Public Perceptions of the Adventist Church

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Center for Creative Ministry
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Source of Data

- A random sample of 1,284 telephone interviews with the general public in the United States and Canada
- Allowance for sampling error is 3% (+/-) at the 95th percentile of reliability.
- Conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry under contract with the NAD Office of Information, Research and Strategic Planning
Additional Sources

- A survey using the same methods and sampling conducted in 1994 by the Center for Creative Ministry under contract with the NAD
- Surveys conducted in 1970 and 1986 by Gallup Poll using the same questions
- Surveys conducted in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 by the Center for Metropolitan Ministry using the same questions

Have you ever heard or read about the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

- Yes: 56%
- No: 44%
History of name recognition of the Adventist Church by the general public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name Recognition (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>56%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Name recognition of the Adventist Church by generation

- Older generations: 72%
- Baby Boom generation: 68%
- Younger generations: 38%
Name recognition of the Adventist Church by ethnicity

What comes to mind?
What comes to mind?

- Saturday Sabbath
- It’s a religion
- A cult, Mormons, JWs
- Pushy, knock on my door
- Personal contacts
- Different, too strict
- Good people
- Vegetarian diet, etc.
- A Christian group

Name recognition of Adventist media ministries

- Lifestyle Magazine
- It Is Written
- Voice of Prophecy
- Breath of Life
- The Evidence
Name recognition of Adventist publications

Name recognition of Adventist health and service organizations
Do you know anyone who is an Adventist?

- No: 78%
- Yes: 22%

Have you ever visited an Adventist church?

- No: 93%
- Yes: 7%
Name recognition in major metropolitan areas, 2000-2004

Columbus: 58%
St. Louis: 45%
Pittsburgh: 37%
Baltimore: 32%
Newark: 34%
Philadelphia: 32%

Source: Center for Metropolitan Ministry

What comes to mind?

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- Pushy, knock on my door
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0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%
Name recognition of Adventist media ministries

Source: Center for Metropolitan Ministry

Name recognition of Adventist publications
Name recognition of Adventist health and service organizations

Know someone who is an Adventist
Have ever visited an Adventist church

- 4%
- 3%
- 2%
- 14%
- 10%
- 7%

Source: Center for Metropolitan Ministry

Is the Adventist Church active in local community causes?

Source: Center for Metropolitan Ministry
Do Adventists live longer than the average person?

Source: Center for Metropolitan Ministry

Summary of Public Perception Data

Source: Center for Metropolitan Ministry
Summary of Public Perception of the Adventist Church

What do these data mean?

- The Adventist Church is largely invisible in North America today
- The problem is greater in the cities of the Northeast than it is in the Midwest or the Sunbelt
- The average person is not likely to respond to a message coming from an organization they don’t know
What do these data mean?

- Media ministries and literature have less impact than do personal relationships
- The Adventist Church is increasingly marginalized and “preaching to the choir”

What can be done about public perceptions?

- Break out of the “religious ghetto” into mainstream, secular media
- What the Mormons are doing
- NAD has experimented with public awareness spots in Tulsa, Spokane and Indianapolis
- Major barrier; cannot raise money in a spot strategy
What can be done about public perceptions?

- Increased community involvement by local churches, not individual members
- Establish Adventist public service/public affairs agencies in major metro areas
- Make contributions that gain media attention and “street cred”

What can be done about public perceptions?

- The credibility of a church and the plausibility of its message is judged differently by new generations than in the past
  - Past: institutional strength, education of the clergy, substantial publications
  - Now: significant humanitarian activities in the local community, creativity of worship experience, authenticity
Your local church

- How often is it mentioned in the local news?
- What would civic leaders say is its contribution to human needs in the city where it is located?
- What percentage of the members live in the same neighborhood where the church building is?

Your local church

- How often does the church board discuss non-religious needs in the city or neighborhood?
- How many civic groups do the pastor and elders participate in?
- If you randomly picked 12 GenXers from the nearest mall and brought them to church, what kind of score would they give you for creativity and authenticity?
Resources

- *Understanding Your Community* from Center for Creative Ministry
- Personalized demographic profiles from the Center for Metropolitan Ministry – (800) 438-9600
- Adventist Media Productions - (805) 955-7770
- Transda - (805) 955-7606
- NAD and Union Conference offices of communication

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