Analysis and Evaluation of the Ministry of the Hamilton Community Church to the Unchurched

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Abstract
Problem. During my first eight years in the ministry I was troubled that members did not feel comfortable inviting unchurched seekers to our weekend worship services. I was concerned about the fact that most churches, including mine, were not reaching the unchurched.

Method. In 1990 I attended a Pastor’s Conference at the Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago, Illinois, where I learned how their philosophy and strategy for ministry had resulted in great success in reaching the unchurched. In September of 1991 we planted the Hamilton Community Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee using some of the philosophy and strategy of the Willow Creek Community Church to reach the unchurched. Our services included contemporary Christian music, drama, multimedia and other modern forms of communication. We also have offered a wide variety of adult classes. In order to be able to determine whether or not our approach was sound I did a case study in which I reviewed the sociological, cultural, and religious factors related to the unchurched and how they led to the planting of the Hamilton Community Church.

Next I explored what the Bible says concerning the methods God has used to reach the lost to determine if what we were doing was in harmony with Scripture. I also reviewed church history to see if there was any others who contextualized the presentation of the gospel as we have been doing. I also examined the writings of Ellen White to find out her
views on our type of ministry.

Results. There was considerable controversy in our community over the methods we were using, particularly in the areas of music and drama. Our attendance averages around 400. We have had 60 baptisms, twelve of which came from unchurched backgrounds. Approximately 100 inactive Seventh-day Adventists have begun attending church again.

Conclusions. In my opinion, the Bible, the writings of Ellen White, and church history all support the contextualization of the presentation of gospel message as we have done when trying to reach the unchurched. The Hamilton Church is headed in the right direction, but our methods need improvement in order to reach larger numbers of unchurched people.

Subject Area
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