

Liberty University School of Divinity

**House Church: Planting Seventh-Day Adventist House Churches Among Rwandese  
Refugees In Columbus Ohio**

A Thesis Project Submitted to  
The Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

House Church: Planting Seventh-Day Adventist House Churches Among Rwandese Refugees in Columbus Ohio.

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2018

Mentor: Dr. Jeffrey D. Ward

Traditional Church attendance is declining among the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventists refugees living in Columbus Ohio. Many of the Rwandese families reside in the same apartment complex carpooling with the few that drive to work and church services where possible. This project is in response to the unique opportunity of the proximity of these families to each other. The goal is to train leaders and plant Seventh-day Adventist house churches in the homes of some of these families so that they may walk to a neighbor's house for worship and fellowship. This project surveyed twenty-five Rwandese refugee adults living on the Northside of Columbus to determine their religious backgrounds and levels of church involvement in their native country and refugee camps. This survey will assist in selecting leaders who will lead the house churches and make it possible for Rwandese residents in these apartment complexes to have service and fellowship in their native language. The success of the Rwandese house church project will produce trained and committed lay leaders who will step up and take ownership in executing the Great Commission to their countrymen and unchurched neighbors.

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## Contents

CHAPTER 1: THESIS INTRODUCTION .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	2
Statement of Limitations .....	3
Biblical and Theological Basis .....	4
Statement of Methodology .....	6
Review of Literature .....	7
Current Literature .....	7
Biblical Context .....	13
Summary .....	19
CHAPTER TWO: NEW TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDING OF HOUSE CHURCH..	20
Introduction .....	20
Jesus: The Initiator of the Church .....	20
Early Church Model in the New Testament .....	22
Holy Spirit: The Power of the Church.....	24
Church: The Gospel in Action.....	28
The Acts of the Apostles .....	30
Descriptive Figures of the Church.....	32
People of God (1 Peter 2:9-11) .....	32
Household of God (Ephesians 2:19) .....	33
Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) .....	34
Assembly (Ekklesia) (Acts 19:32,41) .....	34
New Testament House Churches (Meeting Places) .....	36
Mary's House Church .....	36

Lydia’s House Church .....	36
Troas House Church.....	37
Priscilla and Aquila’s House Church .....	37
Nympha’s House Church .....	37
Philemon and Apphia’s House Church .....	37
Summary.....	37
<b>CHAPTER 3: RWANDESE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST IN COLUMBUS .....</b>	<b>39</b>
History of CANSDA .....	39
Multicultural Congregation .....	40
Missional Concept.....	41
CANSDA’s Vision.....	41
SWOT Analysis .....	42
Evangelism.....	43
Target Group .....	43
Choosing Columbus Ohio As Home.....	44
Research Method .....	45
Analysis of Research Answers.....	46
Age Range .....	46
Gender.....	47
Education Level.....	48
Number of Years in Columbus .....	49
Traditional Church Attendance.....	50
Challenges to Church Attendance.....	51
Interest in Planting House Churches.....	52
Church Involvement in Native Country .....	54

Personal Witnessing.....	55
Leadership Training Opportunity Interest .....	57
Interest in Hosting a House Church.....	58
Research Overview.....	59
Summary.....	60
<b>CHAPTER 4: PLANTING HOUSE CHURCHES AMONG RWANDESE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST REFUGEES IN COLUMBUS OHIO .....</b>	<b>61</b>
The Project.....	61
Church Planting Trend in Africa.....	61
Scriptural Foundation and Core Ministry Values.....	63
Family .....	64
Spirit-Led .....	64
Scripture .....	64
Growing in Christ.....	64
Evangelism and Outreach .....	65
Ministry Mission .....	65
Ministry Vision.....	65
Prelaunch Phase.....	66
Leadership Selection and Responsibilities.....	66
Responsibilities .....	67
Pastor .....	67
Interest Coordinator .....	68
House Church Leader .....	68
House Church Clerk .....	68
Children’s Ministries Coordinator .....	68
Forming a Prayer Habit .....	69



Site Selection .....	70
Host Family .....	70
Putting the Core Values into Action.....	72
The F.L.O.W Strategy .....	73
Fellowship .....	73
Learning .....	74
Adults.....	74
Children Ministry.....	74
Outreach.....	76
Worship .....	78
Sabbath (Saturday) Gathering.....	78
Action Plan for House Church Launch .....	79
Teleconference Prayer Ministry.....	79
Timeline and Sequence Plan .....	81
Rwandese House Church Connection to CANSDA.....	83
Measurable Steps and Evaluation.....	83
Recipe for Success.....	84
Back to The Basics .....	85
Recipe for Disaster .....	88
Summary.....	90
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>92</b>
Introduction .....	92
Project Review.....	92
Strengths of the House Church for the Rwandese Community.....	95
Lay Leadership Opportunities.....	96

Language .....	96
Maintenance and Mortgage-Free .....	96
Intimacy .....	96
Ethnic-Specific.....	97
Flexibility .....	97
Simplicity .....	97
Authenticity.....	97
Project Take-Home Lessons (Discipleship Based on Diversity) .....	98
Recommendations .....	98
Conclusion.....	100
Thesis Restatement.....	101
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>APPENDIX A.....</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	<b>112</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Participant Age Range

Figure 2: Participant Gender

Figure 3: Participant Educational Level

Figure 4: Participant Number of Years in Columbus

Figure 5: Participant Traditional Church Attendance

Figure 6: Participant Challenges to Church Attendance

Figure 7: Participant Interest in Planting a House Church

Figure 8: Participant Church Involvement in Native Country

Figure 9: Participant Personal Witnessing Experience

Figure 10: Participant Interest in Leadership Training Opportunity

Figure 11: Participant Interest in Hosting a House Church

Figure 12: Proposed Leadership Structure

Figure 13: FLOW Diagram

Figure 14: Models of Children's Spiritual Formation

## List of Tables

Table 1: Old Testament Elements of God's Unique Community

Table 2: Romans 12:6-8 Spiritual Gifts and Practical Application

Table 3: SWOT Analysis

Table 4: Sabbath Meeting Flow

Table 5: Timeline and Sequence Plan

## CHAPTER 1: THESIS INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

The church is called to go out and spread the gospel. The process of spreading the gospel producing numerical growth to the body of Christ. Cell churches or house churches have always been mediums for church expansion and growth. Ed Stetzer notes, "The earliest churches obeyed the Great Commission by planting new congregations to carry out the assignments of discipling, baptizing, and teaching."<sup>1</sup> This approach of multiplication in different locations led to many churches being planted. The mission and assignment have not changed and must be carried out with the urgency. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:18 NLT).<sup>2</sup> The Columbus All Nations Seventh-day Adventist Church (CANSDA hereafter) is privileged for the fact that it has the full backing of the Holy Spirit to take the gospel to its immediate community and beyond. The purpose of the existence of the church is to make disciples, and this can be achieved by looking at a model that worked for the early church. With an ever-growing immigrant population in the city of Columbus, CANSDA, which is made up of members from seventeen African countries feels the urgent need to make disciples of these

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 38.

<sup>2</sup> Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), Ac 1:8.

nationals. The dynamic nature of the church has placed a burden on the hearts of the members to reach out and evangelize their fellow countrymen.

This thesis project is in response to a unique need among the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist refugees in Columbus Ohio. For many years now, these refugees have not been able to integrate well into any church, and the main reason is the lack of formal education for most of the adults. This has prevented many from obtaining a driver's license and getting good paying jobs to support their families. On the spiritual side, these families are missing out when they attend church services. CANSDA uses English for all its services, and these families do not understand what is being said but enjoy the fellowship and potlucks. This project will look to plant house churches for the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist in Columbus Ohio, which will, in turn, solve the transportation and language barrier issue and also produce active leaders that will make disciples.

### **Statement of the Problem**

CANSDA is located in an area that is home to three Refugee resettlement agencies in the city and as a result has been home to hundreds of immigrants from the continent of Africa. Due to the diversity in CANSDA, the church has been able to identify with the cultural needs of the diverse residents of the community as compared to other churches in the area that are not as diverse. Taking advantage of the diversity in the church, CANSDA has created opportunities in the worship service for the various ethnic and multicultural groups who experienced worship identical or close to how it is done in their respective regions or countries of origin. Diversity sometimes be a disaster waiting to happen especially when specific factors are not considered. Tracey Lewis-Giggets notes, "Ideally, the church should provide, within its organizational culture the ability for its members to express themselves and their concerns

without fear or judgment.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the Rwandese members of CANSDA are not able to express themselves as they would since English is the medium for communication in the church. Most of these families choose to stay in their apartment complexes with no form of religious worship on Saturdays as in the case of the Seventh-day Adventist. This has made many of them yearn for life in their native country of Rwanda where at least they enjoyed worship and understood each other.

It is with this background that CANSDA seeks to plant house churches in apartment complexes that are home to a large number of Rwandese refugees. This author sees an opportunity to tap into the experience and expertise of some of the refugees who led small groups in the various refugee camps across East Africa. The success of the Rwandese house church movement will produce trained and committed lay people who will step up and take ownership in executing the Great Commission to their countrymen, neighbors, and nationals of other East African countries who speak the same language. Principles learned through this process could be used to plant more house churches among other refugee groups in Columbus Ohio and neighboring cities.

### **Statement of Limitations**

The early church with all the exponential growth used cell or house models to accommodate new converts. It was never intended for the small groups to become a big gathering as exists today. Even though house churches and small groups are growing very popular in many churches today, there still exist some church leaders that are reluctant to

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<sup>3</sup> Tracey M. Lewis-Giggetts, *The Integrated Church: Authentic Multicultural Ministry* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, ©2011), 69-70.

embrace this concept as a tool for the community that will lead to evangelism. This house church project is explicitly designed for the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist refugees taking into account the socio-economic challenges they face. Even though some principles could be adapted and applied to other nationalities, the living arrangements of the Rwandese refugees makes this project unique them.

Secondly, this project is not intended to assist with measuring exponential growth, but it is intended to harness the spiritual gifts of potential leaders within the Rwandese Adventist community to lead an evangelistic effort within their community.

Thirdly, this project will use the Natural Church Development (NCD hereafter) as an evaluation tool to provide an assessment of vitality. Additionally, all Scripture quoted in this project is selected from the New Living Translation Bible (NLT) unless otherwise stated. Lastly, this project will create a template that would be used to plant churches among other nationalities that may have similar challenges as the Rwandese.

### **Biblical and Theological Basis**

There is no doubt that the Bible provides the basis for doing any work that involves the salvation of humanity. CANSDA is committed to modeling the biblical examples of the early Christian church. Without biblical support and foundation, all the efforts put into planting house churches will end up being social gatherings that will eventually fade away as the social needs of the group members changes with time and other unknown conditions.

God is a relational Being, and this is evident in both the creation of man in Genesis 1:26 and later a companion for Adam in Genesis 2:18. Humanity is dependent on one another and it interesting to point out that humankind was created for community. Aubrey Malphurs observes



that "Far too many of our established evangelical churches are inward focused and unacquainted with their communities, and their communities are unaware of them."<sup>4</sup> The church that operates without the community in mind will die or become irrelevant to the city in which it placed.

In the book of Exodus, God led His people out of bondage and in the process set up some form of administrative order. Moses at the time was performing this task of leadership alone and was advised by his father-in-law Jethro to form small groups and appoint leaders over these groups for better administration and management Exodus 18:25). The groups acted as small communities for the members, and it made meeting needs more comfortable for both the leaders and the people.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ called twelve disciples and immediately formed a community which is known today as the Church and began to instill within them the process and methods of recruiting others. The disciples became the agency for God to bring the Good News of salvation to humanity. Jesus bypassed the learned and elite of society and went for common men to proclaim the gospel. Through personal contact for over three years, the Master trained his disciples for the work ahead. Thus, this band of men became God's strategy to evangelize the world. The mandate of The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 moved the disciples to carry the good news of salvation to many. Ordinary men empowered by the Holy Spirit were propagating the obedience and trust exhibited by the disciple which brought many to these "new" teachings. The day of Pentecost resulted in over 3,000 people added to the Church. These new converts who were added to the church daily (Acts 2:47) met in homes as recorded in the book of Acts, "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

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<sup>4</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting: A Guide for Starting Any Kind of Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 121.

In his closing remarks of the letter to the church at Colossae, the apostle Paul noted, “Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house” (Colossians 4:15). Priscilla and Aquila had a house church in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19) Philemon also operated a house church from his home (Philemon 1:2).

The house churches multiplied because of what was happening in these meetings. Needs were being met, and they prayed, studied and preached the word. That is what the gospel was designed to do by God. Jimmy Long notes, "The ministry of reconciliation is the ministry of taking people who are alienated from God and each other and building them into a community which deeply cares for each member and allows God to care for them."<sup>5</sup> God through the gospel reconciles humanity to Himself.

### **Statement of Methodology**

This project will identify through survey core leaders within the Rwandese Adventist community and a couple of families to host the initial meetings. The cell churches will create a Christian-based society for these refugees and assist in their quick assimilation into the American culture. This project will also provide an evangelistic tool to present the gospel of Jesus Christ and His soon return to people that would not hear the gospel through the current system that is practiced at the church.

Chapter one of this thesis project is the introduction: This will cover the selection of the topic, stating the problem and purpose. Chapter one will also set limitations of the research and provide a biblical and theological basis for the study. Finally, chapter one will show the review of the literature, methodology used and the conclusion.

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<sup>5</sup> Jimmy Long, “A Biblical Voyage Through Small Groups,” in *Small Group Leaders’ Handbook: The Next Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 28.

In chapter two, the biblical foundations and understanding of the house church will be presented as well as providing some examples within the New Testament.

Chapter three will present research done in the form of surveys. This project will survey twenty-five Rwandese Adventist refugees living in and around one of the major apartment complexes on the north side of Columbus, Ohio to determine their religious experiences here in America and their level of church involvement in their native country or refugee camps. Through the survey, this author will find out what the perception and interest is concerning the house church project. The location of this apartment complex was chosen because it has the most significant concentration of the target group. Chapter three will show the results from the surveys and an overview of the findings in the form of charts, tables, and graphs ~~will be made available to the reader.~~

In chapter four, the house church project will be presented in detail. The scope of sequence and the format for the weekly gatherings will be laid out for the reader.

Chapter five is the conclusion of the thesis project. This chapter will bring together and summarize all the main points discussed in the previous sections. The author will make recommendations and give a summary of the entire project. The conclusion will also show the socio-economic benefits these Rwandese Adventist refugees will have on the community and experience themselves.

## **Review of Literature**

### Current Literature

Malphurs, Aubrey. *The Nuts And Bolts Of Church Planting: A Guide For Starting Any Kind Of Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011. Aubrey Malphurs in this book covers every aspect involved in planting a church. He guides the reader through a careful consideration

of the reason he or she is planting a church, the guiding principle for the mission, God's bright picture for the church and how the church plans to do ministry which includes disciple-making, financial strategy, church location, and leadership. Without a structured plan, and knowing the dynamics involved, church planting will fail.

Payne, Jervis David. *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2009. The author looks at global church planting as a whole and draws the attention of the reader to the biblical, historical and missiological principles in reaching the lost. This book is not just about steps to plant a church; it is about confronting potential challenges that church planters around the world face. With research and practical considerations, the author answers the why of church planting emphasizing the biblical mandate involved in this noble task.

Searcy, Nelson, and Derrick Thomas. *Launch: Starting A New Church From Scratch*. Ventura, Calif: Regal Books, 2006. The authors of this book use their personal experience of planting a church with no resources and getting tremendous results in three years. They provide practical strategies that can be adapted to different locations as needed. The practicality of the book offers many references to consider as the church planter contemplates planting a new church.

Sjogren, Steve, and Rob Lewin. *Community of Kindness*. Ventura, Calif: Regal Books, 2003. The authors in this book call for a strategy presented in the book that has proven successful when it comes to getting members involved in introducing the gospel to others. Jesus used this method to meet the needs of people before presenting the truth. The premises of the book are creating an awareness of the needs around believers and also having the desire to respond to

those needs. The principles in the book can be practiced by anyone and the results ~~and~~ will be caring for one another.

Bergler, Thomas. *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Group, 2012. The author takes a look at the gradual decline in the spirituality of American churches as result of attracting people. He uses the term “Juvenilization” to show the eroding effect of the youth and pop culture in the church. He also offers some solutions on how to correct this issue that faces the church. Since church planting involves all ages, it is essential to be aware of some of the trends in the churches today and be adequately prepared.

Thomas, Gary. *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011. Gary Thomas in this book addresses the need for pastors and leaders to take proper care of their bodies. He draws a direct correlation between the body and soul and how proper physical care can lead to significant spiritual benefits. The physical appearance of a minister or church leader has the potential of either serving as a motivation or discouragement for church members and unbelievers alike.

Cole, Neil. *Church Transfusion: Changing Your Church Organically-From the Inside Out*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012. The author of this book draws the attention of the reader and church leaders to the solid foundation of the church; Christ. Without Christ and the power of His atoning blood, the church will fail, and it is with this backdrop that Neil Cole reintroduces Christ and His saving blood into every aspect of the church. The life of the church is entirely dependent on full transfusion with the blood of Christ.

Cole, Neil. *Organic Church: Growing Where Life Happens*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005. Neil Cole in this book speaks to the fact that the gospel must be taken to where

people live and have their day-to-day activities. The church for too long has spent time and money on endless upgrades trying to attract people without success. The author calls for a shift in strategy in reaching people. He argues that this method is what Christ recommended and wanted the church to do all along.

Earley, Dave, and David A. Wheeler. *Evangelism Is--: How to Share Jesus with Passion and Confidence*. Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2010. Evangelism is the reason churches exist; it is the primary task of everyone that has accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Evangelism over time has become a daunting task for many churches. In this book, Early and Wheeler provide succinct phrases of what evangelism is. The book gives practical ways to share Jesus with confidence and efficiency.

Greer, J.D. *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011. The gospel is the power of God through Christ that reconciles sinners to God. J. D. Greer makes a passionate plea for the gospel to retake its rightful position in churches. He notes that religion and formalism have never been able to do what the gospel does for those who accept it. God, he points out, is ready through the gospel to create a desire in humanity that yearns for God.

Macchia, Stephen A. *Becoming a Healthy Church: Ten Traits of a Vital Ministry*. Paperback edition. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2003. The author of this book provides ten characteristics of a healthy church. He uses surveys and extensive research to describe the makeup of a healthy church.

Mitchell, Michael R. *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples: World-Class Christian Education in the Church, School, and Home*. Bloomington, Ind.: Crossbooks, 2010. No one can train or lead others unless he or she is also trained or in the spiritual sense being led by God and

His Spirit. Michael Mitchell in this book provides resources for anyone who is already involved in making disciples or who is interested. He notes that God has provided a model for making disciples and if followed, will develop love and skills for Christian education as it relates to disciple-making.

Prime, Derek and Alistair Begg. *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2006. The authors of this book are aware how challenging pastoral work can be. In this book, they provide the pastor with some practical advice on how to carry out ministry efficiently. Just like the disciples in the early church, the modern pastor and church leader needs to entirely have a grasp of what they are called to do, or they would just be busy without producing fruits to the honor and glory of God.

Wilson, Michael Todd, and Brad Hoffmann. *Preventing Ministry Failure: A Shepherd Care Guide for Pastors, Ministers, and Other Caregivers*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2007. The rate at which pastors and church leaders are either quitting or falling from grace is alarming. In this book, the authors examine the external and internal factors that contribute to how long and efficient a minister lasts in ministry. All of the pressures that cause ministers to quit, according to the authors, can be prevented. They provide some guidelines that can once again provide some hope and strength for ministers and leaders who are struggling.

Boren, M. Scott, and Jim Egli. "Small Group Models: Navigating The Commonalities and The Differences." *Christian Education Journal Apr 2014 (April 1, 2014): Christian Periodical Index, EBSCOhost*. The authors examine several models of small groups or cell groups and point out some of the similarities. In as much as they highlighted some differences, they also note that the basic idea or structure has not changed from what is observed in the Bible especially during the formative years of the church.

Atkinson, Harley T., and Joel Comiskey. "Lessons from The Early House Church For Today's Cell Groups." *Christian Education Journal Apr 2014* (April 1, 2014): *Christian Periodical Index*, EBSCOhost. If there were ever a need to get a duplicate of anything right, the best thing would be to take a look at the original. The authors pointed out that the early house churches provide proponents of cell groups today valuable lessons. They note that evangelism was the purpose of establishing house churches. In addition to evangelism, these house churches also provided a form of community for its members. The house churches were also a medium where members used their God-given talents and gifts to serve others effectively.

Osiek, Carolyn. "How much do we really know about the lives of early Christ followers?" *Hts 67*, no. 1 (2011): *ATLA Religion Database*, EBSCOhost. Carolyn Osiek in this article touches on the importance of understanding the culture of people in an attempt to present the gospel to them. She draws back both the historical and cultural curtains of early Christ followers and gives the reader a chance to reexamine how he or she reads and understands Scripture. The culture she notes plays significant roles in everything including evangelism. It is in the best interest of church leaders to spend the time to learn the culture of their target population.

Atkinson, Harley. "Small Groups: Context And Strategy For Christian Formation And Evangelization." *Christian Education Journal 11*, no. 1 (2014): 71-74. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost. The author of this article acknowledges the difficulties and persecution the early Christians faced. These challenges led to a response that gave birth to a new way of church growth, which was through house churches. He cites examples of what is happening in Africa and South Korea where small groups are creating an explosion in the church membership. The premises of his argument are that small groups are strategically meant to be an



evangelistic tool for the church, and it is time for the church to realize that and use these groups to evangelize.

Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006. The author of this book explores what gave the early apostolic church growth and the impact the church had in the early century. He calls on churches to look to the past and draw lessons from the method that worked instead of creating new formulas that are not working.

Lorch, Steve *Welcome Home: A Practical Guide to House Churches, Small Groups, Home Fellowships or Whatever Else We Call Them*. Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2009. In this book, the author presents a tool for churches and individuals interested in starting house churches. The book covers leadership development in the church. It is evident from the content of the book that Steve Lorch is convinced that with the proper training of leaders within the church, every aspect of the church will function well mainly when it comes to starting and running a house church.

### Biblical Context

God is a God of missions. He desires that everyone on earth will hear about his desire to save man from eternal sin and separation from Himself. It has never been God's intention to have His children keep quiet about Him. He is continually sending His children to tell others about Him. Jesus Christ came as a result of this mission to save the lost. Elaborating further on the passion Jesus had for the lost Robert E. Coleman notes, "That is why he lost no opportunity to impress on his followers the deep compulsion of his own soul aflame with the love of God for

a lost world.”<sup>6</sup> The Bible provides several supporting passages that show the intention of God when it comes to telling others about Him.

### **Psalm 96:3**

“Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.” The mighty acts of God should not be hidden. David in this text is showing gratitude for what God had done and called on all to do the same by declaring the amazing things God had done. This kind of declaration brings all honor and glory to God and also draws those who hear it closer to God.

### **Romans 16:5**

“Also greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epaphroditus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.” The apostle Paul in this text sends salutations to several people, and the mention of the church that met at home indicates as John Lange puts it, “The definite prototype of an apostolically household church, the type of the later parish.”<sup>7</sup> These kinds of congregations were widespread in the New Testament.

### **Ephesians 2:19**

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,” In this passage, the believer is described as being a member of a more prominent family outside his or her own biological family. Believers immediately assume the status of brothers and sisters, as Christians are required to relate to each other as

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<sup>6</sup> Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2006), 54.

<sup>7</sup> John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, F. R. Fay, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Romans* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 447.

such. One can deduct from this logic that the house then becomes an ideal place to exhibit this kind of relationship on a regular basis.

## **Philemon 2**

“Also to Apphia our sister and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church that meets in your home.” This verse also gives clear indication of the presence of a house church. According to John Lange, this was, “part of the church which was accustomed to assemble in the house of Philemon, and in connection with the members of his household.”<sup>8</sup> Arthur G. Patzia also adds “One of the ways in which Philemon has demonstrated his love and concern for the gospel is by opening his house for church meetings. The fact that the greeting extends to the church and includes Apphia and Archippus makes this epistle more public than private.”<sup>9</sup> This Scripture gives a clear indication of a how house churches work; there is a sense of community that exists that even a private letter to Philemon can also be seen as a public letter addressing the group as well.

## **Acts 2:42-47**

The disciples in Acts 2:42-47 gave a perfect picture of a biblical community. They were passionate about God, cared about each other had the desire to grow in their knowledge of God and above all they had a passion for reaching the lost. This is the ultimate design for life that should exist among a community of believers. “These verses contain the major components of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 106.

the dynamic life of this first congregation the apostles' teaching, fellowship, worship, prayer, service, and evangelism.”<sup>10</sup> God used these men and women to impact the world.

### **Matthew 18:15-20**

In this Scripture, one can observe the characteristics of a family or household. The church as seen in Acts 2 was accountable to each other in all aspects of their existence. In the book of Matthew, the inner workings of relationships are described with the challenges that come with it. These kinds of scenarios outlined in this text can be practiced efficiently in a smaller group where members are intimate as opposed to bigger crowds.

### **Acts 17:6**

“When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, ‘these men who have upset the world have come here also.’” The strategy of the apostles in multiplying turned the world upside down as mentioned in Acts 7:6. The rate at which they multiplied is attributed to the fact that they met in homes, which had great potential to expand quickly. The closeness of the people made it possible to minister to each other in a way that could have been difficult to achieve in a large setting.

### **Acts 1:8**

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Christianity was never intended to be stationary. The followers of Jesus were promised power from the Holy Spirit, which was to enable them to go to every corner of the world with the gospel. The purpose of the Holy Spirit was the power to witness. Dennis Gaertner

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<sup>10</sup> S. J. Lawson “The Priority of Biblical Preaching: An Expository Study of Acts 2:42-47.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158, no. 630 (2001): 198-217. *New Testament Abstracts*, EBSCOhost .200.

notes, “Wherever disciples of Jesus become distracted from their witness for him the power is drained away.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Romans 16:23**

“Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.” This text is just an example of the number of house churches that existed during the early church. The reference of Gaius as host of the church would suggest that the church met at his house.

### **John 1:14**

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Jesus became flesh so He could connect with humanity. His followers are expected to connect with the people they intend to reach. This can only happen if followers of Christ go to the people where they are and present the gospel to them.

### **1 Peter 2:4-6**

“And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture” The church is compared to the building of a spiritual house. This analogy gives the idea of every church member being part of God’s plan as seen in this text. Each one is valuable and has a role to play in building up the kingdom of God.

### **Colossians 1:28**

“We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so

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<sup>11</sup> Dennis Gaertner, *Acts*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), Ac 1:4–8.

that we may present every man complete in Christ.” The idea in this text is that believers are mouthpieces of God telling everyone about the gospel with the intention of having everyone matured in Christ. “For it is through the teaching and warning of every man that the proclamation of Christ is carried out.”<sup>12</sup> The gospel is not for a select few or a particular location; it is meant for all to proclaim.

### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” In His design for His Church, Jesus covered every aspect of the Church to ensure growth and unity. He gave leadership gifts so that the body of Christ will be built and equipped for ministry. Believers in the Church are like parts of the human body with each member playing a role in the overall building of the Church.

### **Hebrews 4:15**

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” Through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, He took upon himself the nature of man but maintained his deity. He identified with man without compromising His identity. Believers are to identify with the people they present or intend to introduce the gospel without being a hindrance themselves to the power of the gospel in the lives of their hearers.

### **Acts 16:13**

“And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the

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<sup>12</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 87.

women who had assembled.” This text further supports the fact that God is not too particular about where his children meet to worship or learn about Him. A meeting takes place by the riverside. This is evidence of the promise of God’s presence wherever two or three meet in His name as found in Matthew 18:20.

### **Summary**

The passages above provide insight into the intentions of God in regard to salvation and the role of believers in telling others about Jesus Christ. The New Testament church has house churches located in strategic locations to have the maximum effect in reaching as many people as possible. The work of proclaiming the gospel was not left for a select few, but it was the responsibility of every follower of Jesus Christ. It can also be observed that the work of making disciples was not ~~was not~~ of a particular gender, it was for both men and women to do as laborers of Christ. The above scriptures also present a model of a community. Everyone showed concern and care for each other. The author is, therefore, convinced that the Bible presents enough evidence and support to plant, sustain, and empower house churches to take the gospel to places that would take either many years or be impossible for the traditional church to reach.

## CHAPTER TWO: NEW TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDING OF HOUSE CHURCH

### **Introduction**

Through the pages of the Bible, the reader is exposed to God's plan of restoring man to his original image through the person of Jesus Christ. John MacArthur in his book *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully* puts it this way, "from the opening pages of scripture; the stage is set for the drama of redemption."<sup>1</sup> To have a better understanding of what God has been up to for ages, one has to carefully look behind the curtain that the word of God opens for all who search its sacred pages. This knowledge will set the stage for humankind to understand God's agenda for the sinner. In this chapter, this author will focus on how God through Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit worked with men and women in the New Testament to establish the church and how the church became a tool in carrying out the mission of God, which is the redemption of sinners.

### **Jesus: The Initiator of the Church**

In his determination to restore man, God unveiled His master plan in the person of Jesus Christ. "So, the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son" (John 1:14). It is interesting to note that, Jesus came to live among people and the world that He

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *Evangelism: How to Share the Gospel Faithfully*, The John MacArthur Pastors' Library (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 22



created. He was no ordinary person walking the earth. In the life of Jesus, God is seen reconciling a lost world to Himself through a unique relationship with those He came to save.

Jesus Christ through His mission on earth prepared His followers who would, in turn, form a new community (church) that would carry on with His redemptive work to the ends of the earth. His message and teachings cut through racial, gender, national, religious, and social lines. The apostle Paul points out that, “Christ is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, supreme over all who rise from the dead. So, he is first in everything” (Colossians 1:18). This same thought by Paul is echoed in his letter to the church in Ephesus, “God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church” (Ephesians 1:22). Jesus does not just have authority over the church; he is also the intercessor and mediator of his people (Hebrews 2:17). In addition to his divine leadership of the church, Jesus is also the administrator of the church. He guides the affairs of the church, and it is, therefore, essential that the church has a special relationship with him as its leader and guide. The church, in essence, follows the agenda of Jesus Christ.

Jesus had a master plan for missions, and He was the savior of the fallen human race. Robert Coleman observes, “The validity of the Gospel rests on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> Coleman goes on to note, “If he were not the incarnate person of God in the flesh, then our faith would be in vain; but because he is the Son of God, then all he said and did has eternal significance. We must be clear at this point.”<sup>3</sup> The disciples were clear on their message and mandate.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Coleman, *The Heart of the Gospel: The Theology behind the Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 92.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Between the time of His resurrection and ascension, Jesus prepared His disciples to take the gospel beyond the Jewish nation. They had moved from being recipients of the gospel to bearers.

### **Early Church Model in the New Testament**

To have a better understanding of the early church model, one must first examine the method set by Jesus in His ministry. The book of Mark provides some exciting accounts of the ministry of Jesus which took place in homes. Most of these teachings and healing were done in Capernaum where Jesus seems to have spent much time ministering. Roger W. Gehring in his book *House Church and Mission*, notes, “The five historically reliable verses (Mark 1:29, 33; 2:1; 3:20; 9:33) clearly demonstrate that Jesus’ healing and teaching ministry took place in and around the house of Peter in Capernaum.”<sup>4</sup> Another gospel writer, Matthew also supports the fact that Jesus spent much time in Capernaum performing miracles. “And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead. For if the miracles I did for you had been done in wicked Sodom, it would still be here today” (Matthew 11:23). Capernaum seems to be a strategic town for most of the ministry of Jesus, notably the house of Peter.

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<sup>4</sup> Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (S.I.: Baker Academic, 2009), 37.

Gehring further points out that, "...in calling Peter as his follower, Jesus gained the head of a household and with him the entire household for his cause, a household that was then available to him as an operational base for his missional outreach."<sup>5</sup> If this is the case, then one can conclude that Peter was not just a disciple but a strategic partner in the ministry of Jesus where He provided a launching pad for reaching others. Apart from Peter's home in Capernaum, Gehring pointed out that there were other "sedentary followers of Jesus,"<sup>6</sup> who played similar roles to Peter's house in Capernaum. Some of these homes might have been used briefly; however, the fact remains that Jesus used homes as a place to meet the average person who was open to His unique methods of teaching eternal truths. Below are a few instances where Jesus met in homes of others to minister.

Matthew 9:9-13, Jesus invited to the house of Matthew for a party.

Luke 19:1-10, Jesus visits the home of Zacchaeus.

Matthew 8:14-17, Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law and other sick people.

Luke 5:17-20, Jesus teaching in a house and heals a man lowered through the roof by his friends.

The Church was to have an impact where people lived, and it was in the community that this impact was most felt. Jesus impacted his community and trained his disciples to have the same impact in the community where they lived. The early Church was a unique group of people. Through the gospel, all barriers that separated people were broken down, and God's ultimate purpose for the sinful race was achieved. The Apostle Paul puts it this way,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 41

<sup>6</sup> Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission*, 43.

For Christ, himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people *something unheard of and strange* when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law *which was unique to the Jews* with its commandments and regulations *ceremonial laws*. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups *the birth of the church, the body of Christ* (Ephesians 2:14-15 italics supplied).

The church of the New Testament challenged and changed the concept of Jewish nation being the only chosen people of God and opened the doors for others to become new members of this new community. This new group demonstrated the unity of all believers in the way they interacted with each other and God. Commenting on the uniqueness of the early Church, Francis Chan in his book *Multiply* notes, “There is something so attractive and intriguing about this first group of believers. Not only was the birth of this group miraculous, the way they began to live together and interact was something the world had never seen.”<sup>7</sup> Men and women became passionate to share their new-found faith in the risen Savior with anyone who would listen. The message of the early believers was as powerful as the person behind the message.

### **Holy Spirit: The Power of the Church**

In his book, *B Paradigm: An Early Church Growth Model*, Lennox Zamore points out that, "The Holy Spirit birthed the church and orchestrated the Gospel; therefore, we cannot advance the Gospel with human ingenuity or strength. It all comes from the Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, *Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C Cook, 2012), 291.

<sup>8</sup> Lennox Zamore, *B Paradigm: An Early Church Growth Model (Paradigm Series) (Volume 1)* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 2.

success of the spreading of the gospel is attributed to the central role the Holy Spirit played through the lives of the believers. The apostles were endowed with gifts and power on the day of Pentecost which in turn propelled their evangelistic efforts ensuring great success. On the impact of the Holy Spirit, Robert Coleman notes, “It is only the Spirit of God who enables one to carry on the redemptive mission of evangelism.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, the gospel has no impact without the backing of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who share and receive. Coleman goes on to add that, “It was by his virtue that he preached the gospel to the poor, healed the brokenhearted, proclaimed deliverance to the captive, opened the eyes of the blind, cast out demons, and set at liberty those who were oppressed.”<sup>10</sup> The Holy Spirit gave men and women the courage to face all threats and opposition as they carried along their mandate to spread the gospel and perform miracles. The Holy Spirit powers the mission!

Darrell L. Guder points out that, “Missional communities are called to represent the compassion, justice, and peace of the reign of God. The distinctive characteristics of such communities is that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains them.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, nothing can be done without support and assistance from the Holy Spirit.

Klaus Dieter Issler in his book, *Living into the Life of Jesus* observes, “The Holy Spirit’s ministry is an important link and transition between Jesus’ life and ministry and the believer’s life and ministry.”<sup>12</sup> The ministry of Jesus Christ was fruitful because of the power of the Holy

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<sup>9</sup> Robert E. Coleman and Billy Graham, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2006), 57.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1998), 142.

<sup>12</sup> Klaus Dieter Issler, *Living Into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2012), 108.

Spirit. Quoting from the prophet Isaiah when he stood in the temple, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free" (Luke 4:18). Issler goes on to note that, "Jesus predominantly relied on divine resources of the Father and the Holy Spirit to accomplish his messianic mission."<sup>13</sup> After completing his messianic mission, Jesus promised his followers the gift of the Holy Spirit who would lead and guide them into all truths and give them the power to continue the work of Jesus Christ (John 14:16-17).

The Holy Spirit provided the keys to ministry (spiritual gifts) to the followers of Christ, and through these gifts, the believers were equipped and empowered to spread the gospel. Peter, in his first epistle, points out the fact that God has gifted believers for ministry; he goes on to provide some guidelines in the use of these gifts:

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another (*since these gifts are given for service from God, believers would have to give an account of how they use these gifts*). Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you (*spiritual gifts should be used boldly because they come from God Himself*). Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ (*the use of these gifts should bring glory to God*). All glory and power to him forever and ever! (*when all is said and done, God should be the one getting all the credit*) Amen (1 Peter 4:10-11 italics supplied).

The believer is equipped to serve the community of God in which he or she is placed. In his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul provides insight into how specific gifts were given so

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 110.

that those who had them would train other believers to serve. This process will, in turn, enrich the lives of the believers causing them to grow spiritually. “So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13). The believer is the tool or vessel that the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish tasks that bring glory to God and grow His kingdom.

In Romans 12:1-8, the apostle Paul shows the application of spiritual gifts to everyday life.

Spiritual Gift	Practical Application
Prophecy	Speak as God gives you faith.
Serving	Serve people well without being selfish.
Teaching	Teach others biblical truths.
Encouragement	Be an encouragement to others in words and actions.
Giving	Give generously.
Leadership	Take assignment seriously.
Kindness	Gladly show kindness without hesitation.

Table 2: Romans 12:6-8 Spiritual Gifts and Practical Application

The natural talents of the believer can never replace the influence of the Holy Spirit. God desires to reconcile sinners to himself through the messianic work of Jesus Christ, and it is the Holy Spirit that empowers believers to be partners in this great initiative of God. J Todd Billings, in his book, *The Word of God for the People of God* points out that, “Through all of these works of the Spirit, we see how God uses the Christian community of the church as a part of the

discernment process of hearing what the Spirit speaks through Scripture.”<sup>14</sup> He further points out that, “Yet the Spirit is not possession of the church; rather, it is the transcendent God who bears witness to God’s Word made manifest in Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup> The church does not get to use the Holy Spirit; it is instead the other way around; the Holy Spirit uses the church.

### **Church: The Gospel in Action**

Millard J. Erickson, in his book, *Christian Theology*, states, “The church is at once a very familiar and a very misunderstood topic.”<sup>16</sup> He goes on to observe that, “it is one of the few aspects of Christian theology that can be observed. For many persons, it is the first point, and perhaps the only point, where Christianity is observed.”<sup>17</sup> Erickson further notes, “He did not adopt as his own an existing nation, but actually created a people for himself.”<sup>18</sup> God was up to something with the creation of humanity.

God has always wanted to use His chosen people (church) to reflect His character and attributes to the world. The Church was established as the agency to call sinners to repentance and reconciliation with God. The apostle Paul echoed the same sentiment in his letter to the church in Ephesus, “He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups” (Ephesians 2:15). In the redemptive work of Christ, a new

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<sup>14</sup> J Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 133

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>16</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2013), 950.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 950.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 958.



community was born; the church came into existence. This new community was to be the light of God shining in a dark world. "In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:16). Through the activities of the church, under the leadership of Jesus Christ, the world sees what God's family looks like and in return glorify God. The church has one purpose, and it is to spread the gospel. The apostles witnessed about the risen savior Jesus Christ and the message they shared inspired a vision for all believers across the globe.

The Church, therefore, becomes a place where believers are empowered and encouraged to do ministry. The Church only prospers as it creates an atmosphere for its members to grow and mature in their service to Christ and others. The church is "the gospel made visible"<sup>19</sup> according to Mark Dever. The church was established to be on the move showcasing God love to the world. Doyle Andrew refers to the church as a missional community, he notes, "The missional community is focused on serving. It is figuring out how to be a neighbor to its surrounding community. As they serve, people will become interested in what is happening, and so they may ask or wonder."<sup>20</sup> The gospel is connected to the services rendered by those who share it. The church cannot ignore the felt needs and just focus on the preaching the word. In his preaching to the crowd, Jesus would also feed his listeners. The early church saw the need to interact with the community, meet needs and share the good news about salvation through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*, 9marks (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Academic, 2012), 18.

<sup>20</sup> C Andrew Doyle, *Small Batch: Local, Organic, and Sustainable Church* (San Bernadino, California: Xlibris Corp, 2016), 56.

## The Acts of the Apostles

The Holy Spirit gave the increase, and these new believers met in small groups for prayer and fellowship. The believers formed a community within the community, and people took notice of them. Commenting on the Christians relationship to the community, Lennox Zamore notes in his book *B Paradigm*, “Christianity is not to be lived out in a temple. It is to be lived out in the community.”<sup>21</sup> The disciples lived in the community, and their daily interaction with people from all walks of life brought about transformation and growth to the body of Christ. Their approach was entirely different from what the norm was.

After the ascension of Jesus and the instruction to wait for the Holy Spirit, Luke points out that, “When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying” (Acts 1:13). In Acts 1:15, the number of believers recorded was 120 and after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Peter’s address to the crowd, “Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all” (Acts 2:41). The church was growing at an astounding rate, and Luke further points out that, “each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The question that comes up at this point is where did all these new believers meet? Peter Lampe in his book, *From Paul to Valentinus* states “There was no community-owned real estate in the first two centuries. The real estate used by Christians lay divided in different private hands.”<sup>22</sup> If this is the case, then the only viable option to meet was in the homes of the believers who had space for meeting. This author is very familiar with this meeting arrangement as it is common for many startup

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<sup>21</sup> Lennox Zamore, *B Paradigm: An Early Church Growth Model (Paradigm Series) (Volume 1)* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 181.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 372.

immigrant churches in the United States to usually meet in the home of someone until there are the means to transition to a larger or permanent place of worship. Lampe further notes, “The worship took place in private dwellings, in the homes of Christians who had room to assemble a house community.”<sup>23</sup> This would explain Luke’s account that “They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity” (Acts 2:46). Doug Redford further gives more insight into Acts 2:46:

The apostles made it their practice day after day to go right back to the temple courts where they had been arrested and continue teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ—the very "crime" for which they had been seized and beaten. In addition, they continued to instruct believers from house to house. Thus, whether in public or private settings, regardless of the cost, they never stopped telling others about Jesus. Their unconquerable faith and devotion continue to challenge us today.<sup>24</sup>

According to Neil Cole, the church is “what occurs every day of the week in between as believers relate to their Lord, each other, and the people around them.”<sup>25</sup> The church was to have impact in the lives of ordinary people going about their daily affairs, and what a better place to find them than their homes. They were actively engaged in the mandate of their master Jesus to “go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). The actions of the apostles in Acts laid out a pattern for the believers in the New Testament.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 372.

<sup>24</sup> Doug Redford, *The New Testament Church: Acts-Revelation*, vol. 2, Standard Reference Library: New Testament (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Pub., 2007), 32.

<sup>25</sup> Neil Cole and Phil Helfer, *Church Transfusion: Changing Your Church Organically--From the Inside Out* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 197.

## Descriptive Figures of the Church

The New Testament uses several descriptive figures to describe the Church. For this project, this author will focus on three. These descriptions provide some insight in the understanding of the different roles and expectations God has for His Church.

### People of God (1 Peter 2:9-11)

The “People of God” description has some background in the Old Testament. “I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt” (Exodus 6:7). Todd Billings notes, “The books of the Bible are not just “addressed to” ancient Israel or the early church. Through Scripture, the Spirit addresses all of God’s people, not just the original hearers.”<sup>26</sup> Luke echoes this thought in Acts, “. . . God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people for himself” (Acts 15:14). The New Testament indicates that the Church did not come about by the will of man, God did the choosing. “You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name” (John 15:16). Just like His Old Testament people were called to be a “kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6), His chosen people in the New Testament and today have the same calling, “for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

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<sup>26</sup> J Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 61.

## Household of God (Ephesians 2:19)

Walter A. Elwell points out that, “In biblical times a household included father, mother(s), children, grandparents, servants, concubines, and sojourners.”<sup>27</sup> So when one describes the Church as a household, it portrays a family setting with relatives living together or having something in common. “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). Paul Minear in his book *Images of the Church in the New Testament* states, “Because of this collocation of figures, the body image retained its gospel function of describing what God had done in fulfilling his covenants of promise to Israel by enabling strangers to live as citizens in his one household.”<sup>28</sup> The Gentile believers who had accepted the gospel and joined the church were not alienated from God; they were now fellow citizens like anyone else.

Thomas C. Oden in his book *Life in the Spirit*, points out that, “The order required for a well-functioning economy or household is not an end in itself, but a means to peace, love, relative justice, and concord—values best attained when each member of the household is functioning optimally in behalf of the whole, not self-assertively in behalf of individual interest (Eph. 2:19–22).”<sup>29</sup> The success of this church household is built upon each member unselfishly contributing to the community with their spiritual gifts, and resource and anything short of total commitment are seen as hindering the work of the Holy Spirit as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).

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<sup>27</sup> Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Household,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1007.

<sup>28</sup> Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black, John T. Carroll, and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 235–236.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology, Vol. III* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 295.

### Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27)

The “Body of Christ” description is only mentioned in four books – Romans, 1 Corinthians, Colossians, and Ephesians. The apostle Paul states, “And God placed all things under his (*Jesus*) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his (*Jesus*) body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22,23 italics supplied). The Church is made up of sons and daughters who have been received into fellowship, a community, with each other through the merits of Jesus Christ. Commenting on the body of Christ, Paul Minear in his book *Images of the Church in the New Testament* states, “This use of the term “body” also underscored the identity between the people-creating work of Jesus Christ and the people-empowering work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>30</sup> Minear further states that, “The life of the body is characterized in a correspondingly free fashion; it lives as body by its subjection to Christ’s authority, by co-operating with his desire to present it in glorious perfection, by full acceptance of this mysterious union, by men treating one another as members of his body.”<sup>31</sup> This world is divided along racial, ethnic, and geographical lines, but, in contrast, the body of Christ serves as a visible community of one people in different parts of the world irrespective of race, creed, status, and gender.

### Assembly (Ekklesia) (Acts 19:32,41)

Another description of the Church in the New Testament is “assembly.” This assembly did not exist in a vacuum, and it was an intentional design by the will of God. Davis observes, “Christianity is not merely a set of buildings or documents but living persons spanning nations, cultures, and vast epochs of history.”<sup>32</sup> The work of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost set in motion

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<sup>30</sup> Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, 177.

<sup>31</sup> Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, 219.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 283.

a more organized group leading into the selection of deacons and prioritizing the work of the spreading the gospel (Acts 6:1-7). Oden makes this observation, “*Ekklēsia* denotes both the church as a whole and the local assembly of the whole church. A local or individual church is a company of those who are united in any given place in faith in Jesus Christ for worship, proclamation, and service in Christ.”<sup>33</sup> Ed Silvano, in his book *Ekklesia*, interestingly points out that “The New Testament examples of church are vastly different from the contemporary notion that it is a place where members go, usually once a week. Back then, the church always referred to *people*, never to buildings, and it was made up of individuals who operated 24/7.”<sup>34</sup> This understanding is vital because many unfortunately tie church and the Christian experience to a physical location and that is precisely what this project is about; changing that concept within the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist community.

Ed Silvano provides some insight into the term *ekklesia*;

The word that is translated assembly in this instance is the same one rendered church elsewhere in the New Testament. *Ekklesia* refers to the crowd twice, and a third time to the court itself, showing that the term was employed to describe a body of people assembled to conduct government business. In fact, when the town clerk, “dismissed the assembly [*ekklesia*]” amidst warnings of illegality (Acts 19:41), the same noun translated assembly in that verse is translated church 112 times elsewhere in the New Testament.<sup>35</sup>

Ed Silvano, further points out that, “Jesus deliberately chose the darkest spiritual place in Israel to unveil that two most fundamental revelations about Himself. First, His divinity—that He

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 282.

<sup>34</sup> Ed Silvano, *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Instrument for Global Transformation* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Chosen, 2017), 21.

<sup>35</sup> Ed Silvano, *Ekklesia*., 24.

is the Christ (the Messiah), the son of the living God. And second, His Ekklesia, which He designed to prevail against the forces of evil entrenched in government (Ceasar), idolatry (the god Pan) and the devil himself (the Gates of Hades).”<sup>36</sup> The church (ekklesia) is grounded in Christ, and He is the divine leader.

### **New Testament House Churches (Meeting Places)**

Before his conversion on the Damascus road, “Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison” (Acts 8:3).

#### Mary’s House Church

“When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer” (Acts 12:12). After he was miraculously freed from prison, Peter went to the house where the believers had met and were praying. The fact that he knew where to find the other believers indicated that Mary’s house was a usual place of worship for the believers.

#### Lydia’s House Church

“When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town” (Acts 16:40).

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 41.



### Troas House Church

“On the first day of the week, we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting” (Acts 20:7-8).

### Priscilla and Aquila’s House Church

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus... Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home” (Romans 16:3,5).

### Nympha’s House Church

“Please give my greetings to our brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church that meets in her house” (Colossians 4:15).

### Philemon and Apphia’s House Church

This letter is from Paul, a prisoner for preaching the Good News about Christ Jesus, and from our brother Timothy. I am writing to Philemon, our beloved co-worker, and to our sister Apphia, and to our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the church that meets in your house” (Philemon 1,2).

## **Summary**

In this chapter, the active involvement of the Godhead in missions has been examined. God has from the beginning of life on earth, been working with humankind to form a community that would reflect His image and character. After the nation of Israel failed to live up their calling, Jesus Christ came, lived and set an example for His followers the importance of taking the message of salvation to those in darkness. Backed by the Holy Spirit, the early church was equipped and guided to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ to all humanity.

The house church model in the New Testament offered transformation of the individual and it is not surprising that the church grew rapidly. The Holy Spirit influenced ordinary men and women to do extraordinary things among God's people.

The Columbus All Nations Seventh-day Adventist Church (CANSDA) has a unique opportunity to model the early church, their evangelism approach among the Rwandese Adventist community living in Columbus. The house church model in the New Testament will be a perfect fit as it will address some of the logistics challenges that are faced by this group of refugees. In the next chapter, the Rwandese community will be examined, and data from surveys and how they impact the CANSDA will be discussed. This background info will lead to setting up an active house church network among the Rwandese.

## CHAPTER 3: RWANDESE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST IN COLUMBUS

### **History of CANSDA**

The Columbus All Nations Seventh-day Adventist Church (CANSDA) was founded in September of 2009. The need for this church plant came about as a result of having many Seventh-day Adventist members from the continent of Africa who were not comfortable in predominantly American churches and were looking for a congregation that would provide a familiar environment to express spiritual gifts. CANSDA began predominantly as an African congregation but later evolved into a multi-national and multi-cultural congregation with membership from seventeen countries around the world and is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CANSDA believes it has a responsibility to present Christ to a lost world and also address the holistic (physical, mental and spiritual) nature of humanity. CANSDA is known by the residents of the city of Columbus for its involvement in bringing health and wellness education. The church has partnered with the minority health division of the Columbus Public health in holding regular health screenings and educational events to help citizens of Columbus live healthier, happier and productive lives. In response to the obesity epidemic in the country and in the city of Columbus, especially among children, this church held an annual “Let’s Move Columbus” event. The event promotes an active lifestyle among families with an emphasis on daily physical activities.

CANSDA, like any other Christian denomination is tasked with preaching the everlasting gospel to a dying world. The success of this task is mostly dependent on how well the leadership and members of CANSDA understand the Spiritual factors for growing a healthy church and also taking the gospel to those who for one reason or another would never step foot into a traditional church.

### Multicultural Congregation

CANSDA is currently made up of members representing 17 countries mostly from the African continent. The service is in English; however, provisions are made every weekend to provide translation services in Kinyarwanda for the members from Rwanda who do not speak or understand English. Even though the diversity in the church might appear to be a recipe for disaster, the leadership of CANSDA sees an excellent opportunity to connect with non-Christians whose nationals are represented in the church. CANSDA has also partnered with the other Christian denominations in Columbus to meet the growing needs of refugees. All the churches together feel a sense of duty to the strangers of the city of Columbus and are doing everything to assist them to adapt quickly to the “American culture.” The children of Israel had this warning from God, “Do not take advantage of foreigners who live among you in your land. Treat them like native-born Israelites and love them as you love yourself. Remember that you were once foreigners living in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34). Joni Eareckson Tada in her book *When God Weeps*, notes, “The purpose of life is to live for others. Jesus showed us that.”<sup>1</sup> She goes on to add that, “No man is an Island. We are all connected.”<sup>2</sup> Humankind is interdependent. There should be a sense of responsibility for each

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<sup>1</sup> Joni Eareckson Tada and Steve Estes, *When God Weeps: Why Our Sufferings Matter to the Almighty* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2010), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 102.

other, especially the less privileged. The apostle Paul points out, “For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone” (Roman 14:7, NIV).

### Missional Concept

CANSDA, like other Seventh-day Adventists around the world, have an understanding of who God is, and His desire to redeem humanity. This act of God is done by being able to see through the eyes of God as He sends his followers to the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. CANSDA’s missional concept is tied to the very nature of God who sends those who have accepted His plan of redemption into the world as missionaries bearing the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

### CANSDA’s Vision

Aubrey Malphurs in his book, *The Dynamics of Church Leadership* notes, “Vision is not about reality or what is. Vision is all about our dreams and aspirations or what could be.”<sup>3</sup> With that said, CANSDA has high hopes for the future of the church.

1. The church envisions being a spiritual haven, in creating an environment that is conducive for Christians of all nationalities to grow and use their God-given talents in the service of others as they join small groups that would address and minister to their personal and spiritual needs.
2. The church envisions providing an opportunity for the young people to be trained in various aspects of life as they prepare to lead the church into the future.

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<sup>3</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *The Dynamics of Church Leadership*, ed. Warren W. Wiersbe, Ministry Dynamics for a New Century (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 149.

3. The church envisions getting every member grounded in the Word of God through creative and cultural sensitivity as sound biblical sermons are preached from the pulpit every weekend.
4. The church envisions having a larger facility that will fit the growing needs of both the church and immigrant community. This facility will serve as a community center for immigrants where wedding, funerals, birthdays and Independence Day celebrations will be held.

### SWOT Analysis

Internal Strengths	External Strengths
<b>Strengths</b>	
Diverse Population	Positive publicity
Most first-time guests can immediately identify with someone from their country.	Non-church members speak of the welcoming and sense of belonging in the church.
<b>Weaknesses</b>	
Poor time management on the part of members	Discouragement to first time guest.
Lack of committed ministry leaders.	Short-term community outreach projects.
<b>Opportunities</b>	
The average age of membership is between 25-30 years.	Located in the most diverse part of city.
The youth rightly trained will lead the church into the future.	The church within walking distance to most apartment and shopping areas.

<b>Threats</b>	
Cultural clashes and misunderstanding due to diversity.	Adverse publicity and potential rejection of gospel.

Table 3: SWOT Analysis

**Evangelism**

CANSDA believes in the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and the church has to spread the gospel and loving message of Jesus Christ to a world filled with apostasy and all evil vices. "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So, pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields" (Matthew 9:37-38). The love of God for humanity mandates every believer to reach out to the those without the gospel. In the case of CANSDA, this writer has observed over the years that, in as much the gospel is being preached every week to the members, there seems to be a disconnect between a particular group within the church. Moreover, it has become necessary to come up with a strategy to not just present the gospel to them in ways that they would understand but also equip them to become God's missionaries in the city of Columbus and America at large.

**Target Group**

The target group for the house church project is the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist community living on the north side of the city of Columbus. This group has suffered one of the worst crimes against humanity on the African continent. Julia Sanders in her book *Rwandan Genocide* notes, "There are few crimes more heinous than murder, ending an innocent human life is an unforgivable act that's consequences cannot be taken back. And yet, there are occasions

where murder is taken to a new extreme in the form of genocide.”<sup>4</sup> Within 100 days, thousands of lives were lost, and survivors ended up fleeing to neighboring countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Uganda) and ended up living in refugee camps. According to accounts from the CANSDA members from Rwanda, many of them gave birth to most if not all the teenage children in refugee camps.

### Choosing Columbus Ohio As Home

Columbus Ohio is a very immigrant-friendly city. There are currently two refugee resettlement agencies in Columbus; Us Together and Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS). These agencies are responsible for settling many of the Rwandese Adventist refugees who worship at CANSDA. The first Rwandese Adventist family to worship at CANSDA was in 2012, and this family later brought other Rwandese Adventist families who were either new to the city of Columbus or had been here for some months and had no home church to attend. It is interesting to note that many of the Rwandese Adventist refugees have relocated from other cities within the United States. Some came in from as far as Phoenix, Arizona, Houston, Texas, Des Moines, Iowa, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

This author is privileged to sit on a few boards in the city that serves mostly immigrants and refugees, and the familiar stories heard are that the refugee community in Columbus encourages their friends and family members in refugee camps to find their way to Columbus, Ohio if they ever make it to the United States. The city of Columbus has seen a surge in immigrant and refugee businesses on the north side of the city, and this has been a significant attraction for refugees from other cities. Somali business owner Ahmed O. Haji notes, "Some

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<sup>4</sup> Julia Sanders. *Rwandan Genocide: The Unspeakable Evils of Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Rwanda* (Independently published, 2017), 16-18, Kindle.



refugees or some immigrants have great business skills. So, they got into the business without help of the government, and they flourished,"<sup>5</sup> Haji's observation is a prevailing sentiment of the impact of refugees on the local economy in Columbus. With such environment and opportunities, it is not surprising that many immigrants and refugees move and make the city of Columbus their home.

### **Research Method**

The collecting of information was done through a survey format. Participants were given 15 questions to answer. The survey was distributed to 55 Rwandese Seventh-day Adventists within the city of Columbus. The participants were selected based on their ability to speak and read English. This was necessary to avoid the need to have interpreters or translators for the survey. From the 55 participants, 52 of the responses came back, and only two were excluded for not having all the questions answered. The survey was aimed at finding out about the participants, their assimilation into the city of Columbus, the number of years spent in Columbus, their religious background and finally their willingness to be involved in the idea of a house church project. As an African, this author knows too well the challenges that come with implementing something new or unfamiliar. Commenting on what needs to happen for change to occur, Ed Silvano, in his book *Ekklesia* "Transformation is a process that shifts paradigms so that we can see what we have not seen before, which allows us to do what we have not done yet. And for this, we must be open to change."<sup>6</sup> The house church is going to be a complete paradigm shift

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<sup>5</sup> June Soh "Immigrants, Refugees Revive Depressed Neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio" *Voice of America* September 14, 2017, accessed February 5, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/immigrants-and-refugees-revive-depressed-neighborhood-in-columbus-ohio/4028841.html>

<sup>6</sup> Ed Silvano, *Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Instrument for Global Transformation* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Chosen, 2017), 29.

for many in the target group because what many see as a church is actually a designated building set aside for worship and religious meetings.

### Analysis of Research Answers

#### Age Range

The survey included 50 adults between the ages of 18 and 65 years. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 20. The responders in this age group have a good understanding of the English language and are more integrated into the community as compared to the older ones.

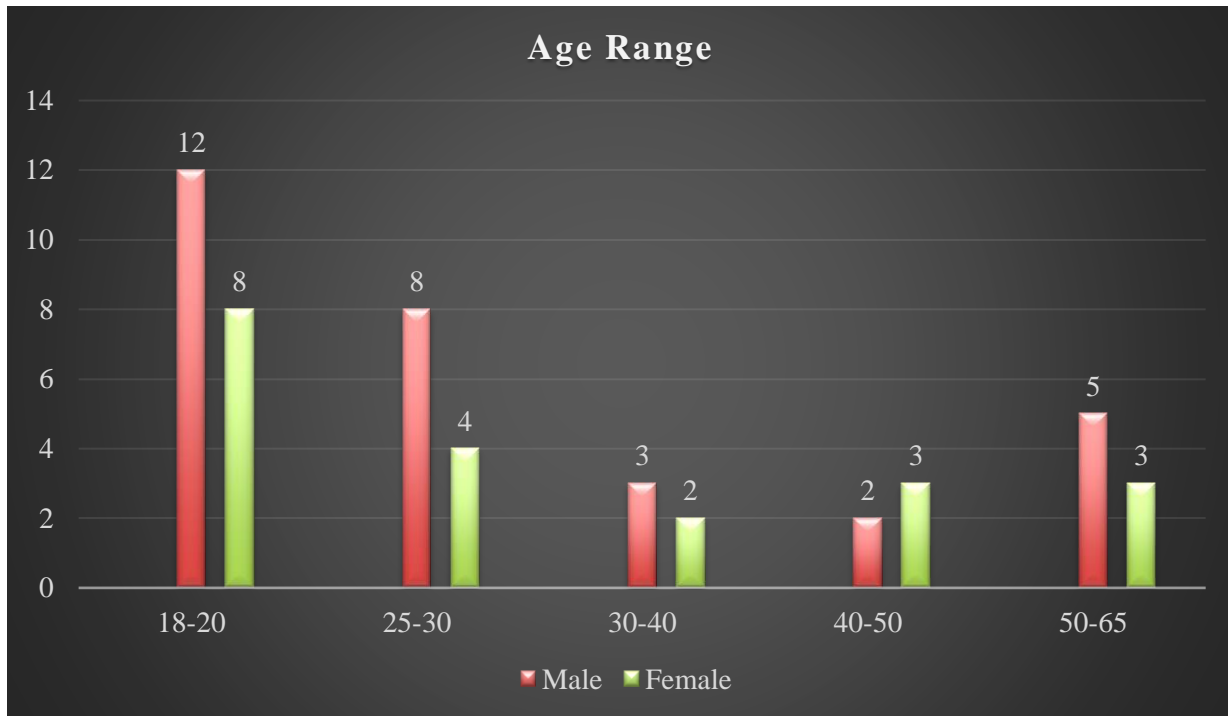


Figure 1: Participants Age Range

As shown in Figure 1, 12 males were ranging between 18 to 20 years compared to 8 women in that age bracket. In the age range of 25-30, there were eight males and four females. The number of participants went down in the higher age bracket ranges. The age ranges of the participants show a large population of young people in the Rwandese community. The average

family in this community is made up of a father, mother, and four children. The children usually include a teenager with younger siblings.

## Gender

One interesting point to note is the number of males that took the survey as opposed to the females. Most families deferred the responsibility of speaking on behalf of the family to the father or the older male child in the home in the absence of the father. In the case of this survey, the numbers were close as an unexpected number of females participated in the survey. This had to do with the fact that many of the females were fluent in both speaking and reading English. Another aspect of this survey was that many of the women who were very reserved when CANSDA first encountered them have not become very outgoing and have a fair command of the English language.

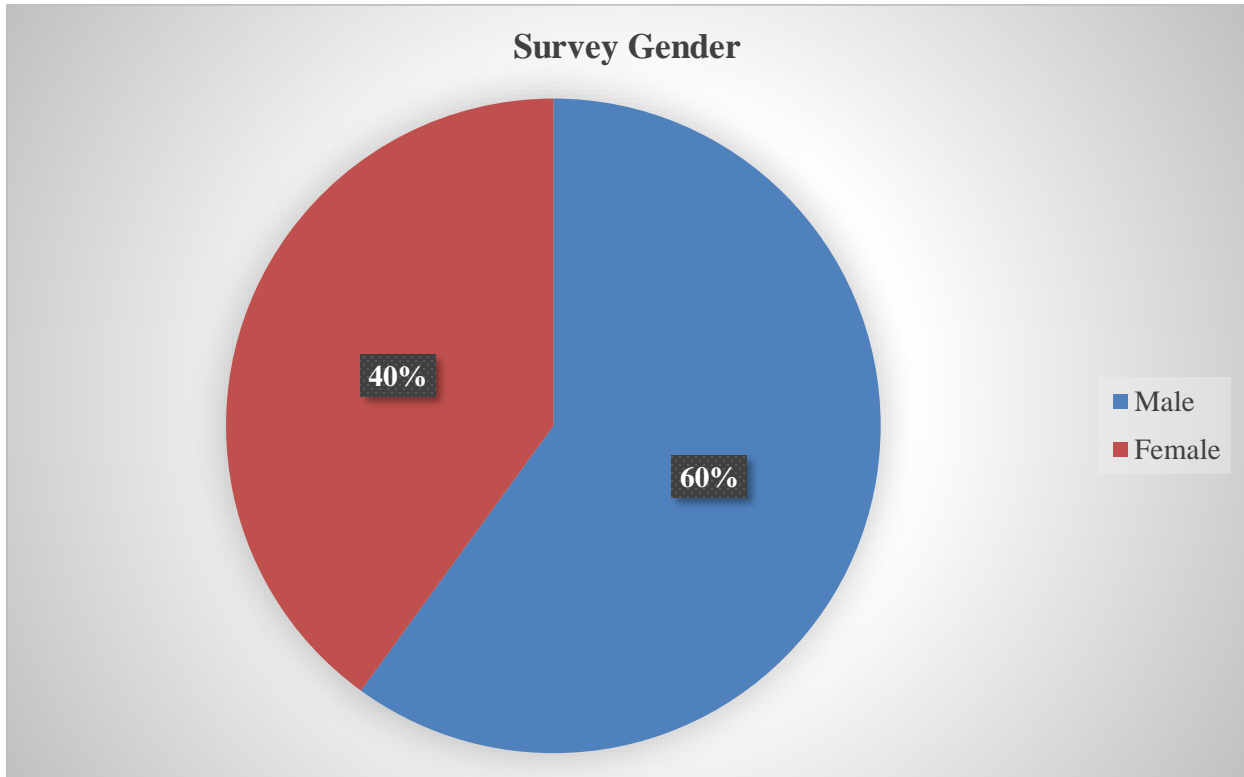


Figure 2: Participants Gender

As shown in figure 2, 30 participants were males (60%), and 20 participants were females (40%).

### Education Level

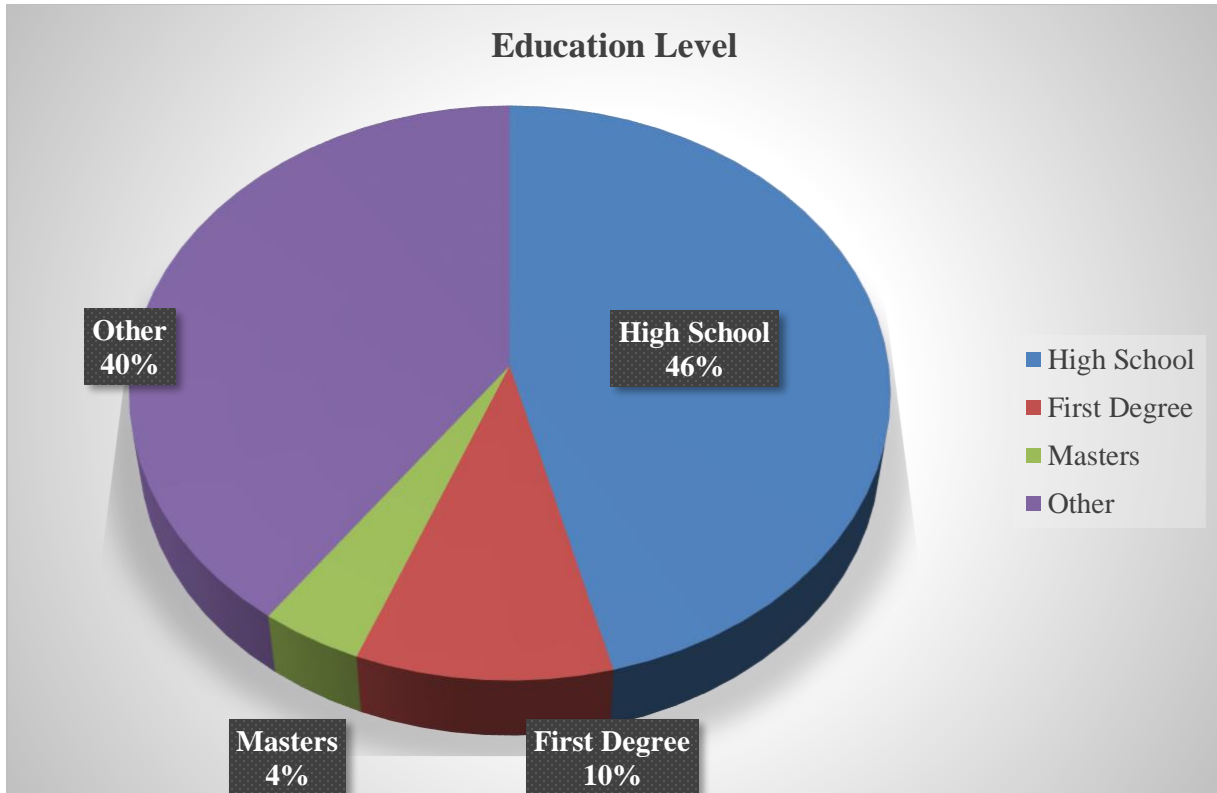


Figure 3: Participants Educational Level

The education attainment of the respondents reflected years of not being in a stable country due to the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda. Most of the respondents had attained an equivalent to a high school diploma. In figure 3, 23 (46%) out of 50 have high school diplomas, 5 (10%) of the respondents received their first degrees after they relocated to the United States, while two had gone on to obtain a master's degree. 20 (40%) of the respondents had some form

of uncompleted high school diploma. The respondents with the least education were more likely to get low paying jobs and in some cases no jobs at all.

#### Number of Years in Columbus

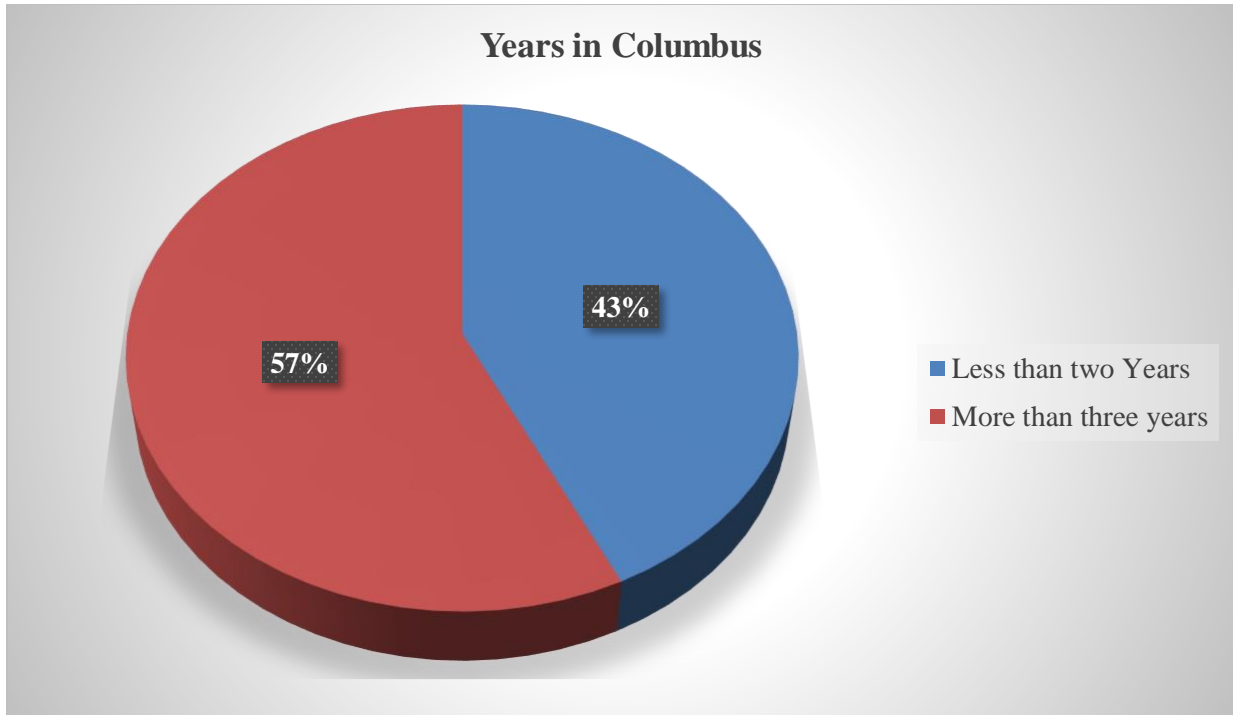


Figure 4: Participants Number of Years in Columbus

The successful assimilation into the American culture by the respondent depended on how long they had been in the country. The longer their presence here, the more they knew their way around and could also serve as mentors for other Rwandese refugees that come into the country. 15 (43%) of the respondents have been in Columbus for less than two years, and 25 (57%) had been in Columbus for more than three years. It is interesting to note that most of the respondents who had been in Columbus for over three years relocated from other American cities, and the reason they gave was the presence of a sizeable Rwandese community in

Columbus and Dayton, Ohio which are just about one hour apart. They had also stated that the support system was very strong in Columbus, and this information was shared in the refugee camps that “if you were lucky to come to America, find your way to Columbus Ohio.”

### Traditional Church Attendance

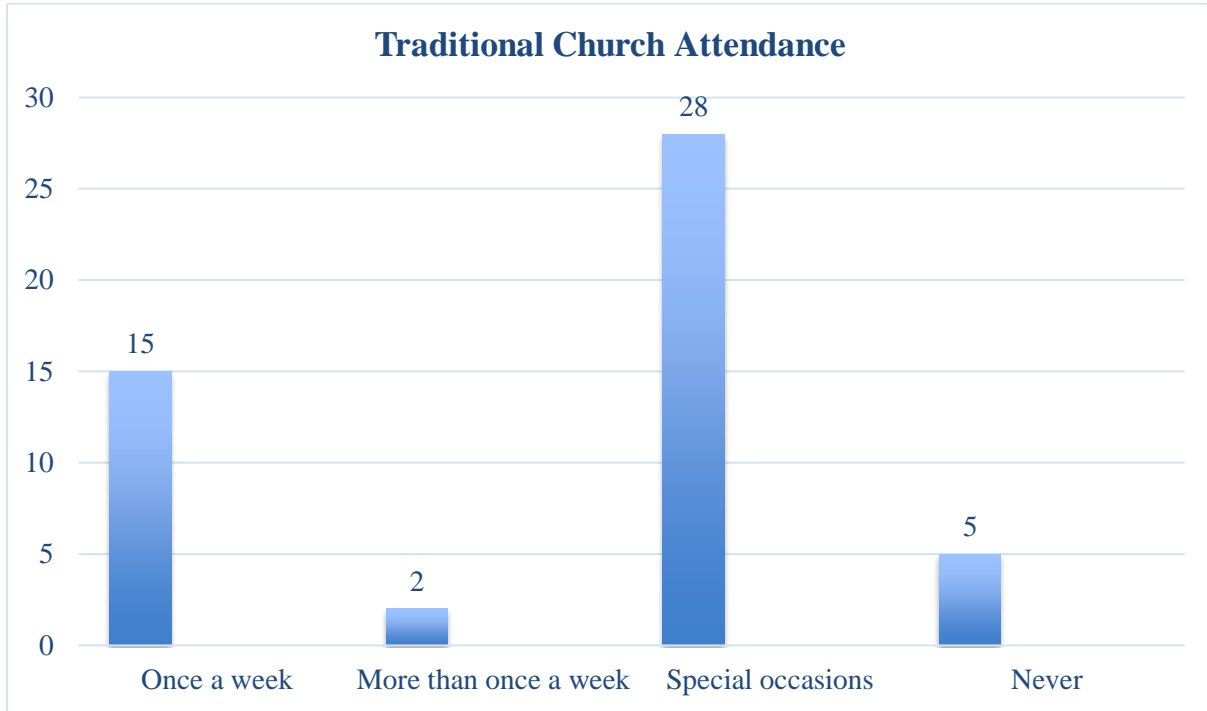


Figure 5: Participants Traditional Church Attendance

When it came to traditional church attendance as shown in figure 5, only 15 of the respondents attended church services once a week. About five never attended any service and 28 only attended services on special occasions (weddings, baby dedication, baptisms, communions, etc.). Two of the respondents, however, stated that they attended services more than once a week. David Olson in his book, *The American Church in Crisis* poses a question that many have asked,

“Should church attendance numbers matter to Christians?”<sup>7</sup> He goes on to provide an answer and some explanation, “Yes, they should. When church attendance declines, fewer people hear the gospel for the first time, take the sacraments, or hear of God's love for them. Fewer marriages are restored. Fewer teenagers find a listening ear.”<sup>8</sup> It is essential to get this group into a community of believers so that the possibilities mentioned above associated with church attendance can be achieved.

### Challenges to Church Attendance

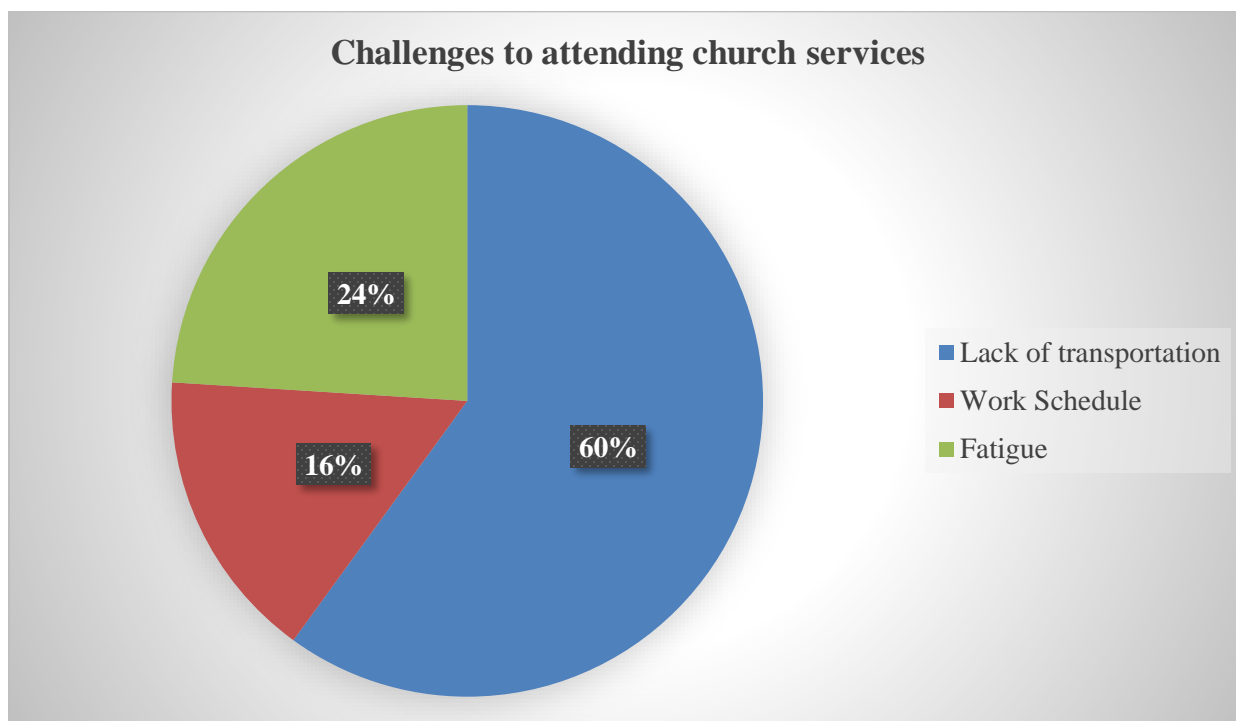


Figure 6: Participants Challenges to Church Attendance

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<sup>7</sup> David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based On a National Database of Over 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, ©2008), 25.

<sup>8</sup> David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis*: 25.

According to information gathered as presented in figure 6, the most prominent challenge to those who did not attend services on a regular basis was the lack of transportation. Many of these families do not own vehicles, and so they either carpool to work or take the bus. 30 (60%) of the respondents had transportation issues, and 8 (16%) of the respondent's work schedule did not allow them to attend church services on a regular basis. 12 of the respondents, however, stated that fatigue was the main issue for them. These could be the older adults who were the sole breadwinners for their families, and a few of them had to work more than one job to keep up with the financial demands of their families. Those who had just a single job worked in warehouses where they perform tasks that only require physical strength. In some homes, the men were the only person working, and the women stayed home and took care of the children.

#### Interest in Planting House Churches



Figure 7: Participants Interest in Planting a House Church



In the spring of 2016, this author began to explore the possibility of establishing a couple of house churches within the Rwandese community. At the time, the concept was foreign to many people especially those within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This author came across the DMin project of Milton Adams<sup>9</sup> also, immediately made contact and invited him to hold a weekend seminar on house churches within the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. In the summer of 2016, members of the church were exposed, some for the first time, to the idea of having a house church which was different from what most people have known for many years. The significant impact of the workshop was theological and biblical support for house churches. From then, a few members began to think about how they could be involved in either hosting or facilitating these meetings.

According to figure 7, the majority of the respondents were highly interested in having a house church. 35 of the respondents were in favor and sighted either their inability to drive or fatigue as their primary reason for wanting this option. Interestingly, many of the respondents in favor also missed having church services in their native language and wanted to experience church as they did in their country or refugee camps.

Five of the respondents were neither for or against the idea, and they felt that worshipping in the house church would slow down their assimilation into the society since worshipping with others once a week was their only way of socializing and having fellowship with people of the same faith from other nationalities. They, however, expressed interest of alternating between the

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<sup>9</sup> Milton Adams, "Developing, Planting, and Multiplying an Adventist House Church Using Principles of Missiology in the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (DMin. Diss., Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2009).

house church and the traditional church. 10 of the respondents, however, were against the idea of a house church as shown in figure 7 above.

### Church Involvement in Native Country

Many of the members of CANSDA were very active in the Adventist churches in their native countries. Some of the members were elders, Bible workers, Sabbath school teachers, musicians, children’s ministries teachers. It is not surprising that many of the Rwandese surveyed fall into these categories. The longer these people stay in America and are not given the opportunity to use their gifts in service in the local church and community, the further they tend to drift away from their faith.

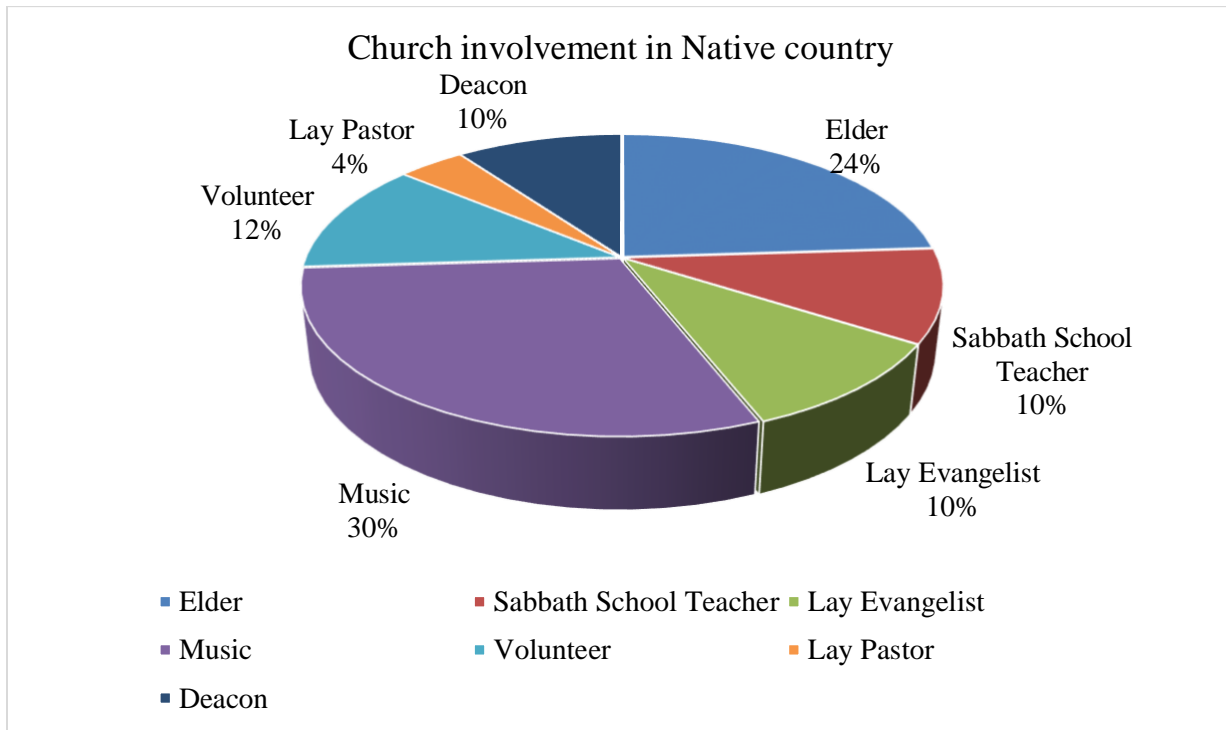


Figure 8: Participants Church Involvement in Native Country

According to figure 8, about 30% (15) of the participants were involved in some form of music ministry in Rwanda before migrating to the United States. 10% (5) were lay evangelists, and 4% (2) were lay pastors. Knowing about the presence of lay pastors and evangelists was an exciting moment when this author was reviewing the responses from the survey. Another leadership advantage from the respondents was the fact that about 24% (12) of them were elders in their native country. The participants are all gifted in various aspects of ministry which will be a blessing to the house church project and the body of Christ at large.

### Personal Witnessing

The early church in Acts grew because the believers “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). These early believers were convicted of the power of the gospel and they, in turn, shared with others with boldness. J. D. Greear in his book *Gospel* states, “we are changed not by being told what we need to do for God, but by hearing the news about what God has done for us.”<sup>10</sup> Sharing the gospel is what every believer in Christ can and should do. “...always be ready to tell everyone who asks you why you believe as you do. Be gentle as you speak and show respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

Knowing about the participant's personal evangelism history is vital to the growth and future discipleship among this group. The success of the house church among the Rwandese Adventist community will be dependent on how they introduce others to the saving power of Jesus Christ by sharing the gospel and their confession stories. Fellowship within the body of

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<sup>10</sup> J. D. Greear, *Gospel* (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Pub. Group, 2011), 64.

Christ has to lead to a transformation of life which is brought about by sharing and receiving the Word of God. " 'You are my witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'and my servant whom I have chosen'" (Isaiah 43:10). Each believer has a personal mission field in which he or she is responsible for witnessing about his or her salvation.

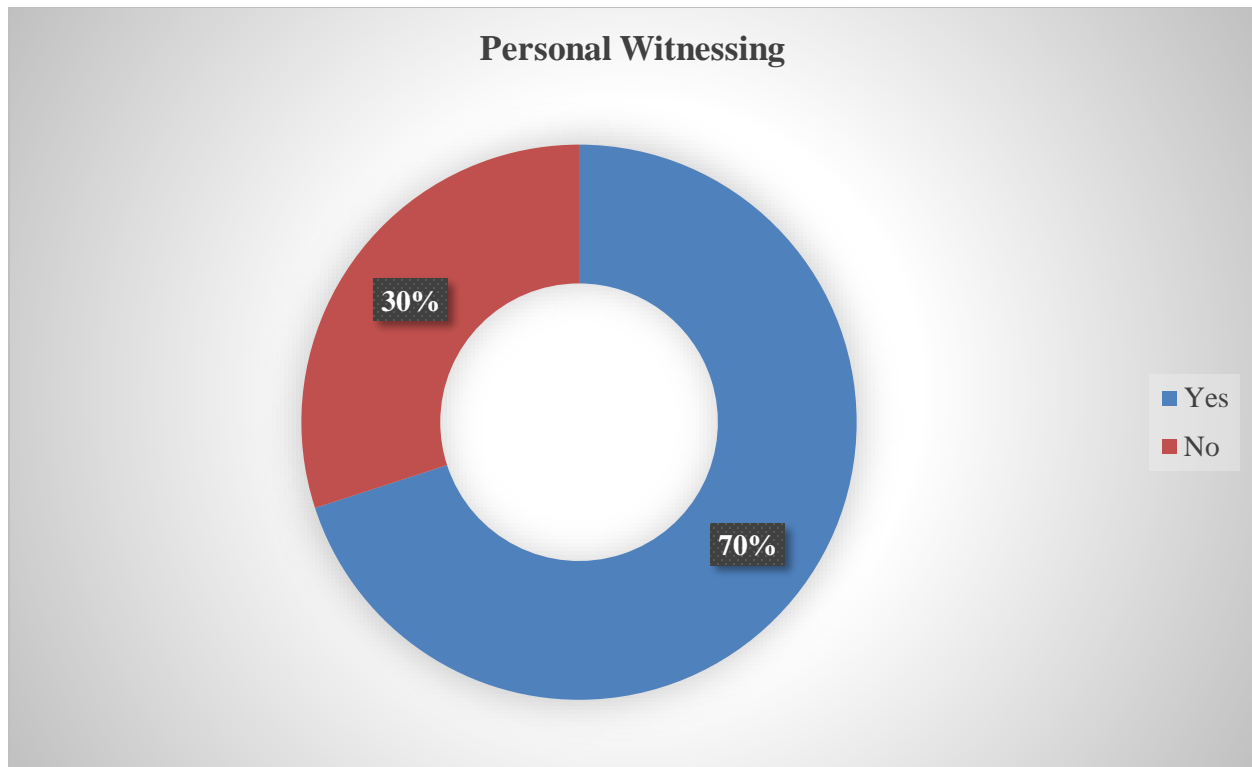


Figure 9: Participants Personal Witnessing Experience

To find out how comfortable the participants were in leading others to Christ, they were asked if they had given any Bible studies to individuals before and figure 9 shows that 70% (35) were involved in giving Bible studies before while 30% (15) had not.

## Leadership Training Opportunity Interest

This author wanted to find out from the survey if any of the participants were interest in receiving leadership training at the local church so that they can in turn train others in their community. Glen Schneiders in the book *Church Planting from the Ground Up* points out that, “Leadership development never happens accidentally.”<sup>11</sup> He goes on to say, “a significant part of the church planter’s job is to provide a healthy environment for leaders to grow within the emerging church.”<sup>12</sup> This author realizes that for CANSDA to sustain the house churches, there has to be an intentional effort to invest in leaders who will lead and help achieve the goals of the group.

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<sup>11</sup> Tom Jones, ed., *Church Planting from the Ground Up*, ed. Tom Jones (Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 2004), 296.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 297.

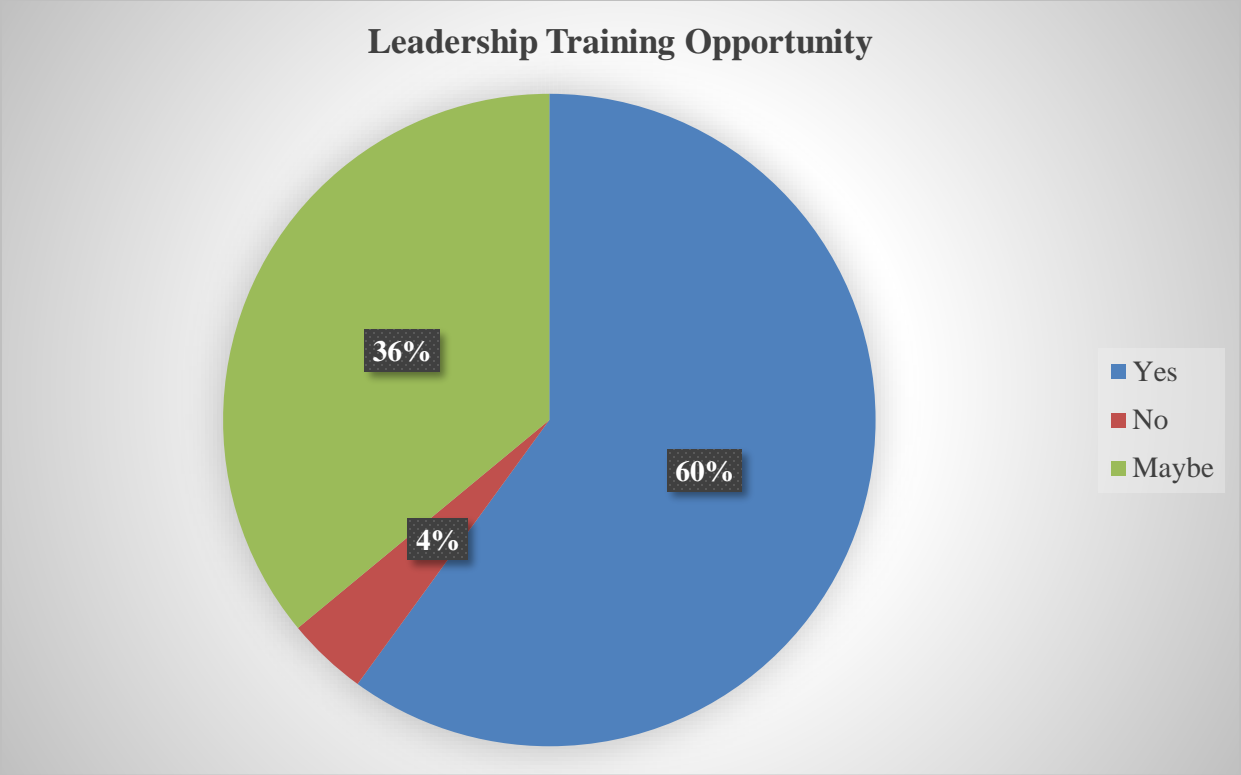


Figure 10: Participants Interest In Leadership Training Opportunity

The results of the survey were very encouraging. 60% of the respondents indicated their willingness to be trained in areas of leadership. Out of the 50 participants, 36% were not sure if they wanted to be trained and 4% said no to leadership training opportunities.

**Interest in Hosting a House Church**

The success of planting house churches within the Rwandese Adventist community depends mainly on finding families to host these gatherings. Any location short of someone's home defeats the purpose of a house church. The living arrangements in the various refugee camps creating a special bond for some of Rwandese Adventist families as they knew each other and shared life at these camps. They also worshipped together in the camps

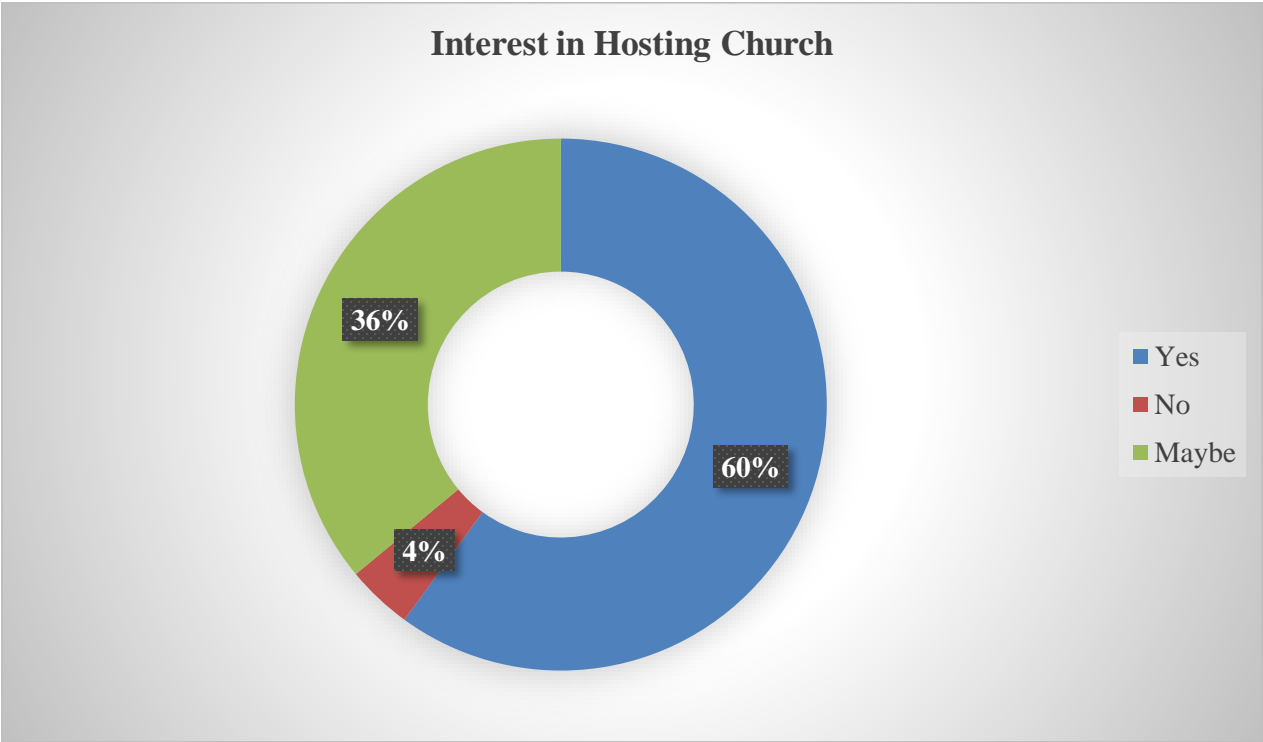


Figure 11: Participant Interest in Hosting a House Church

According to Figure 10, 60% of the participants indicated interest in hosting the church at their home. 36% were not too sure, and 4% said they were not interested in hosting a house church.

**Research Overview**

The information gathered from the participants of the survey gives this author a clear indication of what the general attitude towards a house church is within the Rwandese community taking into consideration their history and current situation. It is also the first step to planting any church. Over 65% of the participants live in the same apartment complex that also houses several refugees and immigrants from other countries. Out of the 30 participants that expressed a desired to host the house church, 20 live in the same apartment complex with some

of them living just a floor above each other. These families, because of their previous relationship in the refugee camps, have formed a similar community in their apartment complex and have a lot in common. They belong to the same denomination, most of their children attend the same schools, and above all, they are all striving to maintain or improve on their relationship with God in a 'strange' or foreign land.

### **Summary**

There is so much one finds out about people when they are given the opportunity to express themselves. This survey has further given insight into the lives of the Rwandese Adventist Community in Columbus and how CANSDA can equip them to reach out to their fellow countrymen and women who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and personal savior.



## CHAPTER 4: PLANTING HOUSE CHURCHES AMONG RWANDESE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST REFUGEES IN COLUMBUS OHIO

### **The Project**

In chapter three, this author discussed the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist community, their relationship to CANSDA and how they ended up in Columbus Ohio. Concerning planting a house church among the Rwandese Adventist community, results from the survey were analyzed which provided an idea of the composition of this group as CANSDA considers planting a house church among them.

This chapter will focus on the house church project itself, providing a step-by-step process on getting the Rwandese house church up and running and how to sustain it over the years.

### Church Planting Trend in Africa

Aubrey Malphurs in his book, *Look Before You Lead: How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture*, notes, “To effectively minister to people in a culture, whether it’s a church or parachurch organization, we must understand culture in general and organizational culture in particular.”<sup>1</sup> He further states, “We will better reach people when we understand their culture and are aware of how it is similar to or vastly different from our own.”<sup>2</sup> Certain conditions need to be met for church planting to be successful. These conditions in most cases are unique to

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<sup>1</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *Look before You Lead: How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 13.

specific locations or group of people. Some background on how church planting in Africa is vital to assist with focusing on the Rwandese Adventist refugees living here in America. David Garrison in his book *Church Planting Movements*, "Today, African Christianity is expressing its patterns and independence from the West."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to give an example of what happened in Uganda, comparing different approaches by two missionary groups:

The 1.1 million Teso people, living in Uganda's Teso Province comprise just over five percent of the nation's population. The gospel first reached Uganda in 1875 with Anglican explorers and missionaries. Since that time, there has been intermittent missionary activity among the Teso for nearly a century. During the early 1980s, Southern Baptists assigned their first missionaries, Harry and Doris Garvin, to the Teso. The couple learned the Teso language well and soon began to find a response among the people. By 1986, about 90 Teso Baptist churches had been started.<sup>4</sup>

The key to success for the Baptist missionaries was their ability to learn the Teso language and identify with the people. This gesture won the natives over, and they were open to the gospel.

Aubrey Malphurs in his book, *Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting* observes, "Church planters work through a process during the conception stage that produces a unique church model that is endemic or relevant to the people of the new church, their particular locale, and their culture."<sup>5</sup> He goes on to state that, "The problem with copying existing church models is that, there is no universal model that fits all churches."<sup>6</sup> In other words, what works in a

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<sup>3</sup> David Garrison. *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Kindle Locations). (Colorado: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 1259-1261 Kindle.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 1264-1269.

<sup>5</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting: A Guide for Starting Any Kind of Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 63.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 63.

particular culture or group might not necessarily work in another even within the same country as seen in the case of the Teso people in Uganda. Malphurs in his book *Look before You Leap: How to Discern and Shape Your Church Culture* points notes, “We live at a time of growing cultural diversity. Consequently, we’re reaching out and ministering the gospel to an increasingly multicultural America. This diversity is seen both within and outside ethnic boundaries.”<sup>7</sup>

The Rwandese Adventist community is not different, and this author knows too well the importance of understanding the target group and developing a model that is specific to their needs. Malphurs mentions a “fourfold process for church planting: developing core values, ministry mission, ministry vision and a strategy.”<sup>8</sup> The Rwandese Adventists in Columbus belong to the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family, and so share the same values and fundamental beliefs. For the house church, scriptural foundations will be stated in conjunction with the set ministry values as held by Seventh-day Adventists in general.

### **Scriptural Foundation and Core Ministry Values**

Malphurs states, “values are like the engine of a ship.”<sup>9</sup> Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as the only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. CANSDA holds these beliefs as the principles of life that God has presented to us through His word.

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<sup>7</sup> Malphurs, *Look before You Lead*, 14–15.

<sup>8</sup> Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts*, 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

## Family

“We love each other because he loved us first” (1 John 4:19). The fabric of society is woven into the family. RHC will show love and care to the individual families that meet every week and also extend that love to the people they meet on a daily basis.

Worship: “Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (Psalm 100:2-3). Humanity was created to worship God. In all that CANSDA does, the ultimate goal is to worship God.

## Spirit-Led

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future” (John 16:3). The importance of the Holy Spirit to the faith of the believer is undisputed. The Christian life is impossible without the Holy Spirit, and He enables us to walk every day in the steps of Jesus Christ.

## Scripture

The Scriptures as the final authority in the lives of CANSDA members is non-negotiable. If God says it, CANSDA believes it, if He commands it, CANSDA will do it. “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right” (2 Timothy 3:16).

## Growing in Christ

CANSDA is committed to empowering and equipping Christ-followers to grow and reflect the image of Christ in their daily lives. “For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So, all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect

the glory of the Lord. Moreover, the Lord who is the Spirit makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

### Evangelism and Outreach

CANSDA is committed to taking advantage of the many opportunities God gives to present the gospel in creative ways backed by the power of the Holy Spirit to those who need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

### **Ministry Mission**

CANSDA intends to develop the Rwandese Adventist to be aware of his or her self-worth in Christ, to train them, and get them ready to be committed to Christ and His mission to bring men out of darkness into His marvelous light.

### **Ministry Vision**

Vision, according to Malphurs is “the fuel the new ministry runs on, not much happens without a vision.”<sup>10</sup> The ministry vision of the Rwandese house church is to grow more disciples and plant more house churches.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 98.

## Prelaunch Phase

Malphurs in his book, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* points out that, “The planting of a church is a process.”<sup>11</sup> He further observes, “The problem is that in the past many people with pure motives have attempted to start a new work but have no idea what they’re doing.”<sup>12</sup> In this light, CANSDA is very careful not to repeat mistakes that many church planters have done. This author is spending much time studying several materials on church planting trends in the United States and applying these principles in the context of the target group in this case. The idea is to keep the process very simple. The less complicated it is, the better it is to execute.

### Leadership Selection and Responsibilities

Tom Jones in his book *Church Planting from the Ground Up*, points out that, “Jesus gathered the core before he ever considered the crowd.”<sup>13</sup> He goes on to point out that, “if you want the crowd to grow, you must spend time consistently with the core.”<sup>14</sup> The leaders of the house church will have the same standards as any other leader that CANSDA has. The leaders, to preserve sound biblical doctrines would be those who had held similar leadership or ministry positions in Rwanda or the refugee camp churches. Being part of the worldwide family of Seventh-day Adventist, it is easier for CANSDA to verify the claims of these leaders and also get

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<sup>11</sup> Aubrey Malphurs and Joe Aldrich, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 23.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Jones, ed., *Church Planting from the Ground Up*, ed. Tom Jones (Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 2004), 229.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 229.

recommendations from their local churches. Tom Jones points out that, “You can teach skills, but you cannot teach integrity.”<sup>15</sup>

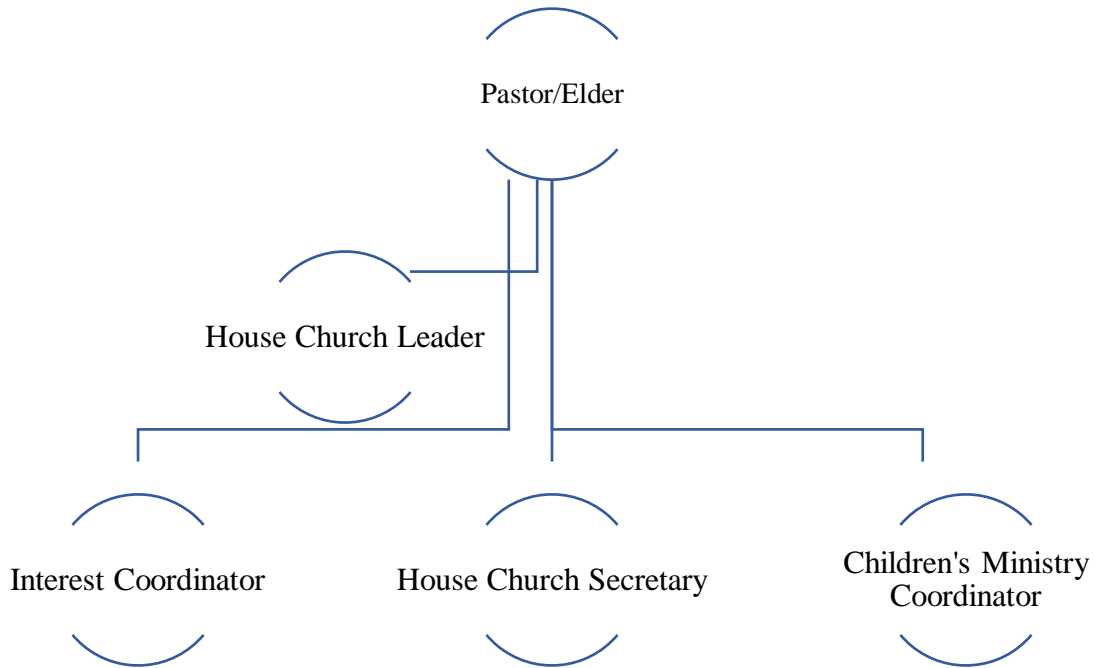


Figure 12: Proposed Leadership Structure

### Responsibilities

#### Pastor

The pastor’s role will be to provide training of the local house church leaders and also provide guidance and counsel in the different matters that may arise in the house church. He will also make sure the mission of the church plant remains on target.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 229.

### Interest Coordinator

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church manual, the role of the interest coordinator is “Keeping an organized list of all interests received by the church.”<sup>16</sup> This individual will keep a list of new guests who show interest in knowing more about the Bible and its teachings.

### House Church Leader

The role of this individual is to serve in the capacity of the elder of the house church. He will be responsible for coordinating the various Bible studies and prayers. He will also work directly with the pastor in getting resources, training and evaluating the progress of the house church.

### House Church Clerk

“Much of the efficient functioning of the church depends on the work of the clerk.”<sup>17</sup> The clerk will keep the membership records, communicate with them, and keep them informed of what is happening with the house church regarding meetings and outreach.

### Children’s Ministries Coordinator

The children’s ministries coordinator is to help through interactive, and age-appropriate Bible studies, develop the faith of the children from birth through the age of 14. This will be achieved by using the various resources available both online and Adventist bookstores.

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<sup>16</sup> *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*, 17th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 86.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 81.



## Forming a Prayer Habit

Henry Blackaby in his book, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, points out, “These are extremely exciting days to be walking with the Lord! You don't want to miss out on what He is doing. The Holy Spirit will instruct you and help you know when and where God is working. Once you know where He is working, you can adjust your life to join Him in His divine purposes.”<sup>18</sup> God is doing something among his people, and the people with the most impact and influence are men and women who spend time wrestling with God in prayer. It is through prayer that the mighty power of God is felt.

Prayer will be the primary focus of the leadership team as they seek wisdom, guidance and strength from God. “Effective spiritual leaders pray for their people.”<sup>19</sup> He goes on to note that, they “are passionate toward God and compassionate toward people.”<sup>20</sup> The early church was always in prayer (Acts 2:42), and the Lord blessed their efforts as a result of this practice.

To ensure that God is fully involved in this house church plant, the elected leaders will be given Dave Earley's book *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders* and *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* by Henry Blackaby as resource to aid their prayer life and walk with God. The leaders will also be trained and encouraged to develop personal daily devotional schedules which will help in building a routine of communicating with God.

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<sup>18</sup> Henry T. Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, 15th ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 70.

<sup>19</sup> Dave Earley, *Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders* (Chattanooga, Tenn.: Living Ink Books, 2008), 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

## **Site Selection**

The site for the initial launch of the house church is at the Whispering Oaks Apartment Complex on the north side of Columbus. Whispering Oaks is home to several Rwandese families that attend CANSDA. In selecting a site for a church plant, Malphurs notes that it “would be wise to locate the new church plant not just where we can afford the land or rent, but in a locale that is strategic to reaching the community strategic to reaching the community.”<sup>21</sup> The number of Adventist families that live in an around the apartment complex makes it the ideal location for a house church.

## **Host Family**

Out of the 30 individuals that agreed to host the house church, three have been selected. In the course of putting things together for the launch, it was discovered that some of the interested hosts were from the same family or lived next door to each other. The decision for the selection was based Paul’s counsel to Timothy, “So, an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2). This author also considered a few other factors.

1. Space in the home: The selected homes had enough space to sit 10-15 adults and children comfortably. The homes are all three-bedroom apartments and have a living room area and a dining section with a balcony.

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<sup>21</sup> Aubrey Malphurs, *The Nuts and Bolts of Church Planting: A Guide for Starting Any Kind of Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 175.

2. Location from other families: The host family had to be within walking distance of the target group. The families selected are within the same complex but different floors. This was strategically done to accommodate the seniors who might have difficulty climbing up the stairs since the apartments do not have any elevators.
3. Neighbors: The host houses were selected based on the type of neighbors they had and how friendly they were so that the group would not run into any disturbance call issues with the apartment management. Most of these families hold social events in their homes without any issues, but this author and CANSDA just wanted to be on the safe side.
4. Previous Leadership role: Being a new house church plant, this author wanted to begin with a host that has some previous leadership experience within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is very important to keep the group grounded in the word of God as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
5. Hospitality: The host family also had to be very hospitable to others. People in the community have to be very comfortable in their homes. Since this is a house church and this author wanted it to be more of? an extension of family worship. The host families also had to reflect a typical family with parents and children. This was important to build the family unit as they also lead in building other families in the complex.
6. Family Reputation within the target community: The host family also had to have an excellent report within the target community.
7. Kids safety: This criterion was the most important one in selecting the host families, since much emphasis will be placed on the children, and the host apartments had to meet that requirement. Since some of the children's lessons will include activities which will be held outside the condo, this author wanted to make sure that the kids will be within

view of the host family and other parents during the meetings. The kids will always have an adult with them. However, it does not hurt for the parents to have the peace of mind that they can hear or see their wards when it is necessary.

### Putting the Core Values into Action

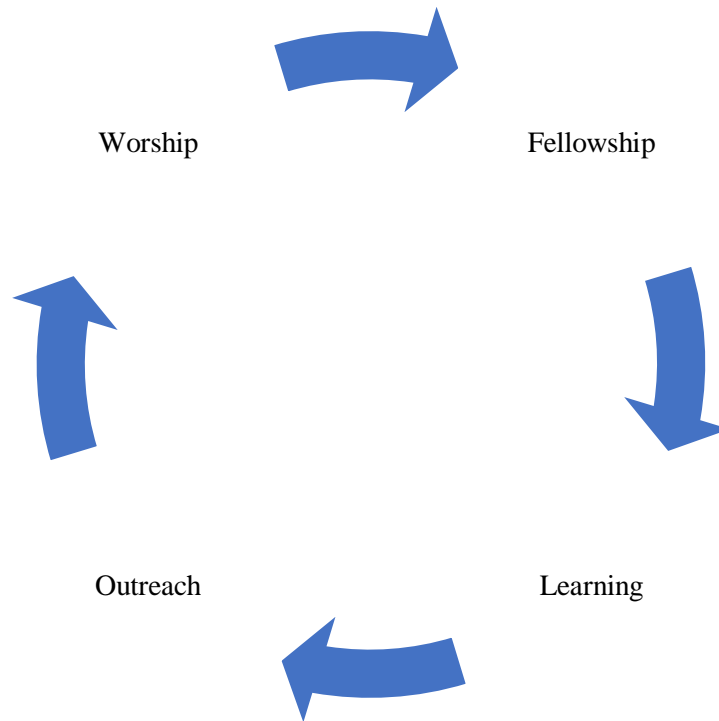


Figure 13: FLOW Diagram

## The F.L.O.W Strategy

Joel Comiskey notes, “The genius of the house church structure was that it changed lives where people lived and worked. People saw Christianity in living color.”<sup>22</sup> It is in the homes that people are most relaxed and authentic and can connect with others in a way that is difficult in a formal setting. Having this in mind, this author is motivated to guide this Rwandese Adventist house church to go back to the basics and build a community of believers that is so needed in the world today. To state this in a more practical way, this author is recommending the FLOW strategy for the house church as it relates to the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist.

### Fellowship

The Rwandese Adventist house church will bring back the sense of community that these refugees once enjoyed in their native country or camps which has eluded many of these families since their arrival in the United States. Many are witnessing their families gradually become distant from each other even though they all share the same roof. One of the most beautiful experiences CANSDA has observed over the years of having the Rwandese refugees in the congregation is to see the former rival tribes (Hutus and Tutsis) worshipping and singing together in peace. “How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony” (Psalm 133:1).

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<sup>22</sup> Atkinson, Harley, and Joel Comiskey. "Lessons from the early house church for today's cell groups." *Christian Education Journal* 11, no. 1 (2014 2014), 83. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 19, 2018).

## Learning

### Adults

The form of learning for the adults will be relational Bible Studies. No one comes with a blank mind to study God's word. The environment will be such that each person will bring their experiences, knowledge and they all drink from the same well of knowledge guided by the scriptures. CANSDA will make available the Adult Sabbath School Study Guide in Kinyarwanda (target group local language) to guide some of the discussions.

### Children Ministry

Children learn by repeating what they see and hear. They are to be taught with love and limits so that they can relate to the requirements that God has set for them. Parents are also to model a life worth emulating for the children. Just as children need physical nourishment, they are also to be nourished spiritually, by feeding them from the word of God and teaching them to love God and their fellow man in return.

Many African immigrant parents are here in the United States so that they can provide a better opportunity for their children to have a life that they did not have as adults in their native countries. Many who have spoken with this author have listed morality and spirituality as their top priority for their children in addition to academic achievements. Many of these families have maintained daily family devotions and worship with their children which involves singing, scripture reading, memorizing scripture, and prayer.

Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, in their book *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose*, point out that, "Children and teenagers need parents and other adults in their lives who have a genuine, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. They need adults to have such a kingdom faith because

they will grow up to be much like them.”<sup>23</sup> The study of God is as essential for children as it is for adults. Jesus issued a stern warning in regards to children, “But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea”(Matthew 18:6). If the salvation of children matters this much to Jesus Christ, then parents and teachers have a great responsibility in making sure that children placed under their care are led and taught in a way that they will become disciples of Jesus.

Greg Carlson in his book *Perspectives on Children’s Spiritual Formation: Four Views* notes, “Through his actions and words, Jesus reveals the value he holds for the child as a significant part of the faith community.”<sup>24</sup> This house church setting provides a familiar setting for these families to not just bond but to also impart the knowledge of the word of God to the young ones.

Carlson in his book, explains the different stages of developing Spirituality in children using four models. This author will focus on what Carlson describes as “*Instructional-Analytic*” model. This model according to Carlson “has a high regard for cognitive thought processing. These individuals grow and nurture their spiritual formation through a consistent and systematic study of God’s Word.”<sup>25</sup> Children ministry, when done right will address all the critical questions that pertain to the will and purpose of God for man including children. All mentoring, training and teaching must have the scriptures as the foundation.

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<sup>23</sup> Ken Hemphill and Richard Ross, *Parenting with Kingdom Purpose* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 50.

<sup>24</sup> Greg Carlson, Tim Ellis, et al., *Perspectives on Children’s Spiritual Formation: Four Views* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 51.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 38.

Carlson further points out that as children systematically study the Bible, “They take the time to explore the Scriptures in detail looking for authoritative answers.”<sup>26</sup> Wess Stafford in his book *Too Small to Ignore: Why the Least of These Matters Most*, observes that, when it comes to the spiritual lives of children, “we are not assembling a bunk bed. We are shaping human lives, with all their wondrous complexity.”<sup>27</sup> There has to be an intentional effort on the part of teachers and parents to make sure that the holistic development of children is taken into consideration.

For this house church, emphasis will be placed on biblical storytelling. The Seventh-day Adventist Children’s Sabbath School’s Bible study quarterly guide will be used in bringing out lessons from the Bible to the children. These materials can be downloaded from Grace Links website. The website has materials for the different age groups, and there are also videos that make learning the Word of God engaging and fun for young children.

The idea here is to present these lessons in ways that the unchurched children, especially those who come from Muslim and Hindu backgrounds can still enjoy and learn from them when they come to visit their friends in the house church gathering.

### Outreach

This is an essential area of this house church project. Many of the residents at Whispering Oaks apartments are refugees and other immigrants who have either relocated from other states within the country or new arrivals. CANSDA’s outreach team has done some health screenings in that area? and are aware of the health needs of many of the residents.

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<sup>26</sup> Carlson and Ellis, *Perspectives on children’s*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> Wess Stafford, Dean Merrill, and Michael W. Smith, *Too Small to Ignore: Why the Least of These Matters Most*, trade pbk. ed. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Waterbrook Press, ©2007), 67.



Commenting on community outreach, Steve Sjogren in his book *101 Ways to Reach Your Community* notes, “the good news is that it doesn’t take an amazing skill to do significant works of outreach.”<sup>28</sup> He continues, “in fact, it only takes small things – faithful acts of outreach done again and again – to begin to make a difference.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus Christ was a master when it came to community outreach. “Jesus traveled throughout the region of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness” (Matthew 4:23).

Over the past few years, CANSDA alongside other churches and nonprofit organizations have teamed up to bring some needed services to the residents. However, one of the significant challenges has also been the language barrier. This is where this writer sees an opportunity for members of the Rwandese house church to reach out to their fellow Rwandese and provide some of these services that are tailored to their specific culture and situation. Some of the areas that this author has identified are:

1. Welcoming and support groups for new Rwandese arrivals in the area
2. Providing driving lessons for Rwandese. There is a significant need in this area.
3. Providing citizenship preparation classes for those who are eligible to become citizens of the United States.
4. Organizing healthy cooking classes for the Rwandese women in the apartment complex

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<sup>28</sup> Steve Sjogren, *101 Ways to Reach Your Community* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 2001), 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

5. Organizing soccer tournaments for the young boys from Rwanda since many of them enjoy the sport.
6. Partnering with CANSDA to run English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for the adults.
7. Organizing financial literacy classes.

## Worship

### Sabbath (Saturday) Gathering

The Sabbath gathering will be in the form of family worship. “Family was where my walk with Jesus began, and it was my parents who took the time to lay that foundation.”<sup>30</sup> The home presents an atmosphere to build godly foundations that guide an individual in the later years of life. In the words of Jesus, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The goal of the house church is to remove all obstacles and formalities that hinders a complete connection with God, His Word, and others. As part of the three angels’ message in the book of Revelation, humanity is called to “Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the springs of water” (Revelation 14:7). Below is a proposed Sabbath schedule outline for the house church. This schedule can be modified as needed by the group.

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<sup>30</sup> Jason Homan *Before the Box: Freeing the Church to Emulate First-Century Christianity* (Grounded Faith Publications), 86 Kindle.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Goal</b>
10:00 – 10:45 a.m.	Breakfast	
10:45 – 11:15 a.m.	Singing and Testimonies	Provide an opportunity to share what God has done for individuals during the week. This is also the time for the first-time guest to introduce himself or herself to the group.
11:15 – 12:45 pm	Bible discussion and reflection *Children will go to their group activities. *Adults will engage in Bible discussion.	Learn from God’s word and make application of the Word to life. Provide feedback on practical lessons learned from the Bible.
1:00 – 2:45 pm	Fellowship Lunch (potluck).	Create a social atmosphere to encourage further interaction among members and if possible first-time guests.
3:00 – 5:00 pm	Visitation	Get in touch with members that were absent from the meetings due to illness or any other reason.

Table 4: Sabbath Meeting Flow

### **Action Plan for House Church Launch**

#### **Teleconference Prayer Ministry**

One of the concerns that have been expressed by a few colleagues and people within the target group is what to do during the week for midweek prayer meeting. In order not to put too much responsibility on the host families, CANSDA will adopt the teleconference prayer line approach.

Africans, in general, believe in the power of prayer. The teleconference prayer ministry will be an extension of the house church project. Most of these families belong to different teleconference prayer lines and so setting one up for the house church families is a smart way to get many within the target group who live in other parts of the city to be able to pray with their fellow Adventist countrymen and women.

This form of prayer ministry has become very useful within the immigrant community here in the United States. CANSDA has one that comes in handy when the weather is bad during the winter months, and the church uses it for prayer meetings. This is a proposed prayer schedule:

- a. There will be a Scripture reading and short meditation each morning at 5:00 am for 20 minutes and a prayer session for 40 minutes. The reason for the mornings is to cater to those who work the morning shifts.
- b. This prayer line will only operate on weekdays.
- c. Different people will be assigned each week to oversee the reading and meditations.
- d. Occasionally a seminar will be given on a social or financial topic, depending on the need.

## Timeline and Sequence Plan

DATE	ACTION STEP	TIMELINE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE
January 2018	Core Group Identified	Completed	Pastor and CANSDA Evangelism Team
June 2018	Order Study Guides in Kinyarwanda (native language)	3 Months	Pastor and East-central Rwanda conference of Seventh-day Adventist.
August 2018	Training of local house church leaders	3 Months	CANSDA Pastor
August 2018	Order learning materials and resources for children's ministry	45 Days	CANSDA Children's Ministry
September 2018	Host Family Orientation	3 Months	Pastor and Evangelism Team
April 2019	Launch of first Sabbath worship	9 months	Pastor and House church leaders.
September 2019	Evaluation of House church	5 Days	Pastor and House church leaders.

Table 5: Timeline and Sequence Plan

As shown in table 5, It will take about a year to launch the first service for the house church. The house church concept even with its biblical and theological support still lacks a broad support from? African Seventh-day Adventist. This timeline gives this author and his team some time to get some materials in place and do a great deal of training and orientation before the first Sabbath gathering for the group. Most of this training will focus on leadership development. Almost all the leaders identified through the survey and personal interactions with this author have the moral and doctrinal capacity to lead. Michael Mitchell however notes, “A leader brings to an assignment not only a set of attitudes, perceptions, values, and strategies, but

also a package of behaviors and techniques believed to be most effective in inducing and influencing followers.”<sup>31</sup> It is important to get the leadership aspect right from the beginning. Mitchell points out three stages of leadership that must be taken seriously as leaders prepare to lead and effect change.

1. Determine the Mission. The leader in this stage identifies the message and is inspired by the message. “The initial behavior of a leader is to identify and determine the mission. Therefore, a mission statement is a critical component in a leader’s understanding of the task to be undertaken.”<sup>32</sup>
2. Declare the Mission. “It is the leader’s responsibility to effectively communicate and relate this intention to the leadership team and the followers, so they are motivated to proceed.”<sup>33</sup>
3. Direct the Mission. The leader in this stage influences the people he leads. “In addition to the responsibility of influencing followers, an administrator also faces the task of influencing the process and effectively accomplishing the goals that fulfil the mission.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Michael R. Mitchell, *Leading, Teaching, and Making Disciples: World-Class Christian Education in the Church, School, and Home* (Bloomington, Ind.: Crossbooks, 2010), 97.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 44-47.

## **Rwandese House Church Connection to CANSDA**

One of the questions that kept reoccurring during this process of planning for the house church plant was its relationship with the mother church CANSDA. The house church will remain part of the CANSDA and continue to receive resources and training as the group grows and replants other house churches across the city. As stated earlier in the introduction of this project, transportation is a significant concern for most of the Rwandese refugees, and this style of church gathering works correctly so that the target group is not excluded from what God is doing among His people in the city of Columbus.

### **Measurable Steps and Evaluation**

This is the rubric for measuring the progress of the house church project:

1. Increase house church size by 30-60% within 12 months.
  - CANSDA will monitor the attendance increase in the house church locations.
  - CANSDA will also note the attendance of first-time guests to the weekly meetings.
  - Members will be encouraged to invite their non-Adventist/Christian friends to these meetings and fellowship lunch.
2. A decrease in family and personal disputes.
  - The number of calls received weekly for mediation from the target community and their families will be used to measure success. Most of

these disputes are between parents who fear that they are losing influence and control over their children as a result of being in America.

- Observations will be made on how members interact with each other during fellowship and worship. It is sometimes visible to tell who has a grudge against someone in this community as many people are unable to conceal their emotions.

3. Deeper understanding of God's word

- Transformation in the lives of members will be evident as they dig deeper into God's Word every week on relevant issues that affect their daily lives.
- There will be an increase in the desire to be involved in other ministries with the sole purpose of sharing one's faith.

4. Restored relationships between parents and teenagers

- Teenagers that have returned home after leaving for one reason or another will be monitored.

### **Recipe for Success**

The success of any evangelistic effort to win souls into God's kingdom is based on the method that Jesus Christ Himself set for his followers. He sent his disciples out to minister to others. Russell Burrill, in his book *Revolution in the Church*, notes "Ministry involvement is people-centered rather than institution-centered. The emphasis is helping people find fulfillment



in ministry rather than on filling the needs of the institution.”<sup>35</sup> Church members should be encouraged and empowered to use their gifts to serve the needs of others.

Payne points out, “there are many hurting Christians on this continent. For whatever reasons, many believers who have had significant involvement in traditional church life have been wounded psychologically, sexually, emotionally, spiritually, or physically, and many times a combination of these areas.”<sup>36</sup> Based on the personal stories this author has heard from some of the Rwandese Adventist concerning ethnic cleansing, hardship, displacement, sexual abuses. This author believes that the Rwandese house church stands a better chance to use the spiritual gifts of the members to minister to their fellow brothers and sisters.

### **Back to The Basics**

In as much as resources help in evangelism, it can never replace people skills. Jesus Christ at one point in His ministry sent His disciples out into the neighboring towns, and villages and instructed them not to take anything with them, and at the end of the day, they did not lack anything (Mathew 10:5-10). The lesson was to teach them how to depend on Him to sustain and give them success. The Church today has the same offer available to bring real progress. Ellen White in her book *The Ministry of Healing*, notes, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them,

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<sup>35</sup> Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, Calif.: Hart Research Center, 1993), 100.

<sup>36</sup> J. D. Payne, *Missional House Churches: Reaching Our Communities with the Gospel* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing, 2008), 123.

‘Follow Me.’”<sup>37</sup> She further points out, “There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen.”<sup>38</sup> Milton Adams calls this method, “God’s mission of recreation and redemption.”<sup>39</sup> A closer look at the method of Jesus will set the stage for guaranteed results for the Rwandese house church.

Jesus Christ mingled with others. Adams states, “This does not fit the fast-food approach in North America.”<sup>40</sup> This author’s first impression when he migrated to the United States was how fast-paced everything was. Everyone seems to be in a rush to get things done, and when this attitude is brought into the work of interacting with people, it fails. Christ was even accused by the Pharisees and religious teachers that, “he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them” (Luke 15:2). His mingling crossed social, cultural, religious, and gender lines. He lived up to his name “Emmanuel, which means, God is with us” (Matthew 1:23). His mission was to look for those who were lost and offer them salvation.

Jesus desired the good of others. “How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me” (Mathew 23:37). He identified with the needs and situations of others. He was a savior that did not exist for Himself but the welfare and benefit of others.

Jesus showed sympathy to others. He showed sympathy for the people that came in contact with him. He had compassion on the people when he saw them in need, lepers, the sick,

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<sup>37</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 54.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Milton Adams, “Developing, Planting, and Multiplying,” 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

and the hungry crowd. He went against the norms and showed sympathy to the people that needed it the most. In his counsel to the believers in Philippi, the apostle Paul said, “Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too” (Philippians 2:3-4).

Jesus met the needs of others. It is almost impossible to interact with someone on a personal level and not notice a felt need if they have one. Meeting the needs of the community is vital to the Christian faith. “Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness” (Matthew 9:35). He fed the hungry, forgave sinners, blessed children, raised the dead. These acts of kindness led to the next step in how Jesus affected the lives of people.

Jesus won the confidence of people. After mingling, desiring the good of others, showing sympathy and meeting people’s needs, Jesus gained the trust of these people. They were now in the position to find out what else he had to offer them. The church will have the same effect on the community if the method of Jesus is put into practice.

CANSDA through the Rwandese house church wants to reach out and meet the needs of the people that God allows to cross path with His followers. This author envisions a stronger community of believers from Rwanda touching the lives of others in a way that Christ did when he walked the dust on earth. If the method of Jesus is closely followed by believers across this country, Ellen White assures that, “accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”<sup>41</sup> Believers

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<sup>41</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 54.

will begin to see an increase in people who have been touched by their kindness and generosity wanting to meet and worship their Lord and Savior.

### **Recipe for Disaster**

Not mingling and meeting the needs of others will turn the house church into an exclusive Seventh-day Adventist gathering. “Mingling requires one to have time to ‘waste’ with unbelieving neighbors. Mingling is a prerequisite. No mingling, no ministering; no ministering, no winning of confidence; no confidence, no context to bid one to follow Jesus Christ; and therefore, no ‘true success.’”<sup>42</sup> The bedrock of this house church is ~~on~~ based on unity under a common purpose and seeing that the method (mingling, caring, meeting needs) practiced by Jesus is carried out.

This house church will fail if members focus only on themselves as an exclusive club and not intentionally plan to reach out to those who have not heard about the good news of Christ and the salvation that He offers humankind. Evangelism is the key to any thriving church and the house church is not an exception. Carolyn Osiek in her observation of the early house church notes, “the house church was a center for evangelism and mission. Each family unit was a locus for evangelization, including perhaps especially the mixed marriage.”<sup>43</sup>

Members of the house church should also not feel that they are following a biblical example and therefore begin to feel a sense of pride and arrogance. The members must have the

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<sup>42</sup> Milton Adams, “Developing, Planting, and Multiplying,” 38.

<sup>43</sup> Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 15.

same character and reputation as the earlier church believers did. Eric Carpenter in his book, *Simple Church: Unity Within Diversity* observes “Imagine, if you can, a shepherd with no love, an apostle with no self-control, or a teacher with no patience. And the fruit in the absence of the gifts might lead to a helpless church full of good intentions. Power without character is dangerous, while character without power is less effective.”<sup>44</sup> It is vital for the house church leadership to be intentional about making disciples and this requires the inner working of the Holy Spirit who enables and give gifts as needed. J. D. Payne also raises another important point on the state of North American house churches which can also be a recipe for disaster. “A major issue facing future North American house churches is that many of them will be no different (missionally-speaking) than the majority of the traditional churches on this continent.”<sup>45</sup> He goes on to state, “As nonmissional church members leave traditional churches, they will plant or become part of house churches that are evangelistically anemic. The future membership in North America’s house churches will generally fall into the following four categories: hurting Christians, new-experience Christians, anti-establishment Christians, and new believers.”<sup>46</sup> If the attitude of these believers Payne is talking about does not change, then it will not matter if they belong to a house church or the traditional church.

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<sup>44</sup> Eric Carpenter. *Simple Church: Unity Within Diversity* (Dallas: Redeeming Press, 2014), 45, Kindle.

<sup>45</sup> J. D. Payne, *Missional House Churches*, 123.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

## Summary

The house church project is designed to be a means in which men, women and families within the Rwandese community can meet on a regular basis in the comfort of their homes and experience God and extend a hand of fellowship to each other. In summary, the house church will strive to meet these goals:

1. Meet weekly and search the Scriptures together.
2. Be a prayer support group for the members of the group.
3. Be the eyes, ears and hands of Christ in their immediate community and surroundings.
4. Identify needs within the Rwandese community and alert the church outreach coordinator for assistance in meeting those needs.
5. Identify the needs of individual family members and solve these problems where possible just as any family would.
6. Be 'fruitful and multiply' like any other family and grow in numbers.
7. Be a support group for young families in the house church.
8. Be a mediator to settle disputes that may arise between family members.
9. Hold weekly potluck at the house church and invite friends and family to join in this unique community.
10. Be involved in public health education within the Rwandese community.

Now that the plan to launch this house church is in place, it is essential to keep in mind the target people, their culture, living arrangements and the broader community to which they belong. Everything about this house is done with context in mind. This author is aware that this model may not work in other places and he strives to continue working with the Rwandese

Adventist community so that they can become disciples of Jesus Christ, bringing others to Him.

When all is said and done, the gospel must be presented in ways that are creative and compelling to the people it is intended to reach.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction**

This chapter brings to an end the church planting project among the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist residing on the Northside of Columbus Ohio. This chapter will give a review of the project, present the strengths of the house church project, and present a series of recommendations for future house church plant among specific ethnic groups.

### **Project Review**

In chapter one, this thesis project was introduced alongside the statement of the problem, theological, and biblical basis for the project. The chapter also provided a list of current literature on house church and the biblical context. The logistics problem within CANSDA concerning the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist was the main reason for the proposal of this project.

Chapter two was focused on the New Testament understanding of the house church. This author also discussed the roles of Jesus, the Church and the Holy Spirit when it comes to church and community. With several examples in the New Testament, the case was made in strong favor of the existence of house churches and how they were instrumental in spreading the gospel and bringing many people into the kingdom of God. The highlight of chapter 2 was the fact that the Bible provides evidence of God's active involvement in the salvation of humankind. Reggie McNeal in his book *Missional Renaissance* notes, "The missional church is an expression of God's heart. It serves as an indication of his continuing commitment to his redemptive mission in



the world. Because God is on a mission, the people of God are too. God is a sending God.”<sup>1</sup> The church has to reflect the missional nature of God as a body of believers caring about what God cares about: people.

In chapter three, this author took a closer look at the target group (Rwandese Adventist). The history and makeup of CANSDA was presented to give the reader a clearer picture of the need to propose planting a house church among one of the nationalities in the church. This author highlighted some of the questions in the survey and provided some insight for the reader. The answers to the survey also provided the reader a glimpse into the Rwandese Adventist community. The highlight of chapter three was getting to know the target group. A lot can be known about people when they are asked the right questions. The survey revealed an overview about the passion and brief history of the Rwandese Adventist community in Columbus. The survey helped identify those who had held leadership positions within the church in the past. This information is vital in having a healthy leadership foundation for the house church. The survey also helped to identify some cultural uniqueness that played a role in the project proposal. Stressing the importance of culture in evangelism, Charles Kraft states, “Christianity was never intended to be static nor are Christians. Jesus was not static in his relationship to the society around him. He used his culture and so should we whose intent is to follow Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> In the case of the Rwandese, this author and CANSDA made sure to use their cultural, social, educational, economic and religious backgrounds to design a house church model that would be most effective in bringing about desired transformation as found in the scriptures.

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<sup>1</sup> Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 20-21.

<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross Cultural Perspective*, 25th ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005), 25.

Chapter four presented details about the proposed church planting project. Using results from the survey and considering the target group, core ministry values, mission, and vision statements were presented. The chapter also provided details on how the house church will be planted, its proposed leadership structure, site selection, host family, and proposed order of service. The chapter also looked at measurable steps and a sequence plan for the house church launch. The house church model presented in chapter four is tailored specifically for the Rwandese community. The highlight of the chapter was the emphasis on fellowshiping, learning, reaching out to others, and worshiping God. The project makes it very comfortable for everyone in the group to be able to share from either knowledge of the Scriptures or experience. In this house church model, no one will be made to feel as if he or she does not have anything of value to share. The house church environment is conducive to personal and collective growth.

The living situation for the target group makes the house church ideal considering their painful history of going through ethnic cleansing in Rwanda. Their experience has somehow bonded them together here in Columbus and around the country. They are used to doing things together, supporting each other and occasionally making long trips out of town to support fellow Rwandese in times of celebrations and grief.

One of the highlights of this project is the New Testament examples of believers who worshiped in houses and still experienced God's power in many ways. It is important to note that God is still interested in having people meet irrespective of location to worship Him and fellowship with each other. "For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20).

## Strengths of the House Church for the Rwandese Community

The house church presents many strengths for the Rwandese Adventists as compared to their current experience at CANSDA. There is no doubt that having them worship with other members at CANSDA boost the numbers, however, in the long run, they do not benefit from all that the church offers when it comes to their holistic development. It will be very selfish on the part of CANSDA leadership to think that everything is okay and with time they will adjust and be like everyone else. Narrating his experience in reaching out to a population that attended church less, Jones Peyton recalls "I had been called by God to make an impact in a culture that saw less than 1.6 percent of the population attending church, and I had to change. The way I did ministry had to change."<sup>3</sup> The experience of Peyton keeps happening to many people across the country. It was not a church as usual when a particular group did not attend church on many occasions. It was not typical for a group of people to be left out of the service just because they do not understand the language used to communicate in the church. It was also not acceptable that men and women who had held several leadership roles within the Seventh-day Adventist church in their country should just be allowed to sit on the sidelines. While many from their country had not had the opportunity to hear about the saving power of Jesus Christ and His imminent return to take His children home. The house church is the answer in making sure that the gospel reaches everyone. The church is instructed to, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

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<sup>3</sup> Peyton Jones, *Church Zero: Raising 1st Century Churches Out of the Ashes of the 21st Century Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2013), 18.

It is with this background that a few strengths are highlighted which makes the house church project a better choice in presenting the gospel to the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist in Columbus.

#### Lay Leadership Opportunities

Pastors are assigned to Adventist churches from the conference (head office). The amount in tithes that a local church produces would determine if they receive a full-time pastor, part-time or volunteer lay minister. In the case of the house church, that will not be necessary. This will give the opportunity for local leaders to be discovered and trained as they lead and train others within the community of Rwandese Adventist believers. Most of these people would just be regular church members and not be able to use their gifts and experience to serve the church.

#### Language

CANSDA currently uses English for all the services and uses a translation device for the Rwandese members who do not understand English. This will not be an issue in the house church setting since the primary language will be Kinyarwanda. This will also help the parents maintain their cultural influence over the children as they all speak their local dialect.

#### Maintenance and Mortgage-Free

The members do not have to think about how to raise money to maintain a building and the associated expenses. In the house church setting, they can focus on sharing God's word and helping others in need within their community.

#### Intimacy

The home will create a level of closeness to each more than what they experienced at CANSDA. This author has observed that during fellowship lunch and social gatherings at the church, most people tend to cluster according to nationality either consciously or not. This is an

indication that there is a yearning for some form of intimacy among people of the same culture and in this case, language.

#### Ethnic-Specific

The house church will attract neighbors and friends from the same ethnic background, providing an opportunity to share and understand the gospel from the same context.

#### Flexibility

The structure and schedule of the house church meetings can be adjusted to suit members of the group. They can decide to meet at any time on Saturday or even decide to have a meal before worship. Flexibility is needed for last minute changes as the need arises.

#### Simplicity

It takes much work in planning and running a typical Sabbath worship service at CANSDA. From preparing PowerPoint slides, praise team rehearsal, adult and children Sabbath school teacher preparation, bulletin printing, deacon and deaconess meetings, and ushers. On the administrative side, there is the church board meeting, various committees, elders meeting, and building committee meetings. It takes many hours spent in making sure that all goes as smoothly as possible. The house church will not have to worry about going through the rigorous and time-consuming process of running the church.

#### Authenticity

The house church will create an opportunity for more participation, relating to each other, being genuine and at the same time giving everyone the platform to share their knowledge and experience with each other.

## **Project Take-Home Lessons (Discipleship Based on Diversity)**

Relational communities over the years have had a significant impact on the lives of the people in any group. The nature of these communities is such that, they build a relationship in an informal setting. The early church used this concept, and as a result, the church saw exponential growth as seen in the book of Acts. Relational communities focus mainly on felt needs. These requirements could range from social, economic, civil and spiritual. Relational communities are best done in small group settings where members of the group become familiar with each other and build the trust needed to be "vulnerable" to each other.

CANSDA has a great opportunity in the construction of the relationships that exist within the congregation. The church members already meet on regular occasions for national and ethnic meetings. Even though these meetings often do not have any spiritual focus, it could, however, serve as a platform that will lead the final sowing of the gospel seeds. CANSDA will select and recruit leaders from the various nationalities represented in the church and train them to lead an effort in their country meetings to begin to address the needs of their fellow members. This was the method of Jesus Christ as He mingled with the people and addressed their everyday needs, and when He had gained their trust and confidence, He presented the gospel to them.

CANSDA has the platform with the various nationalities represented in the church but unfortunately has not built on that. Since this platform exists, this writer doubts there will be any pushback against using the existing communities to spread the gospel eventually.

## **Recommendations**

This house church model can be duplicated within the diverse population of the church as the need arises. The proposed house church plant for the Rwandese Seventh-day Adventists is

based on biblical principles practiced by the early believers. The economic, political, educational and social situation of the Rwandese believers calls for an approach to evangelism and church growth that is tailored to their unique setting.

This author and many pastors in the city of Columbus have found out that many immigrants who have minimal English skills do not attend churches that use only English as the primary language to communicate. Having experienced this trend at CANSDA where refugees come to church for a few weeks and never come back, there was a need to be strategic about how to assist in making the gospel relevant to those that cannot be reached because of language barriers and in this case the house church was the answer.

The world with its diversity has been brought to the doorsteps of churches across this country, and no one should be denied the opportunity to hear the gospel because of a language barrier. There are too many options at the disposal of churches.

In his book *Evangelism Without Additives*, Jim Henderson narrates an earlier experience when he lived in a Christian environment. “How could my broken family have lived at the epicenter of Portland’s leading Christian institutions and not have had an opportunity to hear about Jesus?”<sup>4</sup> He goes on to explain how evangelism is typically done in most churches, “Evangelism is not normal. It is a program, a presentation, a memorized script. Its formalized and structured, and as a result, Christians have to work up a lot of nerve just to do it. This helps explain why most Christians only do evangelism about once a year. They do nothing until their church holds its next evangelism workshop”<sup>5</sup> It is crucial for churches to continuously look for

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<sup>4</sup> Jim Henderson. *Evangelism without Additives*. (Colorado Springs: Water Brook Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 2.

creative and compelling ways to reach out to the people within their immediate community. The experience and knowledge acquired in putting together this house church plant have been very enriching. This author would recommend the following to any Seventh-day Adventist church with similar diversity, challenges, and opportunities as CANSDA:

1. Think outside the box. Do not be bound by practice that indirectly hinder the spread of the gospel to the people that need it the most.
2. Get to know the cultural differences of the members of the congregations and come up with ways to minister to them within their context.
3. Encourage pastors to embrace house churches as a tool to reach out to those that the church cannot reach under normal circumstances.
4. Publish a manual written to guide Seventh-day Adventist churches in North America on how to effectively reach out to the growing immigrant populations within Adventist churches in the neighborhoods and homes where they reside. This manual will serve as an excellent resource for churches and pastors who might be facing an influx of non-English speaking members.

### **Conclusion**

With the growing immigrant and unchurched population in America, the Seventh-day Adventist church alongside other Christian denominations has a unique window of opportunity of taking the gospel of Jesus to places that have been left untouched for years. The homes of many have been left to the influence of the media, salesmen and women and somehow the church has been spending resources to get people out of their homes into church buildings



without great success. Through the house church, the gospel can enter homes and neighborhoods just as it started doing among the first-century believers.

### **Thesis Restatement**

The thesis of this project is to plant Rwandese Seventh-day house churches among the Rwandese Adventist community in Columbus Ohio. The need for this project is a response to a unique need of lack of transportation within the target group and their unique living arrangements within walking distance from each other. The language barrier of the target group was also considered in using a house church model to present the gospel to them. It is hoped that this proposed house church plant among Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist will serve as a template to inspire other house church plants in the many nationalities found in churches across the United States of America.

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## APPENDIX A

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 10, 2017

Kwesi Gyimah  
IRB Exemption 2869.051017: House Church: Planting Seventh-day Adventist House Churches  
among Rwandese Refugees in Columbus

Dear Kwesi Gyimah,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
- (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
  - (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
The Graduate School

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## APPENDIX B

Topic: *House Church: Planting Seventh-day Adventist House churches among Rwandese Refugees in Columbus.*

### **Participant Survey**

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

2. Highest level of education

- High school
- First degree
- Masters
- Other...

3. What is your age?

- 18-25
- 25-30
- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-65

4. How long have you lived in Columbus?

- Less than 2 years
- More than 3 years

5. Did you relocate from another city within America or from outside the country?

- Another city within America
- Outside America

6. How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

- Less than 1 year
- More than 2 years

7. How often do you attend religious or worship services, not including weddings and funerals?

- Once a week
- More than once a week
- I attend on special occasions
- Never

8. What are the challenges you face here in Columbus when it comes to attending church services?

- Lack of transportation
- Work schedule
- Fatigue

9. How would you rate your spiritual growth since relocating to Columbus?

- Some growth
- No growth
- Not sure

10. How active were you in your local Seventh-day Adventist church in Rwanda or the refugee camp?

- Very active
- Somehow active
- Not active

11. What church role(s) did you play in your local Seventh-day Adventist church in Rwanda or refugee camp?

- Elder
- Sabbath school teacher
- Lay evangelist
- Music
- Volunteer
- Lay pastor

- Deacon

12. Have you been involved in giving someone Bible studies before?

- Yes
- No

13. Would you be interested in having a church for Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist here in Columbus?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

14. Would you be interested in hosting a small group of worshipers in your apartment on a monthly basis?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

15. If given proper training and resources, do you see yourself leading a small group of other Rwandese Seventh-day Adventist here in Columbus?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

16. Do you feel a burden placed on your heart concerning other Rwandese refugees who have not accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior?

- Yes
- No

17. What do you miss about worship in your native country?

- Worship and singing in native language
- Public evangelism

- Camp meetings
- Fellowship
- Other...

18. Would you be willing to join other families in this apartment complex to worship on the weekends?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe