the local church and conference/mission are critical, since from these foundational units will come future leaders for unions, divisions, and the General Conference.

Leadership strategy has often been loosely defined. Formal education has provided essential skills, but in most cases is not specific to church leadership roles. Some departments have made specific leadership training available, but rarely coordinated the training with other efforts. However, the overriding characteristic in both strategies has been that training has been availability driven as opposed to need-strategy driven. The church needs both strategies.

Specifically, what are the needed leadership skills projected over the next 20 years country-by-country, church-by-church, mission/conference by mission conference, union-by-union, division-by-division, and at the General Conference? Availability based programs already have the structure and personnel to largely contribute to a major training process, but it may require retooling the curriculum to match an intentional strategy in order to be responsive to projected leadership needs. While the General Conference will continue to be engaged in coordinating leadership training, much of the training can be initiated at the national level and offered at the local church.

### Proposal:

1. To request the Office of Leadership Training to work in cooperation with all levels of the Church to identify specific leadership skills that will be needed over the next 20 years in order to further the quality of life, unity, and growth of the Church.
2. To request the Office of Leadership Training to work in cooperation with departments and schools (colleges, universities, and seminaries) to develop training courses and curricula that addresses the specific needs identified in the opening paragraph of this section.