Christ’s Mission in the Blue Ridge Area

A report by
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Center for Creative Ministry
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Who is Monte Sahlin?

- An ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister for 40 years who has done assessments of more than 1,000 local churches. He is currently employed by the Ohio Conference after spending two decades at the General Conference and union conference level directing research and development. He teaches in the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University and the urban studies program at Eastern Baptist University. He is the author of 20 books, 50 research monographs and many articles.
What is the Center for Creative Ministry?

- One of the research and information centers affiliated with the North American Division, the center provides information, resource materials, training and consultants to help local churches develop new approaches to outreach, evangelism and church growth. It provides the *Sharing Scripture* small group Bible study guides, *Friend2Friend* training videos and other materials.
Goals of this Study

- Understand the status of the Adventist mission in this area
- Profile the spiritual life and vitality of the Mount Pisgah Church
- Find effective ways to reach the community
- Provide information for future planning and problem-solving
Outline

- Background & trends
- The mission field
- Congregational survey
- Analysis & recommendations
October 1914 a group of “self-supporting” workers started the Mount Pisgah Industrial Institute as “a training school for rural community workers in this union.”

Started with 29 students, most elementary students from the local community

Soon a sanitarium and hospital were added with a nursing school
Background

- A key goal: make it possible for students to work their way through.
- By 1940, the sanitarium & hospital had 28 beds and provided 86% of total student expenses.
  - Total of 330 patients per year with an average stay of 14 days.
  - Two doctors, four nurse supervisors and a dietitian.
  - Operating room, maternity, lab, X-ray, pharmacy, and an office practice.
Background

- The school farm produced wheat, rye, corn, garden vegetables; plus a dairy, flour mill and Pisgah Food Company
- Vocational school programs—carpentry, plumbing, construction, mechanics, printing shop
- Enrollment for 1939-40 totaled 122
  - 18 in elementary school
  - 84 in academy
  - 20 in nursing school
Background

Summary of the first 25 years:
- 125 baptisms
- “votes to keep liquor stores out of our county”
- Community health services
- “Sunday school work”
- $38,300 in tithe, $32,900 in offerings
- 22 buildings and 10 homes
Background

- Summer of 1921—eight week training in “rural education”
- During these early years the church met in homes and the sanitarium parlor
- June 1, 1951—GC turns over institution to Carolina Conference
  - Named Mount Pisgah Academy
- 1952—Conference builds a gym/auditorium
Background

- 1954—teacher Roger McNeily joins the Faith for Today quartet
- 1957—Medical Cadet Corps unit of 36 young men
  - R. C. Rilea of MPA appointed a staff officer for Camp Doss, summer of 1959
- 1957—J.L. Edwards first to serve as named pastor of Mount Pisgah Church
  - Also Bible teacher at the academy
Background

- 1960—Student Neal Ludlam wins Southern Union Bible quiz contest, goes to North American Youth Congress
- 1961—Church has an every-member canvas to raise $82,000
- 1963—Students provide Christmas party for 125 underprivileged children from West Asheville in MPA cafeteria
- 1964—Two students “crowned king and queen of Courtesy Week” at MPA
Background

- 1965—First Carolina Conference summer camp held at Mount Pisgah
- 1965—Plans developed to “replace the old Quonset chapel”
- 1966—Smokers Dial opened for Asheville area
- 1967—Carolina Conference Camp Meeting begins at Mount Pisgah
- 1971—Students hold Youth for Christ evangelistic meetings in Asheville
Background

- 1973—New church building is dedicated
- 1978—Pastor & doctor conduct Five-day Plan to Stop Smoking in Canton
- 1981—Health screening in Canton & Waynesville, 170 attend
- 1982—Pastor & Mrs. Ron Whitehead among 21 Master Guides invested at Mount Pisgah Church on May 8
- 1986—Balcony constructed to deal with overcrowding in the church (135 seats)
Background

- In early 1990s mission trips from the Mount Pisgah Church helped start the first Pathfinder Club in the country of Estonia and sponsored an evangelistic series.
- 1995—Opening of Pisgah Villa, third phase of the Pisgah Valley Retirement Center.
Membership & Accessions
Total Yearly Tithe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Yearly Tithe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$492,815</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$489,609</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$533,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$574,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$530,335</td>
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</table>
Membership Estimates

Inactive: 31%
Shut-in or away: 7%
Moved: 9%
Attend regularly: 53%
Candler as a Mission Field

- Candler is a small town in the Blue Ridge Mountains west of Asheville which has become the center of a suburban area surrounded by the Pisgah National Forest.
- Zip Code 28715 has 25,239 people
- One Adventist for 111 people
  - USA: 1 to 305
  - New Guinea: 1 to 25
  - Zambia: 1 to 22
  - Jamaica: 1 to 14
  - Belize: 1 to 10
Who are the people living in this community?

Rural Working Families 42%
Country Consumers 14%
Established Families 14%

Red area = 15 other segments with very small numbers.
“Rural Working Families”

- Income and education are below average, while home ownership is high; one in five are mobile homes
- Above average number of workers employed in farming and forestry
- Primary concerns are divorce, finding a good church, problems at school, finding adequate food and health insurance
- More involved with religion than most Americans with above average percentages in Holiness, Baptist, Methodist, Adventist, Lutheran and Pentecostal churches
- Prefer a church with small groups, Divorce Recovery program, food pantry, youth activities
“Established Families”

- Mostly middle-aged married couples with income above average, yet education below average.
- Half are Blue Collar workers with high numbers who own riding mowers, chain saws and trucks.
- Primary concerns: childcare, parenting skills, finding spiritual teaching, time for recreation.
- Average levels of involvement in religion with above average numbers among Adventists, Methodists, Lutherans and Presbyterians.
- Prefer a church with family life events, youth activities and small groups.
“Country Consumers”

- Better off than the previous group with average income and education
- Blue Collar workers with high percentage in precision crafts
- Primary concerns: day-to-day financial worries, finding food, obtaining health insurance, domestic violence, finding spiritual teaching
- High percentage are not involved in religion; the involved are more likely to be Pentecostal, Holiness, Mormon, Baptist or Methodist
- Prefer a church with small groups, family social activities, parenting classes, youth activities, a church school
Population Growth

2015 is an estimate
Age Groups

- Under 5
- Under 18
- Age 65 and older

Candler vs National
Ethnic Profile

- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- White

Candler vs National
Immigrants

- Foreign born
- Speak another language at home

Candler National
Housing

![Graph showing the percentage of Owner-occupied and Renter-occupied housing in Candler compared to national averages. The graph indicates a higher percentage of owner-occupied housing in Candler than the national average, while the percentage of renter-occupied housing is significantly lower in Candler.]
Education

- Secondary diploma
- College degree

Candler
National
Married

- 50% Married
- 52% Married
- 54% Married
- 56% Married
- 58% Married
- 60% Married
- 62% Married
- 64% Married

Men: 64%

Women: 56%
Median Household Income

- 2000: $37,387
- 2010: $42,257
- National: $43,853
- 2010: $52,599
Poverty

- Individuals below poverty line
- Families below poverty line

Candler
National
Cost of Housing

- Median monthly mortgage: $924 (Candler), $1,427 (National)
- Median monthly rent/lease: $235 (Candler), $402 (National)
Religious Preferences of Local Residents

- Evangelical: 44%
- Protestant: 31%
- Catholic: 11%
- No religion: 11%
- Other: 3%

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Religious Involvement of Local Residents

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Religious Involvement of Local Residents

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Top Needs in the Community

- 46% Achieving financial security
- 42% Maintaining personal health
- 37% Day-to-day financial worries
- 33% Dealing with stress
- 33% Getting health insurance
- 25% Finding good schools
- 24% Dealing with teen/child problems
- 23% Obtaining better quality health care

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
PRIMARY CONCERN: MAINTAINING PERSONAL HEALTH

- **39% to 41%**
- **41% to 42%**
- **42% to 44%**
- **44% to 46%**
Needs in the Community

- 22% Achieving a fulfilling marriage
- 22% Finding a good church
- 21% Finding time for recreation
- 20% Planning retirement opportunities
- 19% Neighborhood crime & safety
- 18% Alcohol/drug addiction
- 18% Problems with school
- 18% Finding spiritual teaching

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Needs in the Community

- 16% Caring for aging parents
- 16% Finding a satisfying job/career
- 15% Finding friends
- 15% Developing parenting skills
- 14% Finding any job
- 14% Finding direction in my life
- 12% Abusive relationships
- 10% Dealing with racial/ethnic prejudice

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Low-priority Needs in the Community

- 9% Obtaining adequate food
- 8% Dealing with social injustice
- 7% Finding affordable housing
- 6% Getting an education
- 6% Affordable child care
- 5% Dealing with divorce
- 4% Dealing with neighborhood gangs

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Church Programs People Want

- 56%  Bible study & prayer group
- 32%  Family activities & outings
- 31%  Youth activities
- 27%  Family & personal counseling
- 24%  Active retirement program
- 21%  Doctrinal study group
- 16%  Marriage enrichment seminar
- 16%  Care for the terminally ill

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Church Programs People Want

- 11% Food & clothing for the needy
- 11% Music/art/drama programs
- 11% Spiritual retreats
- 7% Parent training class
- 5% Day care
- 4% Sports or camping
- 4% Church school (day school)
- 3% 12-step group for addictions
- 2% Divorce Recovery program

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
Church Program Preferences Index

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
How I prefer for churches to contact me ...

Source: Percept Group, Inc.
A standard questionnaire was distributed during worship on two Sabbaths in early 2010.

A total of 131 usable questionnaires were returned which represents 48% of average attendance on those two Sabbaths—a response rate above minimum professional standards and a reliable sample.
Age groups by generation

Before Boomers | Baby Boom | Gen X | Millennial
---|---|---|---
Congregation | Community
0% | 30% | 25% | 18%
Gender

![Bar Chart](image)

- **Men**: Congregation: 50%, Community: 40%
- **Women**: Congregation: 60%, Community: 50%
Annual Household Income

- Under $25,000
- $25,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 or more

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $25,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Level of education

- No secondary diploma
- Secondary diploma
- College degree
- Graduate degree

[Bar chart showing levels of education with percentages for Congregation and Community]
Marital status

- Married
- Never married
- Divorced
- Widowed

[Bar chart showing percentages for each marital status, with 'Congregation' and 'Community' categories indicated by different colors.]
Citizenship at birth

USA

Others

- Congregation
- Community
Attendance

- Mt Pisgah Church
- U.S. Adventist Churches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mt Pisgah Church</th>
<th>U.S. Adventist Churches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One out of last four weeks or less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two out of last four weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or four out of last four weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Church Membership

- Adventist Church member: 97%
- Not: 3%

Graph showing the percentage membership of the Adventist Church.
Academy Students and Employees in the Congregation

- Students: 12%
- Employees: 8%
Tenure as a Baptized Adventist
Raised by an Adventist parent

Yes

No

Mt Pisgah Church  U.S. Adventists
How much does worship at this church help you with everyday life?

- Greatly: 45%
- Some: 41%
- Not much: 14%
How much have you grown in your faith in the last year?

--- Much growth ---

- 0%
- 5%
- 10%
- 15%
- 20%
- 25%
- 30%
- 35%
- 40%

Through this church
Through another group
Through private activities
Some growth
No real growth

Mt Pisgah Church
U.S. Adventists
Assurance of Salvation

87% Certain or very certain
88% Certain or very certain
14% Not certain
12% Not certain

Mt Pisgah Church
North American Adventists
Conversations with Coworkers about their Personal or Family Needs or Spiritual Topics

*Mission in Metropolis, p 110
Church Involvement

- Has a ministry role
- Attends SS class
- Participates in a small group
- Gave Bible studies

Mt Pisgah Church vs. North American Adventists
Has anyone asked you personally to volunteer time in the last year?

- Yes: 67%
- No: 33%
Perceptions of Mount Pisgah Church

- Programs are well organized
- This church is warm & friendly
- Has a clear sense of mission
- This church is grace-oriented
- Activities strengthen personal relationships
- Members are excited about the future
- New people are easily assimilated

Legend:
- Blue: Describes very well
- Yellow: Not sure
- Red: Describes poorly or not at all
Strong sense of belonging to Mount Pisgah Church

- Yes and growing
- Yes, but the same
- Yes, but less so
- No, but I am new
- No, I wish I did
- No, that is OK

Mt Pisgah Church vs. U.S. Adventists
Overall Evaluation

- Pastoral leadership
- Worship
- Parking
- Children's ministries
- Community service
- Church board
- Help for individuals
- Evangelism
- Youth group
- Small groups

Percentage Breakdown:
- Excellent
- Uncertain
- Poor
Music Preferences

- Traditional hymns: 63%
- Praise music or choruses: 58%
- Classical music or chorales: 25%
- Contemporary Christian music: 21%
- Gospel: 16%
- Jesus Rock: 5%
- Do not know: 3%
Music Preferences by Generation

- Traditional
- Praise
- Classical
- Contemporary

- Senior Citizens
- Baby Boomers
- Generation X
- Millennials

Bar chart showing the preferences of different generations for different types of music.
Feelings about Worship

- God's presence
- Inspiration
- Joy
- Obligation
- Awe/mystery
- Spontaneity
- Frustration
- Boredom

The chart shows the percentage of feelings of each category, with red for always or usually, blue for some times, and gray for rarely.
Feelings about Worship
Mount Pisgah & U.S. Adventists compared

- God's presence
- Inspiration
- Joy
- Obligation
- Spontaneity
- Awe/mystery
- Boredom
- Frustration

U.S. Adventists
Mt Pisgah Church

U.S. Adventists
Mt Pisgah Church
What do you personally value most about Mount Pisgah Church?

- The preaching: 46%
- Caring for one another: 39%
- Praying for one another: 38%
- Community service: 30%
- My friends at church: 28%
- Reaching the unchurched: 28%
- Our worship style: 20%
- Social activities: 17%
- Diversity: 17%
- Small groups: 15%
What is valued more at Mount Pisgah than U.S. Adventists

- Caring for one another
- Praying for one another
- Community service
- My friends at church
- The preaching

[Bar chart showing percentage differences between U.S. Adventists and Mt Pisgah Church]
What is valued less at Mount Pisgah than U.S. Adventists

- Our style of worship
- Social activities
- Reaching the unchurched
- Diversity
- Small groups

U.S. Adventists vs Mt Pisgah Church
Observed to be Most Effective Methods to Bring in New Members

- Friendship Evangelism*
- Youth/children's ministry
- Public evangelism
- Community service
- Small groups
- Bible studies
- Community health

*Personal contact by relatives, work associates, acquaintances

Legend:
- U.S. Adventists
- Mt Pisgah Church
2 - Observed to be Most Effective Methods to Bring in New Members

- Friendship Evangelism*
- Door-to-door contacts
- Revelation Seminars
- Music concerts
- Literature
- Family life seminar
- Media ministries
- Other

*Personal contact by relatives, work associates, acquaintances
How Far is Your Home from the Church You Attend?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mt Pisgah Church</th>
<th>U.S. Adventists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same Zip Code</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same County</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different County</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Do you belong to a service club or civic group?

- Yes: 11%
- No: 89%
What major needs in the community should Mount Pisgah Church address?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious/spiritual needs</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty &amp; unemployment</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; wellness</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>Family life &amp; MH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth or children</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other needs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal issues</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</table>
The three most important goals for Mount Pisgah Church – Pt 1

- Worship God: 52%
- Encourage spiritual growth: 49%
- Increase knowledge of the Bible: 34%
- Stronger commitment to Christ: 30%
- Deepen prayer life: 28%
- Church growth: 26%
The three most important goals for Mount Pisgah Church – Pt 2

- More people involved in ministry: 18%
- Understand community needs: 16%
- Increase unity in diversity: 14%
- Equip members for evangelism: 13%
- Transform the local community: 10%
- Raise level of financial giving: 6%
Theory of Congregational Life Span from Research

Plateau for 25-40 years

Early Growth
First 25-40 years

Slow decline
over 50 years
Analysis

- Research has shown that growth in Adventist churches comes from:
  - Community involvement
  - Rich spirituality
  - Intentionality (goals, planning)
  - A positive atmosphere in congregation
  - Activities for the unchurched on Sabbath
An Adventist Missional Paradigm

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”

• *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143
Recommendations

- Provide Friendship Evangelism training for the entire congregation to encourage more informal sharing of faith with acquaintances in the community.

- Study how to expand the small group ministries of the church and make them more accessible to non-members.
More Recommendations

- Develop a plan to expand the community health outreach of the church to meet this major need in the community.
- Study the possibility of recruiting volunteer physicians to staff a free clinic at the church one evening a week targeting the working poor who do not have health insurance.
More Recommendations

- Establish a New Generations Taskforce made up of members under 45 years of age to develop a plan to engage more young adults and young families.

- Consider conducting an experiment with a small-groups approach to public evangelism.
To Contact Monte Sahlin

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