Survey of Member Attitudes Reveals Surprising Trends

Results from thousands of church member surveys were highlighted during last week's world church Annual Council meetings. Jonathan Trim, director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, presented the findings, which, in contrast with an aging North American membership, reveals that 54 percent of world church members are between the ages of 16-40, with only 10 percent older than 60. Other interesting facts: Sabbath School teachers had a more positive effect on members' spiritual lives than pastors; only about one in three families conduct daily worship; almost half of college students and recent college graduates would accept practicing homosexuals as church members in good and regular standing; about 9 in 10 people who left the Adventist church were never contacted by their pastor after they stopped attending. Read a more in-depth summary from the Adventist News Network. Read additional reports from the Annual Council online.
Earthquake Impacts Adventist Outreach in Philippines
Last week's 7.2-magnitude quake in the Philippines directly affected or displaced an estimated 500,000 families. The upper floors of the Adventist hospital in Cebu were damaged, forcing staff to move patients to lower floors and nearby shelters. Walls cracked and ceilings caved in at the church’s East Visayan Academy. The Capital Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cebu also reported damage, church leaders said. The local Central Philippines Union Conference oversees more than 1,200 churches with a membership of 166,000. In addition to efforts in cyclone-hit areas of India, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency is working with local Filipino volunteers to assess and respond to needs. Read more from Adventist News Network.

Will Washington State Expand Religious Freedom?
The Washington State Supreme Court recently heard arguments in an important case that seeks to significantly strengthen accommodation rights for workers with religion-based needs. According to Greg Hamilton, Northwest Religious Liberty Association (NRLA) president, this may open a door for the NRLA team to inspire key legislators to sponsor a Washington Workplace Religious Freedom Act similar to what was successfully approved in Oregon during 2010. Read more about the initial case from the Seattle Times. Also, stay abreast of future actions at NRLA online.

Appreciate Your Pastor or Else ...
... the opportunity may pass. If you haven't yet capitalized on Pastor Appreciation Month during October, there's still time. Make up a gift basket and let them know their ministry is not forgotten. You might even place a new book in that basket to help them train members for evangelism. Fulfilling God's End-Time Mission, a new book from Mark and Ernestine Finley (pictured here), is now available through your local ABC or online. Robert Costa, world church ministerial associate says it "is the best manual of comprehensive evangelism written in recent years. It would be pastoral malpractice to ignore this book." So, there you have it.
Are You Planning for the Camporee?

Oshkosh, Wis., will once again host the International Pathfinder Camporee, Aug. 11–16, 2014. Pathfinder clubs from all around the Northwest and beyond will make the trek with vans, trailers and tents. Those wishing to enter the theme song selection process, have until Feb. 2 to submit a song. Orchestra auditions are also open until Dec. 25. Volunteers are needed to help with administration, programming, communication, safety, medical and other services. Find out how to apply at the camporee website.

Get Your FREE Book Here

If you order the Finley book for your pastor, or place any other order through the online Adventist Book Center site during the week of Oct. 27–Nov. 1, you'll get a free book. To celebrate Vegetarian Awareness Month, Pacific Press will send you free copy of The Vegetarian Advantage by Dr. Don Hall, IF you use the coupon code VEGE12. It might be a big help to you, or someone you know who is interested in living longer and feeling better.
Looking Ahead

October

25–27: UCC Christian Women’s Retreat
25–27: WWU Family Weekend

November

8–9: From Loss to Hope and Healing Seminar

More Events

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Landmark survey reveals in-depth beliefs, perceptions of Adventist members

David Trim, director of the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research presents the findings of the most in-depth research the denomination has conducted on its members. He delivered the findings to Annual Council delegates on Tuesday, October 15. [photo: Ansel Oliver]

Global research offers ‘snapshot’; Sabbath School teachers highly ranked

October 17, 2013 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Author: Edwin Manuel Garcia/ANN

The most extensive research ever conducted on the attitudes, beliefs, experiences and spiritual practices of Seventh-day Adventists reinforced some long-held assumptions about worshippers’ positive affirmation of the denomination, yet revealed an emerging trend toward secularization that is worrisome for some church leaders.

Among the most significant findings, based on tens of thousands of surveys from around the world:

- Sabbath School teachers were ranked higher than pastors and elders when church members were asked to state who was friendlier, warmer, more caring and had a positive effect on their spiritual lives.
- About three-fourths of Adventists strongly embrace the prophetic ministry of church co-founder Ellen G. White.
- Only about one in three families conduct daily worship.
- Almost half of college students and recent college graduates said they would accept practicing homosexuals as church members in good and regular standing.
- About 9 in 10 people who left the Adventist church were never contacted by their pastor after they stopped attending.

The findings, released this week to delegates at the 2013 General Conference Annual Council at church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, were commissioned by the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research two and a half years ago.

The research was based on five separate projects. It consisted of 41,000 interviews or questionnaires around the world; involved 4,260 pastors; nearly 26,000 church members; 1,200 college students and recent graduates; and 900 former Adventists. Research teams from Adventist universities on several contents were involved in the unprecedented effort.

“In terms of both the breadth and depth,” said David Trim, director of the church’s research office, “this is the best snapshot we’ve ever had of the worldwide church.”

Before presenting the findings to hundreds of church administrators, Trim warned the audience to not be quick to judge. “Data is what it is,” Trim said. “What it means, is something else.”

The findings debunked longheld assumptions about the denomination’s gender makeup: The church is 57 percent female, and 43 percent male – quite a ways off from the belief that 65 percent of worshippers were female and 35 percent were male.

The findings also showed a church that is young – 54 percent of the members worldwide are between the ages of 16 and 40 – which has two disadvantages, according to Trim. For one, young members may be called too quickly into denominational administrative leadership positions without the proper experience. In addition, older leaders may need training to learn how to understand and work effectively with the younger generation.

Only 10 percent of church members globally are older than 60, and the largest proportion of aging congregants are in North America,
Europe and Japan. In contrast, Trim said, “Our church in Latin America and Africa in particular is an extremely youthful church.”

The findings contained several bright spots, Trim said, including a statistic that shows that 53 percent of respondents stated that the Sabbath School adult Bible study guide helped “very much” to develop their religious life.

The study guide, perhaps not surprisingly, is least popular with worshipers is in North America, parts of Europe, and in and around Australia. “As someone who is both from Australia and Europe, and married to an American,” Trim said jokingly, “I will accept the blame for all those things. We are very cynical people in America, Australia and Europe.”

Another “success story,” Trim said, was that 92 percent of Adventists have an overwhelming conviction that the Seventh-day Sabbath is the true Sabbath, and only 3 percent disagree (that particular survey’s margin of error was 3 percent, which could perhaps mean zero disagreement).

The findings also pointed to several areas deemed problematic, such as people leaving the church unnoticed, and the seeping influence of secular values, Trim said.

Interestingly, the vast majority of inactive and former members are not rejecting the message and mission of the church.

“They are moving with the strong dynamics of contemporary society away from established forms of religious activity,” Trim said. “The fabric of most Adventist local churches is not sufficient to stem this tide.” He then told the delegates, “Brothers and sisters, I think this is a real challenge to us.”

While only 9 percent of Adventists were contacted by their pastor after they stopped attending church, a larger number of former members said they had been visited by elders or other church members. However, the findings show that 4 out of 10 Adventists slipped out of the church without ever being contacted by anyone.

The fact that members lapse unnoticed is a “tragedy,” Trim said.

From 2000 to 2012, more than 13.6 million people joined the church, mostly through baptism. But during the same time, 5.9 million Adventists were lost (and that doesn’t include those who died). That’s a loss rate of nearly 43.4 per 100 new converts. “That is too high,” Trim said.

Approximately 90 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ. When asked if they expect the world to end within the next 20 years, just 22 percent of respondents strongly agreed, and 45 percent strongly disagreed, Trim said. “It’s not that people don’t believe that Jesus is coming, but there does seem to be some kind of skepticism about him coming soon.”

The research concluded that secularization is no longer limited to America, Europe and Australia. “It’s a globalized society,” Trim said. “People are watching the same television programs, reading the same apps and websites on their phones and computers, and secularization is a problem.”

Following the presentation, Vice President Benjamin Schoun acknowledged that challenges indeed lie ahead.

“We have much to learn and we probably need to incorporate these results into our strategic planning,” he stated, “because it is a very sobering picture in some cases, even though we have our strengths as well.”
Management Expert Hamel Exhorts Adventist Leaders to Encourage Innovation

BY MARK A. KELLNER, News Editor, with ANSEL OLIVER, Adventist News Network

One of Silicon Valley’s brightest minds challenged 400 world leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to create a climate of innovation at every level of the movement.

“I think aspiration is the best insurance against irrelevance,” management thinker Gary Hamel declared in a keynote address to the Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) training program, which preceded the October 11 opening of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists’ Annual Council. "No organization ever outperforms its own aspirations."

Hamel, cited by The Wall Street Journal in 2008 as the world’s most influential business thinker, encouraged leaders to be aware of changing climates in their constituencies. Overall, he said, society is changing the way it views and interacts with institutions such as the church, sometimes rendering those institutions less effective: “Every successful organization is successful until it’s not,” adding, "as human beings, we are all susceptible to denial.”

The LEAD program is part of an effort to introduce Seventh-day Adventist Church decision-makers worldwide to current innovations and best practices in leadership.

Hamel is a founder of Strategos, an international management consulting firm. His books include “What Matters Now,” a guide to building organizations that thrive amid uncertainty and shifting priorities.
He urged Adventist leaders to facilitate experimentation and change within the organization’s ranks: “The pace for change is ultimately the question of how much experimentation is going on inside that organization,” Hamel said. “The job of every leader is make sure that change always seems more exciting than standing back.”

Hamel reminded his audience that while divinely-given truths are eternal, the structures of organizations to communicate those truths can and should adapt to the times: “We don't worship tradition, we worship a risen Lord,” he said.

Drawing from his consulting experience at the epicenter of America’s high technology industry, the famed “Silicon Valley” area between San Jose and San Francisco, California, he noted that Google strives to have 5,000 experiments aimed at improving the firm’s computer search technology every year, with the expectation that a significant number will yield results for the firm.

"Basically every large corporation has an innovation lab in the Silicon Valley, he said. "Maybe the [Seventh-day Adventist] Church needs an innovation lab, too."

Hamel said that while the church is committed to redemption, renewal and reconciliation, there are times when established programs, policies or practices obscure the core message.

“The only way you would really know you are committed is if you were willing to sacrifice some of those habits, some of those structures, to those commitments,” he said.

G. T. Ng, executive secretary of the General Conference, said Hamel's earlier presentations to the Secretariat department sparked the invitation to address the leadership at this year’s Council. Ng said the church can learn much from Hamel's message. “The church at different levels could do more to overcome the inertia to change in terms of methodologies, to maximize the use of technology, to keep pace with a fast changing world,” Ng said. "We probably could do better in empowering the rank and file for mission by removing or reducing red tape. In [Secretariat] we have already taken steps in that direction. The South Pacific Division's example of downsizing in order to allocate more money for mission is a good example.”

The LEAD conference began Thursday evening with major presentations that featured research on the church’s health message. Fred Hardinge, an associate director of the world church’s Health Ministries department, addressed scientific evidence underlining the Adventist health message. After citing numerous studies backing up the various point, he noted that merely presenting health education is not sufficient. “This message is not to be separated from the gospel message. Some of the health promoting effects of the health message have been confirmed by science, but today’s most skillful and perceptive scientist cannot bring the dead to life,” Hardinge said. “Jesus is the only life giver, and He is the only health giver.”

Kathleen Kuntaraf, also an associate Health Ministries director, discussed how Seventh-day Adventist health principles can help fight against non-communicable diseases. “God truly cares for us and gave us this wholistic packaged prescription for our own good,” she said. “However, the struggle between making good and bad choices for our health is a continuous one. And Peter Landless, who recently assumed leadership of the Health Ministries department, noted the end-time importance of sharing health education with the world at large: “The world is facing unprecedented challenges both in the developed countries and in the emerging economies by the issues of obesity, type II diabetes, hypertension, tobacco-related diseases and coronary artery disease. We are called not only to practice temperance in our lives, live the health advantage that has been so generously given to us but also to share it with a broken and dying world.”

Following Hamel’s Friday morning message, hypothetical and actual case studies of leadership situations were presented to the church leaders. A drama team of students from Washington Adventist University presented a skit pitting the arguments of “Dr. Evan Keel Church” against those from member “Yoneeda Change,” asking the audience to decide how best to implement change. Two other case studies, though hypothetical, also reflected challenges many administrators face. One centered on an Adventist hospital that was once a local leader, but had fallen on hard times, and the other concerned a dynamic pastor who, when elevated to a leadership position, was unable to gain cooperation and began to “steamroll” his positions through. In each of these instances, audience questions were designed to guide leaders into a greater understanding of how to deal with, and improve, such situations.
Thousands of homes in the island of Bohol in central Philippines were damaged during a 7.2-magnitude earthquake last week. [photo: Moises Musico]

ADRA distributing water, food and emergency supplies

October 23, 2013 | Silang, Cavite, Philippines | Author: Moises Musico and Gay Deles/ANN staff

A hospital and several other properties owned by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in central Philippines sustained damage when a massive earthquake hit the island of Bohol last week.

The 7.2-magnitude quake killed at least 185 people, injured hundreds more and reduced thousands of buildings to rubble and twisted metal. An estimated 500,000 families are displaced or affected, among them 14 Adventist families. More families, fearing powerful aftershocks, are living outside their homes in makeshift tents.

The upper floors of the Adventist hospital in Cebu were damaged, forcing staff to move patients to lower floors and nearby shelters. Walls cracked and ceilings caved in at the church’s East Visayan Academy. The Capital Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cebu also reported damage, church leaders said.

Travel remains a challenge on the island of Bohol due to impassable roads and interrupted communication services, relief workers said. Although airports and seaports in Bohol and Cebu City are operational, on-the-ground communication, transportation and emergency relief efforts have been hampered.

Despite the obstacles, leaders and staff from the church’s Central Visayan Conference, headquartered in Cebu City, flew to Bohol with other Adventist volunteers to begin distributing food, water and medicine to affected families. Local Adventists are supporting the effort by collecting supplies and supplying off-road vehicles to navigate the debris.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency in the Philippines is monitoring the situation and continues to assess needs. Agency officials said their initial response includes water, food and other basic supplies for the most vulnerable people, such as children, the elderly and pregnant women. ADRA is also coordinating with local government relief efforts to support the broader humanitarian response.

Local church leaders said they’re grateful that the Central Philippine Union Conference headquarters emerged largely unscathed. Hope Channel broadcasts were temporarily halted for safety reasons, Communication Director Donald Zabala said.

The conference oversees more than 1,200 churches in central Philippines with a membership of 166,000.
Are Washington employers obligated, under the state law, to accommodate the religious beliefs of their employees — freeing them from religious holiday shifts or allowing them to pray while on the job? It's an unanswered legal question that the state Supreme Court may now finally address.

By Lornet Turnbull
Seattle Times staff reporter

Are Washington employers obligated to accommodate their employees’ religious practices — giving days off for holidays, for example, or allowing time to to pray during work hours?

On Tuesday, the Washington Supreme Court will hear arguments in a case closely watched by legal groups not so much for its merits but for the precedent it could set in finally clarifying the state’s discrimination law.

The lawsuit before them was brought by four employees of Gate Gourmet, an international company that prepares food for airline passengers, and which, for security reasons, prohibits its workers from bringing their own meals to work.

The four men — vegetarian, Orthodox Christian, Muslim and Hindu — say the meals the company had been serving during the workers’ shifts led them unknowingly to eat pork and other foods in conflict with their religious and moral beliefs.

Asegedew Gefe, one of the plaintiffs, is an Orthodox Christian who has been working at Gate’s warehouse at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport since 2010.

“We’re not asking for this or that,” he said. “If it’s broccoli, tell us it’s broccoli. If it’s pork tell us pork.”

But does the company have to?

While it is illegal under state law to fire or refuse to hire someone because of his creed, defined as a system of religious beliefs, the law is less clear — and some say silent, even — on whether employers must accommodate religious practices in the workplace, at a time when employees are increasingly asserting their religious identities at work.

Some say the protection is implicit in state law.
"Failure to recognize a religious discrimination claim under (state law) would leave a gaping hole in the coverage made available by the statute," the ACLU of Washington and the Washington Employment Lawyers Association wrote in a brief filed with the Supreme Court.

A year ago, King County Superior Court Judge Mary Yu granted Gate's request to dismiss the workers' lawsuit, saying state law does not require employers to accommodate religious practices.

Yu wrote that her order was based on a state Court of Appeals decision in an earlier case in which a devout Christian woman sued the Battle Ground School District in Clark County for religious accommodation, saying her supervisor told her to relay false information to another employee against her religious beliefs.

The appeals-court judges dismissed that case, concluding that the high court, the Legislature and Human Rights Commission, which enforces the state anti-discrimination law, had never formally recognized religious accommodation under state law.

Some believe the Supreme Court agreed to take the Gate case in part because of its importance.

Justices this session are also weighing a separate aspect of the anti-discrimination law in another case.

In May, they heard arguments on whether the exemption granted in the law to religious organizations—from churches to universities to hospitals—is in conflict with the state constitution.

High court rulings in both cases would guide lower courts in deciding such lawsuits in the future.

Specifically, a decision in the accommodation case could shift some lawsuits from federal to state court, set the standard for the accommodation employers must make and allow workers to sue smaller employers—those with eight workers versus those with 25 as required in federal cases.

“This law has been around since 1949; it’s hard to imagine the issue is only now being addressed,” said attorney George M. Ahrend, who wrote an amicus, or friend-of-the-court, brief for the Washington State Association for Justice Foundation.

“Citizens shouldn’t have to rely on federal law for protection.”

Attorneys for the company, which employs about 130 workers at Sea-Tac, wrote in an email that Gate "takes its legal obligations very seriously, including those that are designed to protect the rights of its employees."

They declined to comment further, citing the upcoming Supreme Court arguments.

Aaron Rocke, attorney for the Gate workers, said religious accommodation is implicit in state law.

“The primary legal issue in this appeal is an important matter of civil rights that helps define Washington state as either with the mainstream in protecting civil rights and respecting religion, or a fringe haven for intolerance,” Rocke said.

While low in numbers, religious-based workplace complaints to both the state and federal governments have been on the rise since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

And a poll this year by the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding in New York found the most common religious-based conflicts involved being required to work on a religious holiday or attending company events where foods were not halal, kosher or vegetarian.

**State vs. Federal**

The Legislature passed the state law barring discrimination in employment and other areas based on a person's race, religion and other characteristics 15 years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 enshrined such rights at the federal level.
But while the federal law, applicable to private employers, was later amended and regulations established to provide for “reasonable” religious accommodations in the workplace, the Washington statute was not.

In a 1992 ruling, the state Supreme Court noted that whether state law may “implicitly require accommodation is an important and complex question that we have not previously been asked to decide.”

Laura Lindstrand, policy analyst for the Human Rights Commission, said there was never a legal question around religious accommodation until last year’s ruling in the Battle Ground case.

State law was liberally and broadly construed, as the Legislature intended, to require employers to make “reasonable” religious accommodations for their workers, she said.

While it has not written regulations, the commission has published guidelines around such protections and has investigated such complaints and made determinations on cases, with the understanding that such protection exists, whether under state law, or by extension under federal law, Lindstrand said.

“We didn’t think it was an issue; we were not concerned about the lack of specific language in the law.”

Still, she said, if she were an attorney representing clients in an employment-discrimination case, she’d file it in federal rather than state court.

And that’s precisely what most attorneys in this state say they do.

Hardeep Rekhi, a Seattle attorney, recently got a default judgment in a lawsuit he filed on behalf of a Muslim man fired from his job as a security guard after he refused to shave his beard, which he wears closely cropped in keeping with his religion.

Rekhi said he filed in federal rather than state court, because he recognized a lack of clarity in state law.

In 2005, Red Robin Gourmet Burgers settled a federal lawsuit brought by a server in its Bellevue restaurant who was fired for refusing to cover up wrist tattoos he said were part of his ancient Egyptian Kemetic faith.

Rocke, who plans to seek class-action status, said he proceeded in state court with the Gate suit long before the decision in the Battle Ground case, believing state law protected his clients.

“Our position is that Washington, just like both the U.S. government and a majority of the states, require employers to reasonably accommodate religion in the workplace,” he said.

There have been similar religious-accommodation cases across the country.

Gate’s policy prohibiting workers from bringing meals is based in part on federal security measures.

Gefe said that when Gate hired him three years ago, he had not given particular thought to the meals the company would provide.

On several occasions, Gefe said he and his co-workers ate pork, when they thought they were eating beef or chicken.

While the workers, represented by the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (Unite HERE), could have sought a remedy through their union, a spokeswoman said it’s also their prerogative to sue.

According to the suit, after a co-worker brought the issue to the company’s attention, Gate began serving meatballs made from turkey, but later reversed that move without telling the workers.

Union officials said the company is now labeling the workers’ meals, but Rocke said it’s “not reliable or
consistent.”

In addition to damages, the plaintiffs also are seeking payment for medical testing and religious cleansing or purification and paid time off to do it.

*Lornet Turnbull: 206-464-2420 or lturnbull@seattletimes.com. On Twitter @turnbullL.*
Upcoming Events | GleanerOnline.org

**UCC Christian Women’s and Young Women’s Retreat**

Women and young women are invited to attend the Upper Columbia Conference Christian Women’s and Young Women’s Retreat, October 25-27 at Camp MiVoden in Idaho. The featured guest speaker is Brenda Walsh who is an author, musical performer and the host of Kid’s Time on 3ABN. Enjoy rest, relaxation, crafts and special seminars. For more information and to register go to www.uccsda.org/women.

Find out more »

**WWU Family Weekend**

Families of current Walla Walla University students are invited to the WWU main campus for Family Weekend. Come participate in class visits, student missions vespers, Sabbath seminars, music events, and a complimentary Sabbath dinner with John and Pam McVay. For more information, see wallawalla.edu/family-weekend or call the Office of Advancement at 800-377-2586.

Find out more »

**Sharon Church 2nd Annual Homecoming Celebration**

Connecting people to the promise with speaker Dr. Terry Johnson. At the Sharon Church, 5209 NE 22nd Ave., Portland, Ore. For more information, call 503-287-7649 or email sharonhomecoming2013@gmail.com.

Find out more »

**From Loss to Hope and Healing Seminar**

Journey Adventist Church presents From Loss to Hope and Healing by Donald and Barbara Bigger. These four sessions begin Friday night and continue through Saturday with a potluck lunch between church and the afternoon session. The session titles are “Coping with Tragedy,” “Hope for Then and Now,” What We Learned from Inmate $263818” and “The Bible’s View of Forgiving.”

Find out more »

**SAGE – LeMay Car Museum**

SAGE will ride down memory lane at the new LeMay — America’s Car Museum in Tacoma, on Sunday, at 1:30 p.m. Over 350 vehicles are displayed at one time. The new museum campus is located adjacent to the Tacoma Dome alongside Interstate 5. Group tickets are $10 each. SAGE will meet as a group at 1:30 p.m. at the group check-in counter.

Find out more »