



Research Article

STRATEGIES FOR JOSHUA PROJECT: MISSION WITHIN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Abstract

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has long championed a global mission to spread the gospel, emphasizing strategic adaptation to address cultural, social, and demographic challenges. This research paper explores the key strategies employed by the Adventist Church to advance its mission, including the historical evolution of its missionary efforts, targeted approaches to unreached populations, innovative use of resources, and the development of tailored initiatives for secular, urban, and post-Christian societies. By analysing these strategies, this paper underscores the church's commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission while adapting to the evolving evangelised the a dynamic global population. The study also highlights how the church's focus on strategic planning and adaptability has enabled it to remain effective in fulfilling the Great Commission. Through detailed analysis, this paper explores the interplay of traditional missionary approaches with modern, context-sensitive methodologies, showcasing the church's resilience and dedication to its core mission. The role of innovation in resource allocation and outreach is examined, alongside the impact of demographic shifts on the church's approach for spreading gospel message. By delving into these areas, the research underscores the Adventist Church's proactive stance in addressing the evolving needs of a dynamic global population. Ultimately, this paper sheds light on how the church's mission strategies continue to align with its vision of a worldwide ministry, reaffirming its dedication to spreading the gospel in diverse and challenging environments.

Keywords: Seventh-day Adventist Church, global mission, strategies, Joshua Project, urban Christianity, Mission to the Cities.

INTRODUCTION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, with over 22 million members worldwide, has a unique mission: to share the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 with "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (White, 1946). Achieving this goal requires nuanced strategies that transcend geographical, cultural, and religious boundaries. This paper examines the strategies adopted by the church over time, the challenges encountered, and the evolving focus areas, particularly within the 10/40 Window, secular societies, and urban environments.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its expansive membership of over 22 million adherents globally, stands as a significant religious movement with a distinct mission: to proclaim the three angels' messages found in Revelation 14 to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (White, 1946). This eschatological mandate forms the foundation of the Church's evangelical, educational, and humanitarian efforts worldwide. The early strategies of the Church were deeply rooted in its millennialist worldview, emphasizing the imminence of Christ's return and the urgency of reaching unreached populations which is part of Joshua project (Knight, 2000) (Fig.-1).

Seventh-day Adventist Church maintains 28 Fundamental beliefs based on the Church's interpretation of the Bible

1. Holy Scriptures
2. Trinity
3. Father
4. Son

5. Holy Spirit
6. Creation
7. Nature of Man
8. Great Controversy
9. Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ
10. Experience of Salvation
11. Growing in Christ
12. Church
13. Remnant and Its Mission
14. Unity in the Body of Christ
15. Baptism
16. Lord's Supper
17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries
18. The Gift of Prophecy
19. Law of God
20. Sabbath
21. Stewardship
22. Christian Behavior
23. Marriage and Family
24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary
25. Second Coming of Christ
26. Death and Resurrection
27. Millennium and the End of Sin
28. New Earth

Early Adventist missionaries adopted direct methods of proclamation, including public evangelistic meetings, door-to-door canvassing, and literature distribution, still these methods continue practices. However, as the Church expanded into diverse cultural and religious contexts, the effectiveness of these methods varied, necessitating adaptations. For instance, in the 10/40 Window a region encompassing North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia known for its high concentration of unreached people groups—traditional evangelistic approaches often faced resistance due to cultural

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and governmental restrictions (Fig-2). In response, the Church adopted creative access methods, such as integrating health care, education, and development initiatives as part of its mission strategy (Trim, 2017). The Seventh-day Adventist Church, founded in the mid-19th century in the United States, gradually spread to other parts of the world, including India, where it arrived in the early 20th century (Wiggins, 2000). As with many Christian denominations, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's missionary work in India focused on spreading Christian teachings, establishing schools, and providing healthcare services, such as hospitals and clinics and increasing their population. Over time, however, some of these missionary activities in tribal regions morphed into attempts at converting indigenous groups to Christianity, often without full consent or under coercive circumstances (Hansen, 2003).

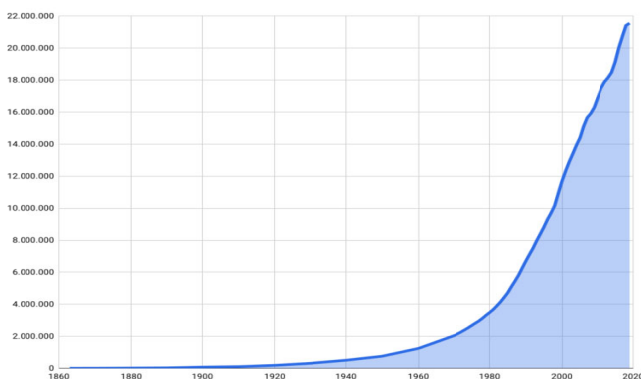


Fig. 1. Seventh-day Adventist Church membership from 1863–2022

The financial management for the mission, established Adventist schools and hospitals in metro-city and urban area. The flow of funding local through education institutes and healthcare system is generated. The combination of direct method and indirect method This dual approach reflects the Church's understanding of mission as addressing physical, mental, and economic growth of needs, a concept rooted in Ellen G. White's writings on health ministry as the "right arm of the gospel" (White, 1905). In secular societies, particularly in Europe and North America, where traditional religious engagement has waned, the Church has faced the dual challenge of declining interest in organized religion and skepticism toward absolute truths. To address these issues, Adventist outreach has increasingly incorporated contextualized approaches, such as small group ministries, community service projects, and the use of digital media to engage younger, tech-savvy audiences (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015).

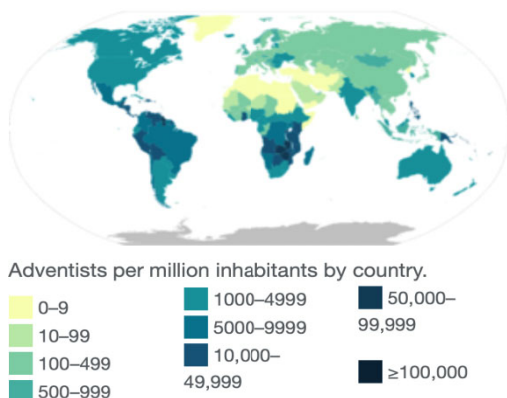


Fig.2. Adventists per million inhabitants by country

The Adventist emphasis on healthful living, vegetarianism, and holistic wellness has also served as a bridge to secular communities, at beginning it providing a non-threatening entry point for spiritual conversations. The "I Want to Live Healthy" initiative, for instance, has been particularly successful in fostering dialogue in urban settings, where health concerns often intersect with lifestyle choices (Eckhardt, 2020). Urban environments pose another set of unique challenges and opportunities for the Adventist mission. The rapid urbanization of the 21st century has concentrated populations in megacities, where traditional rural outreach methods are less effective. Recognizing this, the Church has prioritized urban mission initiatives under the umbrella of "Mission to the Cities," a program launched in 2012 to strategically address the spiritual and social needs of urban dwellers (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015). Key aspects of this initiative include establishing Centers of Influence, which provide services such as counseling, language classes, and health seminars to build trust and relationships within the community. Additionally, the integration of technology and media, such as online Bible studies and streaming worship services, has become essential in reaching urban populations, particularly among young adults who are more likely to engage with digital platforms than traditional church settings (Eckhardt, 2020). From this "Mission to the Cities", money generated and utilize for spreading gospel message to rural and tribal region of India.

The diversity of cultural contexts within the global Adventist community sometimes leads to tensions over theological interpretations, worship styles, and administrative practices. For these issues, highest adaptative strategy operated such as to accept all tribal god, creating (Trim, 2017). Furthermore, the financial and human resources required to sustain mission activities in hard-to-reach areas often exceed the Church's capacity, necessitating partnerships with supporting ministries and lay-led initiatives. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Church's humanitarian arm, exemplifies such collaborative efforts, addressing immediate needs in disaster-stricken areas while fostering long-term development in impoverished communities (ADRA International, 2023). Looking forward, the Seventh-day Adventist Church continues to refine its mission strategies to align with contemporary realities. The global pandemic of COVID-19 underscored the importance of digital ministry, with online worship services, evangelistic campaigns, and virtual small groups becoming central to the Church's outreach efforts during lockdowns (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2021). This shift not only expanded the Church's reach but also prompted a reevaluation of traditional methods of discipleship and community building. Additionally, the growing emphasis on youth and young adult engagement reflects the Church's recognition of the need to nurture a new generation of leaders and disciples. Programs like Global Youth Day and the One Year in Mission initiative empower young Adventists to take active roles in service and evangelism, fostering a sense of ownership and purpose within the Church community (Eckhardt, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's mission to share the three angels' messages with all people remains as relevant today as it was in its inception. Through a combination of traditional evangelistic methods and innovative

approaches, the Church seeks to navigate the complexities of a diverse and rapidly changing world. Seventh-day Adventist - run schools, colleges, and hospitals in urban areas provide avenues for deeper interaction with both local communities and expatriates. By leveraging its global network, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has built a reputation for combining service-oriented initiatives with evangelical goals, which has facilitated its growing presence in urban Indian Christian conversion. Under Joshua project, Seventh-day Adventist evangelism was more effective for spreading gospel message with a personal relationship that was established between a church member and the prospective member through various influence mode viz., school and hospital. An essential ingredient in the most fruitful Evangelistic Factors and Personal Influences was face-to-face recruitment along lines of significant social relationships, for example, family members. The Adventist Church with its tendency to focus on the immediate results of stable and constant conversion efforts rate.

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