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Development and Implementation of a Ministry Program To Reconnect Former Adventists within the Waitara Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Abstract

Problem

The membership data from the Waitara Church revealed a gain of 1.33% in baptisms and professions of faith. However, attendance data collected indicated that the weekly attendance numbers in the Waitara Church, within the Greater Sydney on any given Sabbath; did not add up to the numbers found on the local church membership roll. This disparity in membership numbers raised questions regarding the whereabouts of those who do not attend church any longer but continue to claim to be Seventh-day Adventists, this is a member retention problem that needs attention.

Method

Reconnecting ministry strategy was developed in order to reconnect with former and missing Adventists in the Waitara Church within the Greater Sydney Conference. After a 14-month preparatory period, a Home Coming Event was held on May 6, 2017; at the Waitara Seventh-day Adventist Church. The efficacy of the project was evaluated by the attendance of former members.

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Results

The implementation of the reconnecting ministry program resulted in a first for the Waitara Church with 15 former members in attendance. While churches in Greater Sydney Conference were encouraged to hold a Home Coming Event, according to reports, the Waitara Church was most successful because of its intentional strategy. The outcomes were very encouraging with members suggesting that a similar initiative be held every alternate year. The testimonies from former members who attended the Home Coming Event were appreciative of the fact that the church had not forgotten them. There were requests from other churches to hold a similar program in their churches.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the implementation of this strategy, to reconnect with former and missing members in the church at Waitara, it does seem to be an effective way to establish relationships with those who no longer attend church. This strategy also appears to have had a very positive impact on the spiritual climate of the church in Waitara; therefore, to implement this strategy biannually is recommended. Studying the possibility of implementing this strategy in other churches both in the Greater Sydney and other Conferences within the Australian Conferences is also merited.

Subject Area

Church work with ex-church members--Seventh-day Adventists; Ex-church members--Seventh-day Adventists; Waitara Seventh-day Adventist Church (NSW, Australia)

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The Seventh-day Adventist church traces its roots to American preacher William Miller (1782–1849), a Baptist who predicted the Second Coming would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. Because he and his followers proclaimed Christ's imminent advent, they were known as "Adventists." When Christ failed to appear, Miller reluctantly endorsed the position of a group of his followers known as the "seventh-month movement," who claimed Christ would return on October 22, 1844 (in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar). When this didn't happen either, Miller forswore predicting the date Seventh-day Adventism is a cultish denomination of Christianity which holds that Jesus' return is imminent (though conveniently never setting a specific date for his return). Its largest organized church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, boasts approximately 16 million members worldwide. Note that Seventh-day Adventism necessitates a belief in young Earth creationism. The "seventh-day" is a reference to the seventh day of the biblical creation story: God literally made the world in six 24-hour days