Strategy To Retain Second Generation Immigrants at the Bethlehem French Seventh-day Adventist Church in New Jersey

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Abstract

Problem

Bethlehem French Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Orange, New Jersey, has been facing the challenges of any typical church located in urban environments in this post-millennial world. The church is confronted with member depletion in general, and the young people, in particular. The problem of retention has plagued our congregation in a manner that stagnated our exponential growth. A large percentage of the children who were born and raised in the church is leaving the Seventh-day Adventist faith after college. The Bethlehem French Seventh-day Adventist Church has not been exempted.

Method

To resolve the problem, I have put in place a series of five seminars to instruct the parents about their duty of transmission of the spiritual values to their children, to instill in the young people their self-value and identity awareness, and to train the church elders to offer a spirit-filled worship environment susceptible to nurture spiritual growth in the church. During a period of five months, from April through August 2018, 18 young people from 14 to 21-years-old participated in a research project to measure their religious...
involvement before and after the implementation. Quantitative data recorded before and after were collected, compared, analyzed, and evaluated to establish a diagnostic of the problem, and to propose tentative solutions.

Results

The study revealed that most of the young people do not live in a home where strong parent involvement is part of their spiritual formation, and none of them attended Seventh-day Adventist schools. The results of the surveys also highlighted the fact that there are disconnect and trust issues between the youth and the church leadership. Only a small percentage of them see the adults as spiritual role models. However, their faith in Christ and their likelihood to stay in the church seemed to increase from the pre-implementation survey to the post-implementation survey.

Conclusions

Therefore, I recommended several actions plans to address the problem. I encouraged the parents to improve their parent/child relationship through better parenting skills, and a daily home devotional schedule. I also increased, through subsequent training, the elders’ awareness of youth mentality, and I invited them to be more open-minded regarding contemporary styles of worship. A loving spiritual home environment, a caring and supportive church community, and a better preaching and uplifting worship services would contribute to keeping the youth close to Jesus until he comes back to introduce eternity.

Subject Area

Bethlehem French Seventh-day Adventist Church (East Orange, N.J.); Seventh-day Adventist youth–New Jersey; Church work with youth–Seventh-day Adventists

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