

A TEN-YEAR STUDY OF YOUTH RETENTION IN THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

THE FOURTH YEAR

The Institute of Church Ministry (ICM) has previously reported on the first three years of a ten-year study of Adventist teenagers and their relationships to the church (see Roger L. Dudley and Janet Leigh Kangas, The World of the Adventist Teenager (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1990 for a complete report on the first two years). This project is being sponsored by the North American Division, particularly the Church Ministries and Education departments. The present paper reports the findings of the fourth year of the study.

ADVENTIST YOUTH SURVEY 4 contained 40 questions on four pages. ICM wished to update material on personal religion and church connections. We also wished to gather new material on commitment to Adventist beliefs and religious world views. We used this opportunity to gather data on attitudes toward various public issues. We also included a number of value statements that appeared on the Valuegenesis questionnaire and which will allow for comparisons. Finally, we provided

a place for the youth to talk about their own concerns with religion and the church.

One important reason for sending out a yearly survey is to attempt to maintain contact with the youth before they slip out of the range of the study. In a project of this kind the researchers must develop a long-term relationship with the subjects. Part of encouraging this relationship is to keep track of any residential changes. People today are highly mobile, and after a year the postal system will no longer forward mail. So the very first question we asked was: "Is the address on the envelope in which we mailed this questionnaire still your correct one?" Those answering "no" were instructed to fill in the correct address in the blank space provided.

Keeping track of these address changes is a major job for our staff. Scores of our letters were returned undelivered because the addresses were no longer correct and no forwarding addresses were given. When the first mailing was sent out in June, these young people were 18 or 19 years of age (we began with those 15 or 16 three years before). As the year passed by, a number turned 20. Many had left home. Some joined the military. Some married. In some cases even their parents did not know where they were at present. We then must attempt to find current addresses by contacting church clerks, searching church directories, or advertising in union conference papers. Even after all this, we were unable to deliver a number of surveys. While we process only one questionnaire per year, construction, mailings, follow up, and processing of the survey is a year-long job for our staff.

We had expected that some attrition would occur. Indeed, this was why we began with such a large sample; we wanted to be sure we would still have a sufficient group for appropriate analyses at the end of ten years. We mailed the survey to all 1523 young people in the original sample even though only 1083 had completed the third-year survey. A small number who had not responded in the third year rejoined the study, but most of the responses came from the 1083 who had been with us all along. For the second, third, and fourth mailings we concentrated only on this group.

At the time of writing this report--after four mailings--894 usable questionnaires had been received, and a few others continue to trickle in. If the response rate is calculated on the 1083 who were sent all four mailings, it is 83%--the same as the second and third years. We have had a rather consistent dropout rate of about 17% per year.

Another way to view this is to note that about 60% of our original group are still with us. What about the 40% who completed one or more years of the study but who did not fill in Youth Survey Number 4? Many of them never received the questionnaire due to moves or other problems, but we can not be sure of their number. Some may be loyal Adventists who have tired of filling out surveys (though we do try to make the task simple and attractive). However, it seems fair to conclude that a large number have become inactive in the church. They may have had their names removed from church records or they may have simply drifted off, but they do not have enough interest in the

church to even complete the questionnaire. In this next year we hope to put forth a special effort to determine the membership status of these dropouts from the study.

Even so, nearly 900 young adults told us about themselves. That is still a large study. Here is what they said.

Personal Religion

We asked an especially pertinent question: "How does your present relationship with Jesus Christ compare with that of three years ago?" Here are the answers:

Stronger today	39%
About the same	33%
Weaker today	24%
Have no relationship	4%

Growth is considerably greater than decline (15%). Moreover, the picture is somewhat better than last year when 33% said "stronger," and 28% said "weaker." However, this does not necessarily mean that the spiritual climate among our young adults is improving. More likely, those who were the weakest last year were among the nearly 200 who did not respond this year, thus making the total picture look a bit better.

We also asked three questions that have been used on other studies to measure a foundational religious world view. Following are the questions with the percentages who gave each listed answer:

Religion always identifies a basic human problem, something that is

wrong with humans and their world. Indicate the single most basic problem.

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| 1. something lacking in my individual life | 20% |
| 2. separation of humans from God, sinfulness | 53% |
| 3. lack of human community or closeness between people | 18% |
| 4. other or no response | 9% |

Religion always describes a path to salvation, a way that basic human problems can be overcome. Which of the following comes closest to that path?

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| 1. doing good works to earn God's favor | 3% |
| 2. trusting in God's free gift of forgiveness | 76% |
| 3. working hard to make society better and more just | 11% |
| 4. other or no response | 10% |

Finally, religion talks about the outcomes of salvation. What is the most important outcome?

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| 1. life on earth is changed; feel fulfillment, meaning | 7% |
| 2. live forever with God after the resurrection | 72% |
| 3. world changed so people live in peace and harmony | 13% |
| 4. other or no response | 8% |

In each case, the first and second responses locate the basic human problem and its solution in the individual. In the first of each set the approach is more

psychological; in the second it is more theological, but in either of the first two choices the problem is with the individual and the solution affects individuals. Either of these have been called an individualistic religious world view.

In contrast, the third response in each set may be called a communal religious world view. The basic problem is located in societal arrangements rather than in individual psyches, and the solution will transform societies to bring about peace and harmony. In line with most Adventists these young adults are much more likely to be individualistic in their religious thinking.

Connection to the Church

We asked about the young person's present relationship toward the Adventist church with the following results:

Enthusiastic member	25%
So-so member	50%
Officially a member but not in heart	18%
Have dropped out	7%

Only a fourth are enthusiastic members, with half still connected but lukewarm. We have essentially lost the other fourth although most still have their names on the books. The 7% who have dropped out account for 63 young people. The 18% who are inactive represent another 158 respondents. Actually, more than 63 persons have

indicated that they have dropped membership. Last year 53 so indicated. Many of these continued in the study and have reaffirmed that they have left the church. But some did not reply this year. Removing the overlap, we have a list of 91 separate individuals who have indicated that they have actually dropped out.

And what about the 628 people who filled out the first-year survey but who didn't respond this year. We can assume, as noted above, that many of them are inactive or have officially dropped out. If this were true of even half (a figure we would estimate to be conservative), that would be 314 added to this year's 63 dropouts and 158 inactives, or a total of 535 who have left either officially or in heart. That would be 35% of the group who began. A 35% loss in just four years--probably an underestimation.

We have prepared a special two-page, 23-item questionnaire which we are sending to all those who indicate they have dropped out. In time this will provide a rich source of information on factors involved in the decision to leave the church, feelings about the church, intervention strategies employed by the church, and things that might have prevented the dropouts. We will make a first report on this supplementary study later this year.

Another indicator of commitment to the church is the extent of agreement with its teachings. We asked the respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with six doctrinal statements:

Agree Uncertain Disagree

God created the world in six literal days, approximately 6000 years ago.	82%	12%	6%
A person's standing with God is based on his/her obedience to God's law.	47%	20%	33%
The investigative judgment began in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary on October 22, 1844.	54%	36%	10%
Jesus Christ will come the second time in our generation.	58%	34%	8%
The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true church.	76%	15%	9%
Ellen White was inspired by God, and her writings are an authoritative guide for Adventists today.	79%	12%	9%

Of those young adults still in the study most accept historic Adventist teachings with very strong majorities on literal creation, the true church, and the Spirit of Prophecy. Support is shakier for the investigative judgment and the Second Advent. While few deny these doctrines, more than a third are uncertain. In the case of the judgment it may be that these young adults do not really understand this complicated doctrine based on prophetic interpretation--thus the uncertainty. As to the Advent, the uncertainty may well be over the timing (our generation) rather than the fact of the event.

Perhaps most troublesome is the statement concerning the place of the law for it presents a "righteousness by works" concept with which a majority agree and only a third disagree. This is in harmony with findings from the Valuegenesis study on youth in

grades six to twelve and with a study done among adult members. At all ages our members do not seem to have a clear understanding of the Gospel with its "salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ."

Attitudes toward Current Public Issues

The Christian lives within a society and, ideally, relates to that society on the basis of his/her faith. In an earlier study we explored the attitudes of adult Adventists in the United States toward various public issues (see Adventist Review, March 29, 1990, pp. 14-18). Here we included a number of these issues to determine how the rising generation compared with their elders. We eliminated statements that referred only to issues in the United States, since we have Canadians in this study, and added two others dealing with abortion and the environment.

Of the sixteen issues, ten are typically thought of as "liberal" causes and six as "conservative" causes. They are presented in these two separate groups with the percentages that favored and that opposed each issue. The extent to which these two percentages do not add to 100% represents the "uncertain" or neutral response. As an aid in organizing the material, the two lists are arranged in descending order of support.

<u>Liberal Issues</u>	<u>favor</u>	<u>oppose</u>
Laws to protect the environment, such as a clean-air bill or controlling toxic waste	91%	3%
Elimination of all racial restrictions in housing, education, and employment	87%	5%

Establishment of normal, peaceful relations with Russia	83%	5%
Government-sponsored insurance for elderly in nursing homes	81%	4%
The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the American Constitution which guarantees equality to women	80%	8%
United States-Soviet "freeze" on the development of nuclear weapons	72%	9%
Registration of all firearms	70%	17%
Increased government aid to improve the social and economic position of Blacks and other minorities	69%	16%
Christians as individuals becoming involved in political action (run for office, work for a candidate, etc.)	50%	21%
Churches as corporate entities becoming involved in political action (e.g., issuing position statements)	15%	56%

The majority of our sample supported nine out of the ten "liberal" issues, most of them quite strongly. In general, these respondents tend to be more liberal on social and economic issues than older church members (refer to previously mentioned Adventist Review article). But these young adults are like their elders when it comes to churches becoming involved in public issues. Only 15% favored such action compared to 14% of the older generation. They do not perceive that the church has anything direct and

positive to say to the society in which they live.

<u>Conservative Issues</u>	<u>favor</u>	<u>oppose</u>
Control of crime by tougher laws and "stiffer" sentences	80%	7%
Capital punishment (the death penalty) for certain classes of dangerous criminals	57%	21%
Laws restricting abortions except in cases where the mother's life is in danger or that result from rape	43%	39%
A constitutional amendment to permit prayer and/or Bible reading in public schools	41%	34%
Regarding capitalism or free enterprise as that form of government most in harmony with Biblical Christianity	31%	14%
Increased spending for national defense	19%	55%

Only two of the six "conservative" issues were supported by the majority. The same two were the highest on the adult study and may reflect the heavy "law orientation" among Seventh-day Adventists. The other issues were not necessarily opposed by the youth (except for defense spending); the "uncertain" response was quite high. The percentages of the young people were very close to that of the adults except for the item on capitalism where 53% of the adults were in favor. (The abortion item did not appear on the adult survey.)

Personal and Social Values

The Valuegenesis Study of over eleven thousand Adventist youth in grades six through twelve included a number of items on personal and social values. Seven of these were selected for this survey. The subjects were asked how right or wrong the following practices were. They could choose "always wrong," "often wrong," "not sure," "often right," or "always right." For ease of interpretation the findings are compressed into "wrong" and "right." The extent to which the two percentages fail to add to 100% represents those who were not sure. The practices are arranged in descending order of those judged as wrong.

<u>Value-laden Practices</u>	<u>wrong</u>	<u>right</u>
A married person having an affair with someone other than his/her spouse	93%	4%
A company paying women employees less than men employees for similar work	91%	6%
Homosexual relations between two adults of the same sex who love each other	84%	5%
Efforts by parents to keep children with AIDS from attending their schools	74%	10%
Sexual intercourse by two unmarried 18-year-olds who love each other	63%	18%
Abortion when a pregnancy is unexpected or unwanted	63%	17%

The United States and other countries demanding that South Africa end its apartheid (racial segregation) policies	16%	58%
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The majority of these young adults condemned practices that most thoughtful Christians would see as wrong (including the reversal on the last item). Opposition was especially strong for adultery, discrimination by gender and handicap, and homosexuality. The opposition to premarital sex and abortion was considerably weaker.

future Education

We first mailed our questionnaire in the summer of 1990 (subsequent mailings took place in the following autumn and winter). We asked where the young people had attended school during the preceding year. Here's how they answered:

Adventist academy	35%
Public high school	22%
Adventist college	18%
Other college	14%
Vocational training	1%
Not in school	8%
No response	2%

By the summer of 1990, 76% had graduated from academy or high school, and the other 24% still had at least a year to go. What plans for the 1990-91 school year did

the graduates have? They answered as followed:

Go to Adventist college	35%
Go to non-Adventist college	25%
Go to work	7%
Other	4%
Still in academy or high school	16%
No response	13%

It appears that of those finishing secondary school most are continuing their education, and that they are somewhat more likely to choose an Adventist than a non-Adventist college. On another important decision, 90% were still single with no definite plans for marriage. But 7% were engaged, and 3% (25 young people) had already married. We will see these proportions shift dramatically in the next few years.

Pouring Out the Heart

While most of our questions were forced-choice, we gave a final opportunity for these young adults to cover whatever had been left out: "Tell us anything else you would like to say about your religion and your church." While some did not choose to write, those who did produced comments ranging from a few sentences to several pages. Many wrote with deep feeling. They poured out their happiness, their discouragements, and their anger with religion and the church. These comments provide much food for thought as we attempt to better meet the needs of our youth and

stem their exit from the church.

The following comments are organized under the headings "Attitudes toward the Church," "Church Issues," "True Church," "Church Is Too Liberal," "Reasons for Leaving the Church," "Relationship with Christ," "Youth Needs," "Ellen White," "Sexual Attitudes and Abortion," "Christian Education," "Survey Instrument," "Celebration Churches," "General Conference," and "Miscellaneous." Where several respondents have made essentially the same comment, the comment is listed only once with the number of times it appeared following it in parentheses.

Attitudes toward The Church

-- The SDA church in our town is dead. All it really consists of are people over 55. It's not doing anything. It just keeps getting smaller, not bigger as it should be. People need to start doing something because if we don't God will (6 times).

-- I have been disappointed by the lack of religion in my church. Every Sabbath the services are more like business meetings. Too often the sermon is compromised so that various people can be honored, be it for vacation Bible school, Pathfinders, or whatever. I think that if there were more spirit in the church, if people would not set double standards, if sermons would be worth hearing (and be the highlight of people's weekly experiences), we might not be having the problems we have in the church. Adventists in their effort to be Christlike and spread His word have become more like the very people who killed Jesus--the Pharisees. The legalism and constant concern about the almighty dollar disgusts me. Fortunately not every Adventist is like this (5 times).

-- I have become very disillusioned with the church as of late because of the events happening within the church and all the political back-stabbing (5 times).

-- I think the church has become way too hypocritical and political. We need to all sit down and rethink our values (4 times).

-- Sometimes the church is too traditional and close-minded, and new ideas are often scorned by the older members, and it's the older members who make up the high positions who have authority to pass new ideas. The older folks tend to be too strict and stiff for today's youth, and they don't support youth activities (3 times).

-- I am a strong believer in the SDA church and its life style and hope to remain so. I like to be involved (2 times).

-- I love the fact of being an Adventist. I strongly agree in the Adventist religion and lifestyle. I only wish that more young people from the church were more involved and not as turned off by the standards. I know the second coming is close, and I only hope that more young people can be aware of the seriousness of the times and the wonderful love of the Lord (2 times).

-- We as a church must begin and continue to preach the second Advent of Jesus. It needs to be done as a constant reminder--He is almost here (2 times).

-- My church is beginning to have some life in it, but now that I'm at school, I'm not really into its activities.

-- It's boring. Needs to wake up. Needs improvement.

-- The SDA religion is a good idea, but it never really personally helped me, my family, or friends in any major way. Concentrate on Jesus for me is the true light.

-- The religion is fine, but the churches are what's wrong with the religion.

-- Right now I am very disappointed in the church I used to attend. Recently I went to a wedding held in the church I am a member in. I have not been there for over a year, and the preacher said absolutely nothing to me and my family. I am very discouraged right now. I feel if the preachers are that cold no wonder the people in the church turn cold (and no other people want to join a cold church)! I do believe that the SDA Church does follow the Bible and that it is the correct way, and I always will belong to the church. I just feel that in some areas, such as above, the church needs great improvement!

-- I don't go to Sabbath school because there isn't one for my age. But I'm in church every week, and I've involved myself in our two-weeks long VBS and will gladly do it again next year. Anyway my whole life and attitude has changed, and I'm much happier now with my church and my religion.

-- Sometimes when I think about the end of time, I get kind of scared. I really wonder sometimes if we as a church are going in the right direction and not compromising our beliefs because of convenience or financial problems. I am talking and studying myself so that I may have clear sight of what God's will is.

-- I feel that the church is headed for some rough times with a lot of controversy. I believe that we should not get involved with controversy but should focus our attention and energy on getting ready for the second coming of Christ.

-- I really think that our church tries to judge people and their motives for doing things. What people do is between them and God. The church tries to play the part of God too often. Don't get me wrong. I love our church, but I think it has a lot of growing spiritually to do.

-- I think the church has become stagnant. They need to improve their ways of spreading the message to catch the people's eyes and keep the members attention. How do they expect to hold people's attention when we get preached to in school, at work, and church. Everyone we go we are being talked to. There needs to be some variation in the services. You know how people become desensitized or numb to violence, music, and sex because they have heard or seen it so often. Well, that is the way I have become with the church in the last couple of years. Of course, the message shouldn't be changed, just the way of presenting it. I have talked to many of my Adventist friends who also feel the same way.

-- The church is now split into two groups: those who really believe, and those who show up to make themselves feel holy.

-- I feel that our church needs a mission. Right now all we seem to be doing is focusing on treading water to keep our heads out. However, by swimming forward the same thing is accomplished, and progress is made at the same time. We need to forget our troubles and move forward.

-- We need to have more love and not be so stuck on ourselves. Accept everyone.

-- I would like and am trying to return to church. I ask that you pray for me and my family as well.

-- I think it is a shame that the Adventist religion is segregated with black and white conferences. In the future the conference should allow white ministers to preach at

black churches and vice versa.

-- The Adventist church seems as though it is not very stable. We need to all unite with our common love for God. But instead it seems as though some people are ultra conservative and some are too liberal, and it seems to be dividing the church. Some like celebration churches, some don't. We can worship differently and still love the same God and even be in the same denomination. I pray that our church will grow strong in the love of God.

-- As I listen to my peers complain about how stupid and legalistic our church is, I wish they would stop to consider that we can change things. We are the future church. It is up to us to change the future of our church.

-- It's good to have a church family with whom you can always communicate freely and always rely on.

-- At first when I was a child, the Adventist church was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. As a pre-teen things changed. I became critical about all the "laws" of Adventism. I wasn't rebellious; I just questioned the church a great deal. Often I accused the church for the actions of one member. As a pre-teen I didn't know what I was talking about--completely. Now a little older I still have questions about the authority of the church. However, I speak against the church only when I know the facts. And if I don't know the facts, I try to seek them out for myself. The point I'm trying to make is that maybe I answered the questionnaire harsh when I didn't understand myself in what I believe in.

-- I feel that all of the churches in my area are very "cool." No one even tries to get to know me or looks like they care that I am there. Many SDA churches are that way.

-- I am encouraged in the direction the church is headed for the most part. We need to aim higher, look farther, and work more to finish His work in His strength and for His glory.

-- I feel that our church, at least where I live, has a lot of confusion and misunderstandings in it. We seem to be very disorganized, and some of us are uncooperative with our churches. I wish we could join together as a family and do the work God gave us to do. I think God is displeased with disorganization and lack of cooperation. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and until we join together our work is going to take forever to get done.

-- At one time I thought the Adventist church was filled with back-stabbers and people that stood on self-built pedestals as they catapulted the pedestals out from under others, but now I know that all churches and all people have that. I also know that the Adventist church as well as all other Christian churches are here to help people such as that.

Church Issues

-- I think the Adventist Church has the right idea, but it is the little stuff like their feelings about modest dress and jewelry that bother me. It is not for others to judge. It is up to us. No one should make these decisions for us (2 times).

-- The Adventist church is too legalistic. For example, it is okay to wear wedding rings, but not engagement rings. They serve the same basic purpose. Why does the church organize cross-country skiing trips on Saturday, but down-hill is not allowed? Why can you wear a chain with a clock on it but not a simple diamond. Some people say you can't go swimming on Sabbath, but you can wade in the water. Why do there have to be such specific rules and fine lines on which one side is black and the other side is white. Doesn't the church know there's a lot of grey areas? (2 times)

-- The church places too much emphasis on the dos and don'ts. While there are many valid issues and problems in our church, I feel it is very important to remember not to crowd out Christ. My recent experiences have led me to believe that dealing with the issues tends to push the importance of Christ and his love to the back. A balance is needed. Issues that are in "vogue" also seem to get a lot of publicity, but other ones just as important don't get mentioned. The reason for living is Christ and His love; everything else will fall in place after a time when He is the center point. Don't ignore the issues, but don't make them the focal point either (2 times).

-- A lot of times the church is too picky on little trivial issues instead of focusing on the truly important issues. I believe many people are lost to our religion because of this. A new potential member will be wanting to join, and those who are leading them are more concerned with them quitting smoking or giving up jewelry than they are of trying to lead them to Jesus. The quitting of smoking and jewelry, etc. will come later if they truly accept Jesus.

-- I see that the truth of the church is pretty close to home. I believe that Jesus Christ is a necessity, but I have a lot of mixed feelings about such things as jewelry and

movies. To me they are very trivial and do not make or break my relationship with Christ. Yes, they can, but can't a young adult be at least allowed to experience a degree without over doing?

-- The church should take its stand on contemporary issues. It doesn't say whether the war or the celebration churches with all their new ideas are right or wrong. A lot of my friends don't know what to believe anymore, and they will be the future leaders of our church. I hope we make up our minds soon, before people begin to slip out the back door. Ellen white says that the General Conference in session is the voice of God on earth. I wish they would take a prayerful stand on some of these issues.

-- The SDA church is blessed with a gift of extra knowledge that other churches don't have. The church should present this knowledge to others from the viewpoint of a loving God, not a God who is a harsh judge. Too much emphasis is placed on the strict laws of our church. For example, people are condemned for wearing jewelry and casual clothes to church, while gossiping, pride, and jealousy among the members are overlooked. It is not the church's place to judge a person's relationship with God. Instead of making theology and religiosity the emphasis, the church needs to make Christ the emphasis. I'm not saying to throw theology out the window. I'm simply stating if you are in love with God, all of the doctrines will fall into place. If our church would give the gift that it has been given to the rest of the world, there would be no end to the effect that we, as children of God, could have on it.

-- We as Adventists seem to be dealing with too many petty rules when we should instead be worried about people's souls. We shouldn't worry if a new member comes to church with jewelry on. Just accept that person, and someday the Holy Spirit will tell the person not to wear jewelry. We should love and accept people for who they are, like Jesus does, and forget about the fact that they eat meat or wear jewelry or wear makeup that is "distasteful." Those are petty things that persons can work on themselves. We don't have to force them on them as doctrines. The focus of our church has shifted, and we need to correct it.

-- We need to stop all this nonsense about splitting. There will always be those who are more liberal or more conservative. But we shouldn't let our "opinions" keep us from coming together and worshipping God. We are becoming like children and fighting over stupid, petty things. I think the devil is succeeding in tearing this church apart, the one church which has the message to save everyone who believes.

-- I think that the SDA church is too concerned with rules and salvation by works (even though they deny it). Most of my life I've heard mostly of what you can't do on

Sabbath. I can understand this for teaching children, but I still get it at this age from teachers, some pastors, and Sabbath School lessons. I don't believe the Sabbath is what you can't do, but what you can do and what kind of blessing you get from it.

-- I was given a ring from my boyfriend as a promise ring. Many people at church got hung up about it. The main concern was that jewelry makes you look like an idol. Yet at the same time they don't look at how much their clothes and cars make them look. The point is they are more concerned with the wrong issues than what is really important. They are beginning to be like the Pharisees.

-- I know that we are supposed to look to Christ for our example and not to men, but I find it hard when so many double standards are seen in our church today. We can wear a wedding band but not an engagement ring. A ring is a ring, and those two make almost the same statement about your marital status. Little things like this drive me away because we are supposedly so right, and yet we do so much wrong. Lately I have become very rebellious. I have pierced my ears, and I wear rings, and that's major rebellion for me. I understand that it's okay out in California. I wish we were more caring about feelings and less worried about rules to be kept by us to get favor from God. I think if we concentrate on a relationship with God instead of so much emphasis on rules, we will learn to love Him and the rules will be followed out of love.

-- If you are going to hell for watching a movie or wearing jewelry, you are going anyway. I don't see in the Bible: "Thou shalt not wear jewelry" or "Thou shalt not go to the movies." Sometimes the Adventist church is hypocritical.

True Church

-- According to SDA teaching, we are the last and true church. But who are we to say that we are better than any other church or person? We tend to have this better-than-thou attitude. I don't think this is right. There are plenty of other good Christian people out there (2 times).

-- I know that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the true one. Yet I am torn between what my parents believe (conservatively), what the church is doing, and what my ideas are. I believe some of the things are wrong, yet I am not that conservative and like some of them. What I want and what I know is right are two different things.

-- The SDA religion is the closest to the truth I've found though "holes" still persist that contradict with the Bible.

-- I think my religion is a true and faithful religion. It's beliefs are based on the Bible, the book of God. That's one of the things I like about the church--that they focus on the Bible.

-- What the Adventist say about themselves being the ultimate truth is ridiculous. Most people who believe in the Bible take it too literally and have distorted most of the teachings. As far as the Second Coming, it's a nice idea, but get real, for it is not going to happen. I should not be so harsh because everyone has the right to believe whatever he wants, and if believing helps you get through life, that's fine.

-- I don't believe that there is one particular denomination in which our Lord will take preference to have as his "true" church seeing that God had no specific church while he was residing on earth.

-- I fully agree with the SDA religion as the true one. They uncover everything telling every bit of the Bible to teach us about our Creator and prepare us for His coming. I feel I can completely trust its doctrine.

-- I have never doubted that the SDA church is the right church, but I need to learn more about our basic beliefs so I can be a better witness. I have been thinking about this for a long time, perhaps a couple of years. I hope God will keep my concerns in front of me all the time so that I won't become uninterested and lose any chance I have for Heaven.

Church Is Too Liberal

-- I feel Adventism is becoming too liberal. There is too much rationalizing. I don't want legalism but I do want a church that's distinctly different from the world. We should be able to stand out as an example.

-- How can the church let the wedding band be allowed. It is so wrong. A good thing to read is Amazing Facts "What the Bible Says about colorful cosmetics and jewelry." All Adventists need to read this little book. It's so clear on this subject.

-- I feel our church is degenerating quickly. Things that would never have been acceptable 50 years ago are "okay" now. There is a large amount of contradictions in our church. Pastors preach that E. G. White is a prophet and that all her writings are inspired from God (and it's true). But these same men will go home and eat good that is

clearly wrong according to the light given us. How can they read her writings, then tell a young couple that it is okay to have wedding rings? I feel this is why our youth are leaving the church. People preach and promote half her writings but ignore the half that pertains to things they don't wish to give up, and believe me we can see it and it is confusing and discouraging. It is also hard to respect these people. When we were little we never saw inconsistencies in our leaders' lives. Now that we have grown we see many and it is a letdown.

-- The church is slacking. It does not take its faith seriously any longer. Anything goes, and no one is really into it except for some places like Adventist academies.

-- I hate the way our church is turning so liberal.

Reasons for Leaving the Church

-- I stopped going to church because the church is filled with annoying hypocrites and two-faced people. Instead of working things out about problems, they dwell on prolonging the problems (7 times).

-- I haven't been attending church much lately because it doesn't seem to me that I'm getting much of a blessing out of it. There's so much turmoil and conflict within the church.

-- So many of the leaders and members seem to be hypocrites. Christians are not supposed to bring suit against one another, according to the Bible, but it seems Adventists are involved in more law suits than any other denomination.

-- I feel very uncomfortable at church. Everyone is so snobby and rude and there are not many people my age. I date black guys even though I'm white, and that has many grudges along with it.

-- Churches are full of criticism and this is what is making the youth to stay away from church. I used to be an active member of my church but not any more. I hardly go to church anymore. What for? Every time there are people criticize the way I dress, the way I talk, the way I walk. It seems like everything I do some one from the church has to be there criticizing. They have even taken my father to meetings because of me. But don't get me wrong, I'm not like the kind of person that parties all the time. I'm more of a quiet and conservative person. But I like to be in style. And I don't know what's so wrong about that. My parents agree with me. They don't see anything wrong with the

way I dress. It's only the people from the church that see it.

-- One factor that made me get away from church is my father. He is always into church. He has meetings almost every Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday. He never dedicates anytime for us family. He is out there bringing lives to God when he is losing the ones at home.

-- More and more often young adults are leaving the church because we "Adventists" are not praising our youth as other religions are doing. Also, they are not noticed until they do something wrong. Wouldn't you leave an environment where all you ever got noticed for was "the wrong"? Sometimes our church focus is on what we do wrong, never the right in what we do.

-- I do not attend my church anymore because they prejudge people like my mom. She was divorced because my father beat her up all the time. They have no right to pick her out and talk about her and put us down because she's not married anymore. They think they are so perfect and righteous but they are wrong. This is why I stop going to church and forget them because they are not important. P. S. I'm still a Seventh-day Adventist.

-- I believe in my religion (SDA) very strongly but in the past few years I haven't attended my church and it's not the religion keeping me from going, but sadly to say it's the people. There's only one SDA church here in my community so I don't have too much of a choice, but I try to stick with what I believe and fulfill my days out from what I know. The Lord is always in my heart and in my prayers, and He is what gets me by from day to day.

-- I am no longer attending church. I really want to, but it seems that I am always too tired and now I just don't care to go. I don't know too many people here. I keep to myself. I feel that if you don't get close to anybody then you don't get hurt. I know the SDA church is the true church, and I do plan on attending again. I just don't know when.

-- If the church would just realize that its young people are just like the rest of the young people out there, they just might regain their support. So many of the kids that I attended Academy and grade school with have totally dropped out of the church. I do not attend the SDA church very often. I have found that its members are unfriendly and judgmental because I wear make-up and jewelry. Doesn't the church believe that it's what's on the inside that counts? Who are these people to judge one another? I have found that there are other churches that accept me for who and what I am--a Christian.

If these people would just listen to what's going on around them and step outside their SDA "cliques" for one minute, they would realize that everyone is a person, created in God's image and likeness--just as they are. Are we not all equal just because of our appearance or diverse views? I truly hope that we are. If the older members would realize this, as so many of the young people have, they might not shut out many potential members. If they were more approachable, they might gain more support in the community and be able to bring more people to God.

-- I stop going to church because our youth group is small and boring. It gives me no inspiration at all. Sometimes I go with my boyfriend to the Grace Baptist Church. The pastor always speaks a great sermon. The people there are friendly and really caring.

-- My walk with God has not been so wonderful lately. First of all my very so-called religious mother kicked me out because her new live-in boyfriend did not like me. Now I am living with my boyfriend and am pregnant. I no longer go to church. I kind of want to go back. but will they accept my baby? My mother forcing me to go to church and teaching me how to live, and then going back on everything made me very confused about this religion. That's why I'm so unsure of everything.

-- My church is lacking in spirit. They play church. Do one thing and say another. It is the most competitive church that I have seen. I gradually stopped going for two months. But I know now that I am going to church because of Jesus and not the members.

Relationship with Christ

-- I'm happy that I'm a SDA. I plan to go to church when I start college in the fall. I feel my relationship with Christ is getting better each and everyday!

-- Although I have stopped attending church and do un-SDA things, I consider myself to have a very strong relationship with God. I also still consider the SDA ways very right.

-- I no longer consider myself an Adventist, but I have an even closer relationship with Jesus than I ever did before. I don't think it's the church that makes the strength in the relationship. It's a personal thing, one-on-one with oneself and the Lord. One can attend church regularly every week and not even know Jesus.

-- This past year in college I got to the point where I didn't want to say I was a SDA because I didn't live the standards or go to church. I wanted to have a relationship with Christ but wasn't willing to make the effort.

-- My personal relationship with Christ is much more important to me than any religion or any church could ever be.

-- During the years I can see my religious experience as a roller coaster. When I first started out, I was very religious. Then I went to questioning God, and now that I am done with high school, I find myself warming toward God and religion again.

-- I am generally unsatisfied with my relationship with God. I think what we need is a good revival Bible study. We have grown up in the church. We know all the stories. We know all the correct answers. We just don't know God. I've read all about Him. Maybe I just need to be introduced!

-- I know that I need a closer relationships with God, but somehow I have become discouraged by things that have been occurring in and around my church. I don't feel as though I'm in a Christian atmosphere when I'm there.

-- I am currently a member of the SDA church. Although I don't believe or agree on all the things they stand for, I still consider myself close to my Lord.

-- There has always been a question in my mind about religion. What exactly is it? Let's be honest. Religion does not save. How can you follow religion when there are so many different types of opinion and ideas? How can you follow what the Bible says when you don't understand and there are so many interpretations. The only answer I have found is your own personal relationship with God. How much you love Him and How much you can give of your self to him. You see, you can go to church, read the Bible, do everything a Christian should, but if its not from the heart all is in vain! Only God knows what your heart feels and how worthy it is. Let's be honest with ourselves and with our heavenly Father.

Youth Needs

-- I wish that the church would spend more time with the youth planning activities they could participate in so they too can be involved, or else they will just drift away. Programs of the church should not be for the adults only (6 times).

-- I know that SDA is the one truly biblical religion. I believe all doctrines entirely. Many of my peers do also. Yet they stay inactive. Why? We need to show them that religion is a FUN way of life. We need to let our hair down and have fun as Christians instead of clinging to old traditions that don't make any sense (5 times).

-- My church is okay when I get involved. The church should provide more opportunities for youth to get involved in witnessing and missionary work. I think many youth would get involved if they had the opportunity. (3 times)

-- There are many pressures put on the young people of today (i.e. drugs and sex). These kinds of pressures especially among peer groups can really "kill" a kid, both emotionally and physically. Emotionally, peers can force an impressionable adolescent into experimenting with things that they just aren't ready for, and physically these pressures can really begin to take their toll. The statistics pertaining to young people who have experimented with drugs and sex aren't getting any better, and neither are the statistics on teenage pregnancy, teenage suicide, and teenage homicide. I think that if the church really wants to gain the support of its young people, they should stop preaching and offer some guidance and education. I have really been through hell and have come back--thanks to God and my wonderful and understanding mother. If only I would have known or could have gotten some support within the church, I might not have "experimented" with drugs and sex. But, I believe in a merciful and forgiving God whom I hope to join someday in His kingdom in Heaven (2 times).

-- I feel that today the SDA church does not really worry about the youth. It is said that "today's youth are the church leaders of tomorrow." If that's the case, then tomorrow there won't be any church because all the leaders are leaving today. Most are leaving because everything the church does is over their heads. The only thing the church really does is have a youth day maybe once a month. This has been a real concern to me ever since I was younger and deciding if I wanted to stay in the church. Now that I'm 18 and going off to college, I feel its getting worse because every time I came home from academy, I saw more and more of my friends leaving the church and some even getting pregnant. I hope that one day someone will be able to come up with something to give our youth an active role in the church and keep our youth in the church.

-- At the age of 18 I still have so many questions unanswered, how can I have faith in a religion if I don't know or understand what it is I am supposed to believe in or why or even if this is the right religion? I believe in God and I am a SDA because I was raised in this religion, but if I am to continue in the SDA church as an adult I need to believe in

it more. At the church we attend there are no programs for teenagers like me. We have Pathfinders, but mostly younger children are members. So who is going to answer our questions? My friends in the church are as confused as I am, some more. I have tried to talk to our class leader, but it went no where. He talks and talks but never listens. My friends and I often feel looked down on by certain elders. When I confronted one of them, I couldn't believe it. He told me he heard a rumor about me and a friend, and not one member of the church asked us if it was true! Of course it wasn't true. I stopped attending that church a few months ago, and we recently relocated. I hope our new church is different. I feel that the SDA church should make sure teenagers have a place in the church, answer our questions, and talk together.

-- My church has helped me a lot in past experiences because for a while our church has been without a pastor, and we have somewhat been confused about some issues. Now we have a pastor, and we are clear about issues that weren't clear before, issues such as youth, spiritual confidence, and other specific issues of today that tend to confuse the youth. I feel that I have been greatly influenced by the church and I'm grateful for that.

-- I feel that more emphasis needs to be placed on drawing youth back into the church. I recently attended a youth rally in Denver, Colorado with the main speaker being _____. And for the first time in years I felt like God still loved me. He was an awesome speaker who actually made me and my friends really think, and he inspired a lot of conversation. I think our church needs more speakers who are not afraid to step out on a limb, say what needs to be said, and go against the system. Someone who can help me make a choice. I think I am closer to that than ever.

-- I think the youth should not be babied like we are now but allowed to be taught and to learn from the Bible itself and not just having talks about issues.

-- The Adventist church needs pastors who can speak to both young and old people instead of always talking to older people. It gets boring after a while when it doesn't hold your interest. I think more churches should have their own youth pastor, and they can hold their own services.

-- I like my church's summer youth program that we have every summer. It's neat because it allows our youth a chance to get closer together and also to get closer to God.

-- The Adventist church is not helping the college-aged people to stay in the church. It seems that they are for the younger kids and the adults. I don't really enjoy church

and may drop out if I don't see any help to keep me in.

-- We have a new pastor. He is excellent and the church membership and attendance have increased greatly. But the youth group is in shambles (for weekly services).

-- I am an Adventist who has been on the "other side" too long. I've done a lot of stuff that I know is wrong. I want to get to know God again, and I'm trying harder than ever. It's so hard doing it alone. Teenagers my age can't do it alone. We need help. I can't be an example for God if I can't "practice what I preach." I know that there must be more Adventists in the same situation as me.

-- This summer something terrible happened to me and I thought I would have to leave the church and quit going to academy. But my church members and my school have stood by me and are still staying by.

-- SDA standards must be lowered, because the youth of today can't handle them and they will leave the church.

-- The youth of our church are dead! We need the Holy Spirit, and we need to learn the power of prayer. The church should be making a tremendous investment in the youth, for they are the ones who could light the world on fire for Christ.

-- I attend the _____ Adventist church, and it has really brought me closer to God and has helped build my religion immensely. I attend the youth group (ages 14 to 20), and we spend a lot of time getting to know God in our own special ways. We also do a lot of outside activities together. Our youth has also become very much involved with the main church. We feel, as the younger generation, that the older people don't understand and don't want to get to know us. A lot of it has to do with our physical appearance, but we have worked hard for three years and have accomplished tremendous feats. We have even done a whole church service.

-- The youth need to know that God loves them and the church loves them too. We need to know we are okay and believe that we have security with Jesus in our life.

-- I worked at an Adventist youth camp this summer and I saw a large group of the campers don't know why they should not wear jewelry, swear, or do other things that are against the church standards and Biblical Christianity. I was shocked at some of the kids, but I guess I should not because I myself don't know all the reasons behind our standards. I know there are good reasons, and I abide by standards, but I need to know

why we have them. We as youth need to understand them and be convinced of their worth.

-- The church is failing in getting the message across to our youth. Let's get with the programs. If we are supposed to be God's church, let's show it.

-- I feel the Adventist church is not preparing the youth for Christ's return.

-- I still strongly believe our doctrines are correct, but I disagree strongly with the message we are giving to those inside and outside our doors. In my opinion, and the opinion of every young person I know who is within five years of my age either direction (I'm 19), the youth who are to be the leaders of tomorrow will never be such unless someone starts allowing us to be the leaders of today. We are fast leaving the church, not because of doctrinal disagreement, but because of a lack of love, acceptance, and openness to our new and creative ideas. I am so sad to see friends I love leaving the church. But I am even sadder to see and feel the rejection both they and I have felt from many older members who refuse to see and utilize our talents. We want to celebrate our love for Jesus, but we have been told that celebration is evil, and the clear message is being given that we have nothing to celebrate. The whole purpose of the gospel, to seek and save and love the lost, is gone when we are not allowed to express openly our love and loyalty to the God we know.

Ellen White

-- The church is too obsessed with Ellen White. Many members go to her for everything, rather than the Bible. And they presume that everything she wrote back then pertains to today. This explains why so many teenagers are tired of her (3 times).

-- The church needs to loosen their rules and not take Ellen White's writings so literally.

-- I am sick of two-faced Christians. I am forced to read Bible and Ellen White books! I am sick of hearing about Ellen White.

Sexual Attitudes and Abortion

-- There should be no abortion unless the mother's life is in danger. As for a rape, the baby can be given up for adoption to good homes and people who cannot have

children (2 times).

-- Abortion is murder. I feel very strongly about that. My girlfriend and I were sexually active for just about six months. When she told me what I was afraid of hearing, I was only a junior in high school and she a senior. We entertained the idea of an abortion for a couple of days. The outcome of our decisions was anti-abortion which made me proud of my girl. P.S. When she went to take the test it was negative. I thank God to this day. The reason we said no to abortion was my other girlfriend went through one. Self-explanatory. It's real, very real.

-- Sexual intercourse between two 18-year-olds who love each other should be no one else's business. Abortion should not be decided by the government. The mother must decide for she will have to live with that decision. When the government interferes and says whether or not she can keep the child, that's taking our rights as citizens. The government should concern itself with the economy, get the debt back down, and put away bad criminals. If the government would stop messing around in our lives, everything would work out a lot better.

-- Married people having an affair is adultery and is always wrong, no matter the circumstances. When you marry someone you are committed to that person. When you marry that person you vow not to forsake that person. That means you do not hurt that person in any way (physically or mentally). When you have an affair, you hurt that person both ways. Physically, you have made them feel like they did something wrong to make you turn away and mentally, because you betrayed your trust and broke your vow to that person.

-- Sexual intercourse is the most wrong action in this case when the natural expected result of it is unwanted, especially it is pre- or extra-marital.

-- Guns and abortions are nobody's business but the person's. It's between God and us.

-- I feel that our church needs to take a stronger stand against such things as abortion or saving the earth. We aren't very strong in these types of areas. We should tell the world how we believe and stand up for it.

-- I think we need to put more emphasis on birth control.

-- Sex can be very degrading and damaging to the youth.

Christian Education

-- College education in the Adventist system is way too expensive. As much as I would like to go, I can't. I attended non-Adventist college because an SDA college was and still is far too expensive. _____ is the closest SDA college, but it costs \$12,000 to attend. Even with grants and such things it would still be over \$3000. A highly accredited non-SDA college around my home can be attended for less than \$1500, minus any student aid! For 1/8 the price I will stick with non-SDA colleges. I think the tuition could be lowered some to make some of us less financially fortunate people able to attend an SDA college (4 times).

-- Since I started attending _____ College, I have felt stronger to Christ.

-- My life changed drastically this past year. My love for God grew, therefore opening my eyes to what a wonderful church we have. The main reason for the change is my Adventist school and great teachers. One thing that helped me a lot was having people from other religions come to my Bible class. Hearing what they had to say opened my eyes to how right our church is.

-- Since I've graduated from academy, I've gained a respect and love for my church and its beliefs. During my junior and senior years of academy I felt pushed into my religion. But after a year of "real life," I don't know what I'd do without it.

-- There should be more financial aid available to people who want an Adventist education.

-- When I attended Academy as a freshman, it really seemed that everyone was just shoving a lot a doctrine and out-dated views down my throat. After one semester, I quit, went home, and proceeded to experiment with both drugs and sex. That was six years ago, and fortunately for me (and I must thank God here), I found that the answers were in my textbooks and in my relationship with God. Now, I am working as a peer counselor in a local (public) high school trying to get these kids to stay off the streets and in the classrooms. I truly believe that if only the academy had offered some education as to what one can do to their body and mind while "experimenting," its young people (including myself) would actually be prepared for what can really happen in the real world. For the past two years after high school graduation, I have worked in the "corporate sector," and have found that much of the same pressures still exist--even after adolescence. Education and guidance for the "real world" would really come in handy if they offered some classes to prepare academy kids for what is really out there.

The pressure from peers will never cease to exist, but if youth learn to handle it in a adult and mature manner, they will really be much better off and not have to learn the hard way like I and so many of my friends had to learn. Fortunately for me, I did not stay on the party scene or get pregnant as did some of my friends. I hate to say it, but their lives really did go to hell. Drugs and sex can really ruin a promising life, and I wish that everyone knew this.

-- Christian schools should be less concerned about the money that are going to get from the students and more concerned with what Christian education is all about.

-- We teenagers have been treated very unfairly in Adventist academies right now. Parents and teachers think we are such bad kids, and they wonder why we get into trouble. Well I will tell you why. We've had religion shoved down on our throats with no choice for our whole lives. It's like picking a career for your kid that he doesn't want. I'll tell you why I quit going to church. While I was at academy we had to go to worship in the morning, Bible class, worship at night every day, Sabbath school, church, AYA worship, and Sunday worship. I got so sick of never having time away from religion that I vowed when I got out, I wouldn't have anything to do with it. Also, I got into drinking, drugs, sex, everything just to be rebellious that I never would have thought of doing before I went to academy. Now I've been out for a year, and for the first time in my life I've hung around with people outside the church. They are the nicest people that I've ever met. I've never felt so loved. They actually care about me, not how much money I can give them.

-- I feel that all the church cares about is money. I'll tell you from experience that the rich kids were treated good and the poor kids were treated bad in the academy. I was a mill worker, and my mother had trouble paying my bill, and I was treated very badly by most of the faculty members.

-- I have been going to Adventist schools for 12 years and I'd say I've met about 20 actual Christian Adventist teenagers. Almost all of them put on an act to please their parents or whomever. I quit going to church because I was tired of being a hypocrite like all the other teenagers who are afraid to stand up to their parents. I'm so much happier now that I can finally be myself. But I'm so bitter toward the church, and I know that a lot of Adventist teenagers feel this way.

-- College education in the Adventist system is way too expensive and I just can't afford it. As much as I would like to go, I can't! Something should be done about it.

-- My belief in religion and God is stronger today then it was yesterday. It is so

because of the academy I attended and because of several people.

-- Growing up in a Adventist education system has been one of my greatest advantages to life. Since fourth grade when I entered the system, I have been learning a great deal about Adventism.

-- I hate _____ College and the rules especially pertaining to dormitory accommodations. There are a lot of closed-minded jerks working in the administration there. Why is there so much emphasis on all the things one can't do? It's very frustrating and makes me reject religion more.

-- I went to private school for 10 years, and I was ready to leave 5 years of that. By about 8th grade, I had my heart determined on public school, but my parents almost literally threw me back into private school. The years that followed were a little better, but they still hold much regret. I encountered all forms of trials, all mental--backstabbing, gossiping, hatred between others, and challenge of my own worth from a few of the teachers who taught there. At that school, the word of Christ was taught as a "nice thing, but in reality it doesn't work." Never in my life have I had more trials than when I was at private school. Following Christ the way He instructed us was never more difficult. Now I am in public college, and at a job, and I will say that private school gave me more than enough strength to face them both. Witnessing has been more successful, and strangely, my way of following Christ is appreciated.

-- Even in Adventist schools, sometimes faculty come across the wrong way when they push rules. And since kids look to adults for the picture of God, the kids don't want a part of God like that--if that is how He is. I only pray that they can come to know the true God.

Survey Instrument

- I was reading the letter that came with the questionnaire, and I thought about how considerate and caring it was for you to send a letter to make us aware of what's happening. I am honored to be a participant of such a project. The question as to how I was chosen does enter my mind quite often, but I'm sure that information is not available to me. My one concern with this endeavor is that those participating are not sincere or completely honest. It did occur to me that I should put answers that you all would want to hear. But I have strived to be as honest and objective as I can.

-- I am curious to know where this survey is going and what it has done so far.

- I'm kind of disappointed that you are not continuing with your survey. I enjoyed answering your questions.
- I envy you for your efforts at bringing teenager towards Christ.
- It would be neat if after ten years, we could receive a report of our answers and opinions from over the years.
- This questionnaire each year has really helped me to evaluate what is happening in my life. Thank you and keep up the good work.
- Your questions were good this time--quite thought provoking.
- Thank you for this survey. It always helps me to think about God and my life.
- I don't see that this survey has done any good in the last four years.
- The questionnaire has been fun. It has made me feel like I'm a part of the voice of the church and have some say.
- It has been nice to tell you all how I feel.
- I thank you for the survey. I look forward to it every year.

Celebration Churches

-- The "celebration" churches are growing by leaps and bounds. If it is so wrong, why are so many churches growing by leaps and bounds? Why are so many people turning back to God after being so far away and learning the joy of his service? Jesus said "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." Most of our churches are not drawing people but turning them away. What does that say about the way we're lifting Him up? Is His face so blocked by our prejudices and traditions that we can't see the tears in His eyes because of our hypocrisy? He said to love the lost and unlovely. If the church isn't for those who need him most, then who is it for? In my opinion the growth of those few celebrating churches proves that their practical celebration of God's unconditional and all-accepting love for anyone and their service to the world is inspired.

-- I usually attend Celebration Center, and I have really enjoyed the song service,

the Garden of Prayer, the friendliness and praise I feel when I go there. I also enjoy Pastor _____ and his sermons at the _____ Church. I wish a church could be a mix of praise and good messages. I am tired of the boring sit-in-your-row-be-quiet type of worship. A lot of teens go to Celebration because they enjoy the atmosphere. It's really relaxing. I'm thankful for Celebration, for it has brought a lot of life back into people young and old. I am definitely thinking of becoming a member.

-- The SDA church today among the Anglos is failing. We need more enthusiasm and life but maybe not quite to the extent of the celebration churches.

-- Stop Celebration!

-- The Celebration movement that is coming into our church is wrong. It should be studied by both sides.

-- I really like the "Celebration" SDA churches. We should have more of them. If we did, I'm sure I would be in church more often!

General Conference

-- I was very disappointed by the church when the General Conference voted to ban competitive sports. Get with the times! And get serious!

-- We expect great things from the General Conference. Prayer is a good tool. Let's use it.

-- I am disgusted by the General Conference in its path of action relating to many issues.

Miscellaneous

-- The Adventist Church needs to stress vegetarianism more than it does. Animal slaughter is an outrage. Death in the diet is a root cause of the violence in this world. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill," not "thou shalt not murder." Killing animals or killing humans is killing nevertheless.

-- I attended the SDA church in _____. I just wanted to say that it's the best SDA academy in _____ Conference. Dean _____ is really great also! _____

SDA church is where I belong, and I love the church. But all the kids go to _____. We need something done that will help the kids like Sabbath School more in their own church.

-- I find myself questioning if God truly exists. How can we know for sure?

-- There are too many divorces. People in general have taken a very light attitude towards marriage, but it's very sad that Adventists seem to have little regard for it. Divorce should never be an option except in cases of unfaithfulness. But even then measures should be taken to try to work things out before rushing into divorce.

-- Instead of sending all the church support money to Africa and Asia, send it to England. The church is in a sad state over there. I witnessed it, and it was horrible.

-- _____ works as a religion teacher at _____ Academy. He is appalling. He is the biggest turnoff to religion. I have been dating a Catholic girl, and once got in a lengthy discussion with her mother. I found that their views were close to mine, but because of an incident with _____, they turned away. They were just about to start attending an SDA church before this incident. His views are very narrow. He puts down other religions and seems to feel that the only "right" church is SDA, and absolutely none else will be in heaven.

-- I don't understand why people these days claim to be Christians and are for the death penalty. Are we not suppose to love our fellow men and help them see the light and change their ways? I am strongly opposed to the death penalty! I think some of these people can change their ways.

-- Many recent experiences have influenced me to be closer with Christ. Also, a wonderful Adventist girlfriend has been a very positive factor in my life.

-- I'm now 18 and am now a mother of a baby boy. I stopped going to school my last year and decided it would be better to finish so I am going back in August. The baby is okay. I believe in God who helped me mentally through my pregnancy. I didn't have the baby's father. He left, and I realize what a friend I have in God.

-- I attended an academy Youth-to-Youth and would love to help out with one at a collegiate level. It changed my life, and the lives of my friends.