



Consumer Panel Report

NAD Church Resource Center Product Awareness and Evaluation by Local Church Leaders

October, 2007

Introduction

Two consumer panels were conducted for the North American Division (NAD) Church Resources Center (CRC) in December, 2006, and April 2007. The purpose of these consumer panels is to explore the needs in local churches for resource materials as well as evaluate the impact of products developed over the last 20 years by the CRC and its affiliated resource centers, publishing houses, etc. This report describes the findings from these two consumer panels.

One panel was conducted in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the other in La Sierra, California. The Chattanooga panel included pastors and lay leaders from local churches in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. The La Sierra panel included pastors and lay leaders from the Southeastern California Conference. The Chattanooga panel was predominantly white, while the La Sierra panel was very diverse and multiethnic.

A total of 67 individuals—35 in Chattanooga and 32 in La Sierra—participated in a full day of group interview and related activities at a commercial market research facility in Chattanooga and in facilities provided by La Sierra University in California. An experienced focus group moderator conducted the process. During part of the process a copy of the most recent AdventSource catalog was placed in the hands of each participant for them to look through. During another part of the process an array of products developed by the Church Resource Center and its affiliates were displayed on tables and participants were encouraged to select products for careful examination and evaluation. A copy of the Moderator's Guide is included in the appendix.

The overall demographic profile of the total 67 participants is displayed in the graphs on pages 3 through 5. Also included are key items of information about the local churches in which the participants serve.

The participants in the Chattanooga panel included eight clergy and 27 lay leaders. A total of 17 participants were women and 18 men. Two participants were from the Millennial generation (born from 1977 through 1994), 14 from Gen X (born from 1965 through 1976), 15 from the Baby Boom generation (born from 1946 through 1964) and 10 from older generations (born before 1946).

The participants in the La Sierra panel included eight clergy and 24 lay leaders. A total of 10 participants were women and 23 men. There were no participants in this panel from the Millennial generation and only two from Gen X, with 14 from the Baby Boom generation and 10 from older generations.

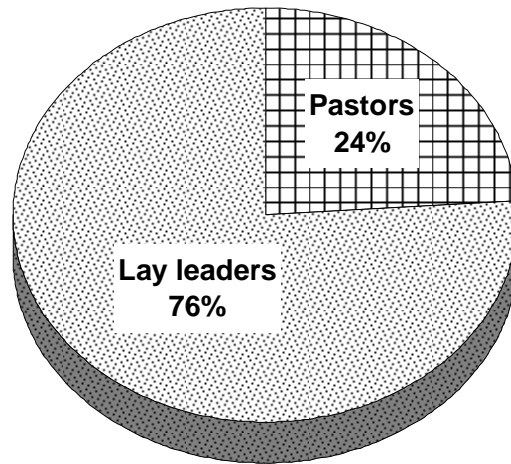
The local churches from which the participants in the Chattanooga panel were drawn include 12 with 100 or fewer members, nine with 101 to 300 members, seven with 301 to 700 members, and four with more than 700 members. Only one of these congregations is located in the City of Chattanooga, nine are located in surrounding suburbs and 18 in small towns and rural areas outside the Chattanooga metropolitan area.

The congregations from which the participants in the La Sierra panel came include three with 100 or fewer members, 13 with 101 to 300 members, seven with 301 to 700 members, and six with more than 700 members. Six of these churches are located in the City of San Bernardino or the City of Riverside, twelve in the many suburban communities in the Southeastern California Conference and six in outlying small towns.

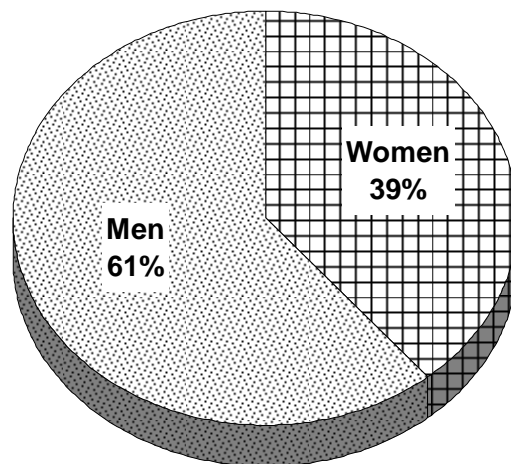
It should be kept in mind that these two panels are not necessarily representative of the gender and generational profile of Adventist local church leaders found in a number of surveys. A consumer panel is a form of focus group research, a qualitative research method and not reliable for quantifiable results. The findings of this study need to be tested in a random sample survey in order to quantify the various views expressed.

At the start of the group interviews, the participants were asked to identify the strongest ministries in their local church. The results of this question are displayed in the graphic at the bottom of page 5.

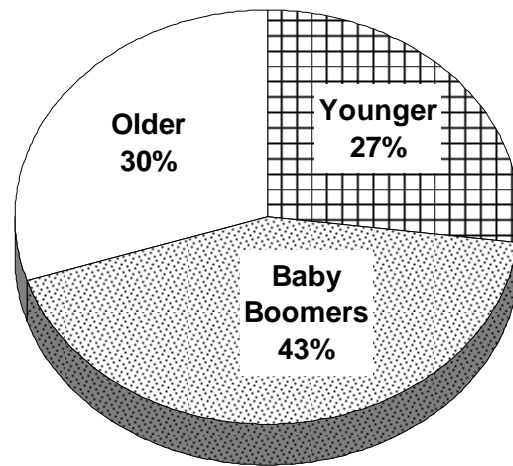
Church Role of Participants



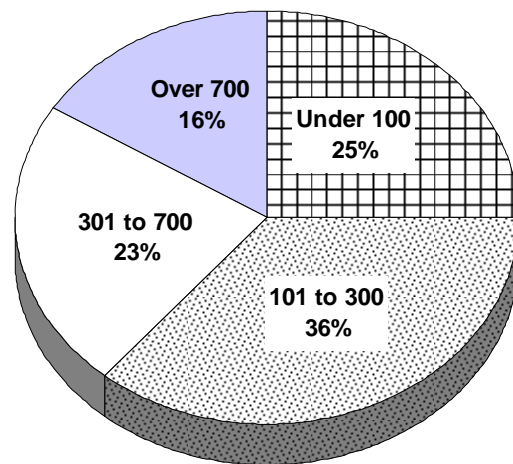
Gender of Participants



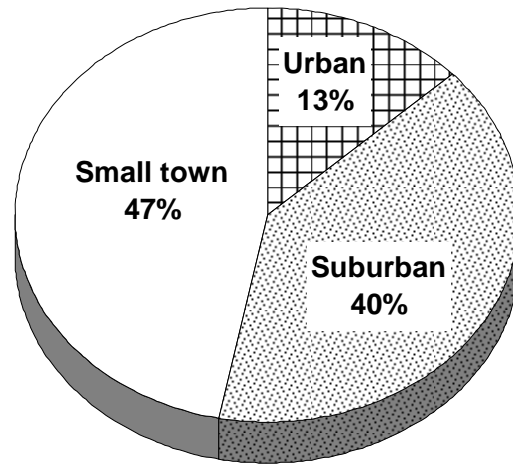
Generation of Participants



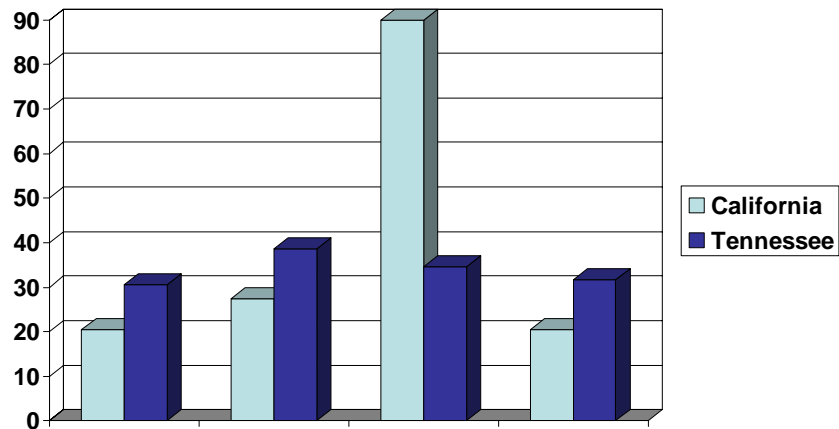
Members of Participants' Congregations



Community Context of Participants' Congregations



Strongest Ministries



Are CRC Products Being Used?

There is strong evidence that products developed under the auspices of the NAD Church Resources Center and affiliated network of organizations (CRC) are being used in local churches. At the beginning of each day, the moderator asked the panel, “What kind of resource materials are you using in your local church? A number of products were mentioned immediately.

A woman in Chattanooga said, “The NAD has an excellent job description for the ministry of deacons and deaconesses, and I give that to each new deaconess that joins our group. The moderator held up ***Responsibilities in the Local Church*** and asked her, “Does it come out of this notebook?” But the woman didn’t recognize the book. “I don’t know where comes from. We just have it in the church office in a manual.” It is likely that she did not recognize the cover of the second edition of this publication and that her church office has a copy of the first edition.

Regeneration materials were mentioned by a man in the Chattanooga panel. “This is part of our rehab ministry that we offer to the community. It was originated by Hal Gates ... based on the 12-step program to help people with addictive habits. They have seminars and training.” Regeneration materials and training are provided by the Center for Addictions at Andrews University, one of the resource centers affiliated with CRC.

A pastor in the La Sierra panel said that he uses ***Connections*** and ***Friend2Friend*** in his congregation, adding “I’m planning to use, for reclaiming missing members, ***Safety Zone***. I got these from AdventSource.” A layman in the same panel reported that his church uses ***Connections*** “for the youth and young adult ministries.” He could not remember if they purchased the curriculum from the ABC or AdventSource. All three of these are products developed for the CRC by the Center for Creative Ministry, one of its affiliated resource centers.

“We still use Mark Finley’s ***Making Friends for God*** video series for training for outreach,” said a pastor in the Chattanooga panel. “I think that’s by HART Publishing,” another resource provider affiliated with CRC. Another pastor in the Chattanooga panel mentioned that he uses ***Gaining Decisions for Christ*** by Louis Torres in “the training material for people wanting to give Bible studies.” It is published by Review & Herald and distributed by AdventSource.

Binding the Wounds by Ron and Nancy Rocky is being used in his church said another man in the Chattanooga panel. It has a ministry of Faith for Today, one of the NAD media ministries, “but I don’t know who’s carrying it now. It includes videos, textbook and a workbook.”

“We use the workbook called ***Prayer Warriors*** for our prayer ministries,” reported a woman in the Chattanooga panel. It was written by Ron Halverson and is published by HART, another CRC-affiliated resource center.

General Conference entities outside the NAD also play a significant role in the materials that are being used in the local churches in North America. A pastor in the Chattanooga panel said, “Two leadership things” his church uses “would be the ***Elders Handbook*** and the DVD witnessing

training seminar by Gary Gibbs, *Winsome Witnessing*.” Both of these are distributed in the NAD by the Ministerial Supply Center operated by the GC Ministerial Association.

Many of panel participants mentioned the **Sabbath School materials published by the denomination**. “We get the *Kids Ideas* magazine at our church, edited by Ginger Church at the Review and Herald,” said a woman in the Chattanooga panel. “For the children’s Sabbath School we use *GraceLink*,” reported a woman in the La Sierra panel. She was echoed by another woman in Chattanooga; “All of our Sabbath Schools use *GraceLink*, except Primary is not using *GraceLink*. We have one class that’s using *GraceLink* on the internet. And we get the *Primary Treasure*, *Guide* magazine, *Little Friend* and *Insight* magazine.” *Guide* and *Little Friend* were also mentioned by another woman in La Sierra. “And the Teen Mission Quarterly is used by our Earliteens,” added a third woman in Chattanooga. *GraceLink* is the denomination’s new curriculum for children’s Sabbath School, the development of which was initiated by CRC in 1996, probably the largest project that CRC has ever attempted. “The adult Sabbath School quarterly and the resources that go along with that,” was listed by a woman in the La Sierra panel and there was general acknowledgement of this fact by all of the participants in both panels, although some are using alternative materials as will be reported more fully in the sections on independent Adventist providers and non-Adventist resources.

Other churches are **using in Sabbath School denominationally-published resources that are not intended as Sabbath School curricula**. For example, a woman in the Chattanooga panel said, “In our Junior Sabbath School class we are using a book by Steve Case, *It’s My Choice*, that was published by Review & Herald, but we bought it from AdventSource, a workbook for baptism, because we have so many of kids that are unchurched. We alternate and every once in awhile we let the kids teach the lesson. It is so simple that they do a wonderful job in teaching the lesson to each other from that book.”

The GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department is also now providing resources outside the NAD CRC network, a man in the La Sierra panel reported. “For the Sabbath School we have a good resource and that’s Jonathan Kuntaraf. From Jonathan we get a lot of the small groups techniques. And that’s what we are trying to inflame at this time, the small groups having their own officers, having their own ... but still making sure that small groups do not become cliques and [we use] Jonathan Kuntaraf, the GC Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director, and [local conference staff person] here for resources and support.”

Churches are using the resources provided by the NAD media ministries in their evangelism efforts. “The Voice of Prophecy puts out a guide on how to run a local Bible correspondence school, and we’ve done by that,” reported a woman in the Chattanooga group. “We’re using the Discover Bible Studies from the Voice of Prophecy, doing the mail-outs,” said another woman in the same group. “When we get response cards back, then we usually hand deliver the lessons.” A man in the La Sierra panel also mentioned the “Voice of Prophecy lessons ... Amazing Facts too.” And a woman in La Sierra listed the Real Truth lessons by Bill Scales. A man in Chattanooga said, “We use *Search for Certainty*, It Is Written’s Bible lessons. We have a full-time Bible worker.” Another man in Chattanooga mentioned Panorama of Prophecy. “We use it for folks that like computer based Bible studies. I think that Doug Batchelor at Amazing Facts produces it.”

DVD and satellite-linked public evangelism resources are being widely used. A pastor in the La Sierra panel said, “For evangelism ... we used It Is Written, Shawn Boonstra’s *The Presence* and also the [satellite-linked evangelism even] before that.” A pastor in Chattanooga mentioned, “*Unsealing Daniel’s Mystery* by Mark Finely, and another one by him, *The Man Jesus*.” A layman from a Spanish congregation in the La Sierra panel reported, “We have used for evangelistic series, Amazing Facts, the Bible study guides and also Revelation Seminar put out by Seminars Unlimited. They both are available in English and Spanish. They may have other languages also.” At times these resources are being used for Sabbath School and for purposes other than public evangelism. “Our teen class, the teacher for that, he’s using Doug Batchelor’s *Storicales*,” stated a woman in Chattanooga.

“For health for health ministries, we use NAD resources,” said a woman in the La Sierra panel. “We go to the health ministries summit each year, and there’s a lot of variety of Adventist speakers, and educational materials that we use [include] Lifestyle Matters, Don Hall’s resource, and Health Edco, we’re on their mailing list. ... We used [what ADRA provided] for World AIDS Day; there was a kit, if you go on line, to NAD Plus Line, there is a link and they sent us a kit for World AIDS day. It was free. And so we put that on.” A man in Chattanooga reported many of the same things. “In health ministry we use Well Source, Life Long Health, Don Hall, and the Life Net from Faith for Today and McDougal from Faith for Today.”

A number of books were mentioned as being used in classes, seminars and small groups that were published as **trade books by Adventist publishers**, but were not designed specifically as curriculum resources. For example, a man in Chattanooga said, “We’re using *Unto a Perfect Man* by Carl Kauffman for a Bible 101 class teaching lay-people how to give Bible studies. It’s published by Andrews University Press. It is excellent, excellent material.” A man in the La Sierra panel reported that “One of our small groups is reading *Searching for the God of Grace* by Stewart Tyner.” [Pacific Press] Another man in Chattanooga stated, “We’re using *Faith and Works* [by Ellen White, Review & Herald] for a young adult Sabbath School class.” Another pastor in La Sierra said, “We’ve used *95 Thesis on Righteousness by Faith* by Morris Venden.” [Pacific Press] A third man in the Chattanooga group told us, “For Sabbath School we use the books *Sunlight* and *My Bible Friends* for our Family Sabbath School. We are doing a Family Sabbath School; the whole family in one Sabbath School. There are two classes and we are using some of the material from these two books.” *My Bible Friends* is a multi-volume Bible story series for young children published by Review & Herald for many years, but no longer listed as in print. Review & Herald is currently publishing a coloring book, an audio version of at least some of the stories and a DVD featuring Uncle Dan and Aunt Sue from the Story Hour media ministry for children. It is unclear which of two books the reference to “Sunlight” is about. Review & Herald currently distributes both *Living in the Sunlight*, and Ellen White compilation, and *Project Sunlight*, a novel by June Strong that was originally published as a Missionary Book of the Year in the 1980s and has continued to be one of the best-sellers among the titles from Adventist publishers.

Pathfinder Club resource materials continue to be one of the most popular and lucrative type of products among the CRC system. These products continue to be the backbone of the business at AdventSource, and we found no indication of decline. “We use a lot of NAD resources in our

Pathfinder program ... a lot from AdventSource—honors, worksheets that you can make copies of. We do get a few things from our local conference office, but they don't have a lot of space. But the conference web site does have a link to AdventSource," said a man in the La Sierra panel. Another man in the same group reported "for the Pathfinders we use the NAD handbook and AdventSource." It is unclear why Pathfinder Club resources were never mentioned in the Chattanooga group.

Vacation Bible School resources are another significant market, considering the research that shows that more Adventist local churches conduct a VBS than other single type of programming other than what occurs on Sabbath. A man in La Sierra said, "For VBS we've used [what] we got from the Review & Herald, one that has the safari theme." Congregations represented in the Chattanooga group are also evidently using these materials, including complaints about the fact that the original publisher—Review & Herald is simply the distributor—is not an Adventist organization. (We include more on this in the section below on conflict and polarization.)

An **excellent example of how the CRC delivery system is supposed to work** was shared by a man in the La Sierra panel. This is evidence that the church resources system which NAD began to construct during 1980s, during the Bradford administration, and which is now under the management of CRC, is fully operative. "Last year the personal ministries director of our church contacted the conference and asked for materials for our personal ministries program. They sent two or three books, and some tapes, all for free; *Practical Guide to Personal Ministries* [AdventSource] and I believe the name of the book is *Light Your World for God* by Mark Finley [HART Publications], a step-by-step how to introduce evangelism into your church and what steps need to be taken. Then our pastor attended at Andrews University the SEEDS Conference, [which] was really impressive; it introduces a lot of different subjects, prepares and trains the pastors. It's not only for pastors, it's for lay people or anyone that would like to go. ... Our pastor focused in on small groups in the homes of the church members. Since then, throughout this past year, he has been on the Sabbath, during potluck, been training the church members, giving them short 20 minute talks, teaching them how to begin a church in their neighborhood and then begin a relationship with the neighbors and bring them to the church."

There were **a couple of generally negative responses**. One of the first comments in the La Sierra panel was a man who said, "in preparation for this I talked to my head deacon, my head elder, young adult pastor, the communication director, and Sabbath School superintendent, and to a person they said, 'We don't get any materials from them that really help us in our ministry. I was rather shocked. ... from the division, from the conference. And so that kind of shook me up a little bit. These are the leaders of our church and they're saying we're really not getting any assistance. Most of them are excellent leaders, and they're doing a good job, but they're not really getting much assistance from the Church.'" No one the group agreed with this man's assessment, but when various products were placed on a table and the group was asked to share which ones they had seen before or used, another man in the La Sierra panel said, "Well ... I don't know much about those materials."

Resources from Self-supporting Organizations

One key theme that we found in these focus groups, which was not present in the focus group research we did for CRC in 2002, is the proliferation of independent ministries, members of Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), that have moved into the business of providing resource materials for local churches and ministries. This includes a few that have been around for a long time, but never affiliated with CRC, as well as a larger number of new organizations, some of which have clearly positioned themselves as alternatives to official denominational resources for Sabbath School, etc.

Some of the organizations mentioned have a long-standing working relationship with the NAD Health Ministries Department. "The CHIP program," was mentioned by a man in the Chattanooga panel. [Coronary Health Improvement Project, directed by Dr. Hans Diehl, <http://www.sdachip.org/>] "Three years ago we used the videos put out by the Lifestyle Centers of America from Oklahoma. I don't remember the name, but it was on general health and had about 12 video sessions," said another man in Chattanooga. This is likely a reference to the Wellspring program, <http://nadhealthministries.org/healthworks/HW6q2004.pdf> which has been endorsed by NAD Health Ministries. A third man in Chattanooga mentioned "a CD called Abundant Living by Health Education Resources and a book entitled *Proof Positive* by Dr. Neil Nedley." They "are very nice. They are health talks that are scripted and anybody can give them." Dr. Nedley's work is also approved by NAD Health Ministries.

Another independent ministry that has been around for a long time, but is evidently now out of business, still has materials out in some local churches. "For our prayer ministry we have a seven-lesson syllabus and it's called The Positive Way Christian life seminar," said a man in the La Sierra panel.

A number of **new organizations have formed specifically to provide resources for children's and youth ministries as an alternative to the official curricula** of the denomination and these are finding resonance with some lay leaders. "We are in our second quarter of Kids in Discipleship," said a woman in Chattanooga. "It's really strong with our church school. In conjunction with that we also use *The Seventh Day* DVD by Jim Arrabito." [The Sabbath Project, LLT Productions] A man the Chattanooga panel reported that in his local church, "We use Truth for Youth for youth evangelism, from Young Disciple Ministries in Washington state." More organizations of this type are identified in the section of this report on the issues surrounding the *GraceLink* curriculum.

A similar situation is developing in outreach. "Our church does a lot with the Share Him evangelism resources [Robert Folkenberg's ministry]," said a woman in the Chattanooga panel. A man in the same group reported, that "for health ministries our church used the Wildwood program. They actually came and did the training. It's called Health Expo." A pastor in Chattanooga recommended "material called Response. It comes from Pondovita Productions. It's a video series that's being done to reach postmodern [people] with the message of Christ by David Asherick." [We could not find any information on this item, except that David Asherick is not currently a denominational employee and was a speaker at the 2007 ASI Convention in Louisville, Kentucky.]

At least **one local conference in the NAD is positioning itself as an alternative resource provider** outside its territory. For several years it has been organizing the General Youth Conference without the endorsement or collaboration of the NAD Youth Ministries Department. So it did not come as a surprise when a man in the group in Chattanooga said, “Our health ministries team used the *Lifestyle Matters* seminar package by Vicki Griffin from the Michigan Conference. It’s a health resource for a health seminar/cooking school type thing.”

The lay leaders are particularly confused by this ideological competition. They see all of these organizations as Adventist organizations and often have little or now awareness of the divisive issues underneath the various approaches. They would like to see all products from all providers presented together. “I was disappointed in the Bible study section [of the catalog],” said a man in La Sierra. “It doesn’t refer to the [name of organization] Bible studies which are state of the art. You know, it’s a shame we can’t get a catalog that has those in it.”

Resources from Outside the Adventist Community

Many of the participants in both focus groups mentioned resource materials from publishers who are not Seventh-day Adventists. This is another aspect of the church resources market that has changed significantly over the past five years since the last research done for CRC. In the 2002 report we stated that “there was hesitation among ... participants in responding to this question.” This year we found no hesitation.

“We use Financial Peace University by Dave Ramsey,” said in pastor in the Chattanooga panel, “and the one by Larry Burkett too; it’s called *Crown Him* I guess.” Later a woman in the same group said, “I’d like to mention that Financial Peace University, they have a children’s program. I don’t want to call it baby sitting, but purposeful childcare where they conduct the children’s program during the time that their parents are taking [that adult course]. We get more family involvement that way too. He has I believe a six week series that he does for children.”

A layman in the Chattanooga panel reported that in his local church “our men’s ministry is using two resources: *Every Man’s Battle*—I don’t know the publisher for that—and [Henry T.] Blackaby’s *The Man God Uses*. The first book focuses on overcoming sexual addictions and pornography. The other one is a small group study guide by the same author who wrote *Experiencing God*.” A woman in the same group said later on, “We have a Celebrate Recovery program that’s very strong. I think it’s from the Saddleback Church and we adapted it to our own needs.”

Others in the Chattanooga panel said, “We’ve used Group Resources for our VBS. Of course, it’s recommended by the Adventist denomination and we have found it very helpful.” And, “The leaders for the academy age Sabbath School use Youth Specialties resources.” And, “We use Beth Moore materials for women’s ministry.” [www.lproof.org/default.asp, Living Proof Ministries] “At McDonald Road Church, for the Women’s Ministry, they use a Baptist program for Bible study called *First Place*. It’s not as good as having our own, but it was really good. It’s a Bible study [that includes] health and lifestyle ... for women specifically.” [More information about this parachurch ministry is at www.firstplace.org/about.html on the web.]

“At our church, we put on once or twice a year, video seminars on marriage with Gary Smalley,” said another man in the Chattanooga panel. “It’s not Adventist, but it’s used by many churches. It’s just a couple that presents how to maintain marriages. It’s a couple, husband and wife that really have a great continual tape series that you can utilize.” [www.garysmalleyvideos.com] Yet another woman in Chattanooga reported, “right now we are using a video series on marriage enrichment, Song of Solomon but I’m not sure who it’s by.”

The La Sierra panel reported an even greater degree of use of materials produced outside the Adventist community. “For our men’s prayer breakfast we are using the Serendipity Bible,” said one man. A pastor in the group responded, “There’s a whole bunch of Serendipity small group stuff.” [www.serendipityhouse.com] A woman shared that in her congregation, “for our prayer seminar we are using the Love to Pray: 40 Days of Prayer from NavPress. I use a lot of NavPress materials,” she offered. NavPress is the publishing arm of The Navigators, a well-known Evangelical parachurch ministry that supports personal evangelism.

[www.navigators.org] A man in the group concurred, “We use NavPress for our small groups. They publish books specifically for small groups.”

A number of the participants in the La Sierra panel reported that **small groups were using a variety of books by Christian authors and publishers outside the Adventist community**. “A book by Seamands we’ve been using is *Healing for Damaged Emotions*.” [David A. Seamands, Victor Publishing, 1981] “One of our groups is reading *The Ragamuffin Gospel* [by Brennan Manning, Multnomah Publishers, 2000] and we’re reading *Shaped by the Word* [by Robert Mulholland, Upper Room Books, 1985]. We have five different groups, and each group is reading their own choice of books.” An third man said, “A book we’ve read is *Sacred Romance*. That is by John Eldredge and someone.” [*The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer to the Heart of God* by Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, Thomas Nelson, 1997]

An elder in the La Sierra panel said, “Our leadership was asked to read four books about postmodern evangelism, none of which are produced by the Adventist Church, and I don’t recall most of them. One is *More Ready than You Realize*. [by Brian McLaren, Zondervan, 2002] I don’t remember the other three we used. They came from a discussion we had in this local conference with pastors and laity on postmodern outreach.”

Some **Adventist congregations are using children’s curriculum materials from publishers outside the Adventist community**. A pastor stated, “For VBS we use something from Concordia, I don’t the actual name of it, but they looked at the Adventist one, and they looked at the Concordia materials and two others, and they liked the music with this one best. It’s Lutheran; that’s all I know.” A laymen in the same group reported that his church “ordered from the Echo’s curriculum, and we’ve ordered Faith Weaver publications and also from David C. Cook, the Bible in Life curriculum. The Echoes curriculum is a Bible course that includes people of color, so multicultural accents. Looking at the demographics of our young adults, we decided to challenge their brains, you know, with more appropriate materials. [Echoes curriculum is from Christian Education Publishers, San Diego; Faith Weaver and David C. Cook, are well-known Evangelical publishers.]

“We’ve used for **resources for Pathfinders from the local Boy Scout council**,” said another man in La Sierra. “They have a lot of materials we use to teach honors. They also have a list of instructors in the area [and] a lot of their merit badges are very similar to our honors, so the instructors that volunteer to teach for Boy Scout troops for merit badges, we’ve gone to them to asked, Will you teach for us? You know, we give them the requirements for our honors and they come and serve as instructors for our honors, so we go to the local Boy Scout council for resources.”

Despite the controversy raised by two recent books by Adventist condemning **Rick Warren and his materials**, pastors and lay leaders in both focus groups reported that these materials are being used in Adventist congregations. “We started developing our small groups three or four years ago on the Purpose Driven model by Rick Warren,” stated a woman in the Chattanooga panel. “Some of the pastors went out to Saddleback Church. We read the books *The Purpose Driven Life* and *Purpose Driven Church*. But, we also developed our own materials. We published a book written by our church members on the purpose driven life [entitled] *The Purpose Driven*

Life as Members of the Collegedale Church. [Various members] were asked to write on specific topics. And then we did the “40 Days of Purpose.” We had sermons each Sabbath for two months on these various aspects [and] small groups. I must add that now we don’t reference the work of Rick Warren so much anymore. We’re doing more from our own material. And our new pastor is doing [his own] sermons ... but that’s where it started.” Another woman in the La Sierra panel reported that in her congregation, “because we are very close to Saddleback Church in Irvine the majority of our members go there on Saturday afternoon. And they are beginning to have an influence from the Purpose Driven books from Rick Warren. And so we go to the Sonshine Bookstore and, for instance my small group that I attend, the book that we are reading is from Rick Warren, and I really enjoy it.” We explored the controversy surround these books and learned more about how it is perceived at the grass roots and that is presented in a section below.

Because it is so common for Adventist congregations to use resource materials from authors and publishers outside the Adventist community, there was an appeal for some guidance as to which materials can be used with the least confusion or introduction of ideas that run against Adventist theology. “In relation to non-Adventist books maybe if we could have somebody kind of do a review of these materials that might be useful to us Adventists, that would probably help a lot,” said a man in the La Sierra panel. “Review strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations how you could use it in the Adventist setting.” There were a number of affirmative sounds and nods in the group. This is a worthwhile suggestion, in part, because found no indication that there is anything that denominational leaders could do or say that will put an end to the use of non-Adventist resources.

Resources Created in the Local Church

With the technology available today and the increase in the number of highly-educated church members, it should come as no surprise that more and more Adventist congregations are creating their own resource materials if they cannot find what they need. We have already quoted above the report from a woman in the Chattanooga panel that her large church has published a book written by members on the Purpose Driven Life theme which is being used by their small groups.

Another woman in the Chattanooga panel stated later, “One of the resources we use is one created by our own church members. The communication department uploads the sermons on our web site, and we have thousands of people all over the country listening to these sermons and writing in [saying] they are learning and being blessed. The web address is www.ccsda.com.”

“My church generates leaflets and little booklets,” say a man in the La Sierra panel. “Very soon we are going to have magazines for outreach, a church newsletter, and other literature like that. Very soon we are going to start a regular magazine.”

Some of this creativity is the result of a need to connect with a specific local context. “We serve a community that is about 85 percent Hispanic,” said another man in the La Sierra panel. “So when we’re looking for resources, we have to create our own if we can’t find them. And most of the time we wind up having to create our own. Either we spend lots of time translating, or we create it from scratch.”

Informal Sharing of Materials by Local Churches

It is our impression from these two group interviews that there is also an increase in the amount of informal sharing of resource materials between local church churches. For example, a man in the La Sierra panel said, “We coordinate podcasting the [name] church and we now have podcasts. So, you know, we network with each other.”

“We have a Russian-speaking community in our church,” explained a woman in the Chattanooga panel, “and every Saturday night they have their own vespers in the Russian language. Because I speak some Russian, I often attend. They’re using right now a recent series that Peter Kulakov, who’s the pastor of a church here in the U.S., did in Kiev. It’s very powerful, and there are 19 presentations in the series. He did the series in March this year, and they’re using that video resource. Its called Secrets of the Apocalypse in Russian, and it stresses Revelation and end-time events. It isn’t all eschatology, they also have a lifestyle section. Last night they had a woman presenting on how to have a good marriage before Peter spoke.

A pastor in the Chattanooga panel told how he brought materials with him from a previous assignment to his current church. “A resource for leadership that I use through every year is the job descriptions for church officers that we developed when I was in the Northwest. I found that to be helpful in the area of leadership.” Another man in the group immediately pointed out that this was something that the NAD CRC provides through AdventSource, implying that he was re-inventing the wheel. The pastor made no response to this observation.

Mixed Attitudes about Adventist and Other Resources

A number of the comments made in the Chattanooga focus group indicate mixed attitudes about the use of resource materials produced outside the Adventist community and materials produced by Adventist authors and publishers. Often there was a juxtaposition of “we use both/and” or there is an implied criticism of the CRC product matched with either a “more spiritual” or

For example, a woman in the group said, “Our women’s Bible study is studying women of the Bible. I know that one book they are using is an Adventist book and one is non-Adventist. They both are called *Women of the Bible*. And our Sabbath School superintendent, she’s new this year, started using the [Program Helps] and [later] we stopped using it and everybody went back to doing their own thing. Most everybody uses the Spirit of Prophecy. We just found some things in [the Program Helps] that just wasn’t [right].”

One man said, “We use Breath Free and Arthur Weaver’s Five Day Stop Smoking videos.” A pastor reported that “for elders we use *Elder’s Digest* from the NAD and for our board, *Leadership* magazine’s material on training leaders.” Another woman said, “All of our Sabbath schools use GraceLink, except Primary is not using GraceLink. ... And we get the *Primary Treasure*, *Guide* magazine, *Little Friend*, and *Insight* magazine, but the leaders for the Academy age use Youth Specialties resources.”

A different man asked about “the VBS material coming from the NAD. It appears that most of the last several years we’ve been using non-Adventist sources. Does anyone know if this is going to continue to be the case? In other words, I’m saying, there are churches in the past that have chosen not to use it, and they have been looking for alternative sources.” A woman responded, “We have quit using [our conference] as a source for VBS training and materials. We go to [a neighboring conference] and they have wonderful, more Bible-based VBS program and the music is more [appropriate].”

All of this seems to indicate that a number of the participants in the Chattanooga panel have mixed feelings about the use of materials from outside the Adventist community, yet are not entirely comfortable with the Adventist materials in every case. The divisiveness and polarization that we discuss elsewhere in this report may actually be internalized by some pastors and lay leaders.

The Issues surrounding the GraceLink Curriculum

GraceLink is the brand name for the new Children's Sabbath School that the General Conference has developed over the past decade. CRC actually launched this effort in the mid-1990s by petitioning the GC to either permit the NAD to develop its own curriculum or partner with the NAD in developing a new curriculum. Assessment of the problems associated with the old materials which had been originally written in the 1940s, with only minimal updates and piecemeal changes in graphics over the years, had accumulated throughout the life of the CRC from the formation of the Children's Materials and Marketing Committee in the early 1980s. During the early 1980s, the NAD developed its own curriculum for the Youth Sabbath School, which was the occasion for considerable internal conflict at the GC and NAD offices. The GC wanted to avoid a repeat of this conflict, so the decision was made by the World Sabbath School Advisory Council to create a new Sabbath School curriculum for children along the lines proposed by the NAD, but under the control of the GC. Dr. Patrica Habada served as the general editor and a large number of writers from all world divisions were involved in the production of these new materials. The publishing house, with funding assistance from the GC, commissioned entirely new graphics.

One of the key operating principles in the new curriculum was to provide a variety of learning methods and not rely entirely on story telling with felts as had the old curriculum. This created animosity among a number of small producers of felts who saw their business coming to an end and resulted in threats to publish alternative curricula. Later a number of theological problems were allegedly discovered in the new materials which justified to many people the need for alternative curricula and damned the new GraceLink curriculum. The new curriculum was introduced over a number of years, with each age level starting on a different year, so this issue has been slowing building for some time.

These issues received considerable discussion in the Chattanooga panel with almost no mention in the La Sierra panel. This appears to be a much larger concern in the south than on the west coast.

"We use My Bible First instead of GraceLink," said one woman. "We get it from ABC. It's an alternative to GraceLink." A man said, "We use that as well." My Bible First is a member of ASI, according to its web site. The author is a retired missionary and "the lessons are faithful to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy," the editor's focus is "faithfulness to the Adventist message. ... The purpose of the lessons is to help children understand the plan of salvation and the great controversy theme by a chronological presentation of the Bible stories." Another goal is "to help parents establish daily family worships." (See www.mybiblefirst.org.)

Another man reported that in his church, "We are using *Young Disciple* magazine in place of *Guide*. Truth 4 Youth is the ministry that produces the magazine." The Young Disciple Ministries web site says that the magazine has been published since 1992 "by Seventh-day Adventist Christians with a mission to bring young people to the Lord." It "is a member of ASI" and "staff members have appeared on 3ABN" and some of its materials were "produced in conjunction with Carolina Global Evangelism." The founder began to produce these materials when she "realized her students were ready for serious Bible study." Perhaps no comparison with

Guide or Insight is intended, yet there is a clear implication in this and other statements. “All material appearing in *Young Disciple* magazine must be true, must have a spiritual impact, and must be consistent with the beliefs of the SDA church as exemplified in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.” (www.youngdisciple.com)

Yet another man stated his church is using “the Family Bible Lesson series, it’s a three year series by SonLight Education Ministry. We use it for Bible studies and nature combined for the children.” The SonLight web site begins by saying that it “provides a Bible based Christian home schooling curriculum.” It makes no mention of the Adventist Church and includes a quote from Ellen White’s book *Education*, attributing it simply to “one writer.” It may be that Sonlight got started as a resource center for home schooling or that this continues to be its primary business, but there is also a downloadable PDF entitled “Family Sabbath School Resources” which presents an entire curriculum keyed to *The Desire of Ages* (no author identified) as well as study guides for *The Great Controversy*, *The Ministry of Healing* and *Testimony on Diet and Foods* and Adventist classics *The Cross and Its Shadow*, *The Story of Daniel the Prophet* and *The Seer of Patmos* (all without identification of authors). It further says that these lessons “are designed with the whole family in mind.” (www.sonlighteducation.com)

Another woman in the Chattanooga panel said, “We use the Student Life program for the youth, and we’re adapting it for the children’s program so the whole family is studying the same thing every week. We feel that’s good for the family because they are all studying the same thing.” The Student Life web site reveals that it is actually a Baptist parachurch entity, with no ties to the Adventist Church. (See www.studentlife.net/Our-Story_371_pg.html.) It is unclear whether this woman realizes that fact, but it does indicate that the controversy over the GraceLink curriculum and the proliferation of alternative curricula can lead to confusion over whether materials are Adventist in any sense at all. It may be an indicator that a Christian fundamentalist approach is at least a partial element of appeal in these alternative materials for some of the church members who are choosing to use them instead of the denomination’s official curriculum.

These open reports that some churches were using alternative Sabbath School materials led other participants in the Chattanooga panel to talk more openly about the conflicts that have occurred in some congregations. “I almost hesitate to talk about this,” said one pastor. “In our church we went through a real hex [vexed?] hassle even before I got there. And we were dealing with ... denominational vs. non-denominational resources published for the children and youth. I compared the content of them, and I do wish that the denominational resources were a little more Bible-based and a little less foolishness-based. The subliminal struggle that I found is the ... subliminal message that kept creeping in when we used the non-denominational materials was that this is holier than the denomination. It’s a subliminal kind of message, and I just wish that our denominational materials would pick up on that and start getting more Bible for our kids in there ... instead of trying to entertain them; that they would actually help them know what God thinks. Yet, I don’t think that we need all that subliminal dissection of our church family.” Others in the group were nodding their heads in agreement as this pastor spoke.

Another pastor picked up this thread. “In couple of churches there were extensive discussions over the material and I was personally questioned as to the direction that GraceLink takes related to Adventist distinctive lifestyle. I was also questioned as to characteristics being very unnatural.

That was a rather large issue related to these two churches that chose not to go that route.” It is unclear what “that route” was, whether to use the GraceLink materials or alternative materials, but there may be clues in the additional remarks the same man made. “It [GraceLink] definitely didn’t deal enough with distinctive Adventist lifestyle, but it also may have been subtly undermining in the way it was taken which seemed to me related to where the studies came from.”

Another pastor joined in the conversation at this point, saying “These themes are going along with a couple of my Sabbath School leaders, my Primary and Junior division leaders. The term they’re using is ‘it’s kind of watered down.’ It’s not Adventist strength; it’s weakened. And they feel like something should be done at the level of where it’s being written in the editors. They need to get back on track.”

“I understand what they were trying to do,” commented another woman. “They were trying to meet each child in their own learning style, the way they learn. But I feel like these others. The material was lacking in the Bible stories and in understanding like we used to. In some of their lessons it’s abstract. There’s no meat to it. But I do think it is important that we do give our children the Sabbath School lessons and help them to learn it with their learning style. So I think that they just need to strengthen it, the content.”

The pastor continued, “The other complaint that I’ve heard is the old series you went through the whole Bible in order. GraceLink does not do that. When a student gets through GraceLink they have a mixed up history of the Bible and it’s not in any depth. The old system would go three years chronologically so they understood the Bible in order.”

The moderator asked, How is *My Bible First* different from GraceLink? “The characters are much more realistic and it’s much more traditional in that it follows a Biblical outline even much more than the material we had before,” said one man. “They actually have something for the kids to study,” said another man. “They go to the Bible rather than dealing with ideological, social issues,” a third man stated. “They emphasize the historical setting of the whole history of Christianity right from creation on through time. They actually have a chart that has it outlined so you can see the whole thing in one picture,” said a fourth man.

“Our Kindergarten leaders have actually chosen not to go with *My Bible First* because they said so many times it gets so involved, and so long and includes so many stories, they have chosen to go with GraceLink in Kindergarten,” said a woman. “But, we use *My Bible First* for Primary and Juniors.”

“It makes a big difference when the teachers go to the Children’s Ministries Convention and hear what the bigger picture is about GraceLink” said another woman in response to the criticism reported above. “When they capture that, they come back and they really go for it with gusto. I’ve noticed that time and again. I don’t know personally a lot about the different levels, except for Cradle Roll. Cradle Roll GraceLink seems to be on target in my book because it has the whole program using that Bible story and we do it for a month. For the whole 45 minutes we talk about that Bible story instead of having a program and then the last 10 minutes having a Bible story. It seems like GraceLink really emphasizes that story for a whole month. Then the next

month you do another whole Bible story, so the quarterly has three Bible stories and all of the songs and everything are all geared to that Bible story. I know our Juniors seems to be thinking that GraceLink is powerful. Earliteens, our leader says she uses a lot of it, and a lot of it she doesn't, but that seems to be mostly because of the size of her group. But she really likes the mission quarterly. Since our Juniors discovered the Internet version of GraceLink, the Junior leader likes to see a lot of the things they do quite well there. She's able to go in on Friday and decide what she wants to use on the Internet."

It appears that many issues may be intertwined in the controversy regarding the GraceLink curriculum and the alternatives being distributed by unofficial providers. Some of these may be related to relatively small degrees of fine-tuning certain materials. Others may be largely driven by entrepreneurs who see an opportunity to start a publishing business, while still others may be manifestations of the rebellious and/or cynical attitudes some individuals have toward large, centralized organizations with relatively inflexible agendas. Nonetheless, underlying this is also an undeniable set of issues related to theology, religious style and questions related to how the faithful should relate to contemporary culture.

The Purpose-Driven Controversy

In recent years two Seventh-day Adventist authors have produced book-length attacks on *The Purpose Drive Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*, the best-sellers by Rick Warren, a Southern Baptist pastor who built the Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, California, from nothing to one of the best-known mega churches in America. The first volume by Warren was published in 1995 by Zondervan and has become widely influential among conservative Protestant clergy in America, in part because it articulates a few relatively simple concepts that were already in the minds of many pastors in his generation. The second book was published in 2002 by the same publisher and spent months on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

In 2005, Tom Mostert, president of the Pacific Union Conference, wrote a critique of Warren's books that was published as *Hidden Heresy* by Pacific Press. He uses the word "spiritualism" in describing what he finds objectionable about Warren's approach. Possibly to soften this inflammatory language, Pacific Press published *Truth Matters* by Herbert Douglass the following year, another critique of the Warren books, but with a less strident tone.

Despite these attacks, as we noted above, a number of Adventist pastors and congregations are reading and using the materials by Rick Warren. The group in Chattanooga got into some debate on these issues. After hearing some pastors and lay leaders report use of Warren's books, one man read a Bible text from 2 Timothy, Chapter 3, and then said, "The reason I read this is because the deceiving and deceptions that are going on are so subtle, and we can get so involved in trying to have right programs, we can get so involved with trying to be the best at bringing people into the church and evangelizing [that] we suddenly jump on techniques and things that are presented and are successful in many other places and try to incorporate those things just to think that we are actually doing God's work, when we really aren't doing what the Holy Scriptures [intend]. I say that from the depths of my heart having spent over 40 hours dissecting the book *The Purpose Driven Life* which is a demon-possessed book. This man's a disciple of Robert Schuller who was a desecrator of Jesus Christ himself. This man says Robert Schuller saved my life. He quotes from Bernie Segal in the second chapter of the book, who lives and works by demons and follows them in his life. These are the [type of] people quoted from in the book, and I can go on and on. I can dissect from the very opening introduction of satanic statements that are there telling you that you were born to read this book today. Let me tell you something, his premises are totally non-Biblical. And he believes in the Catholic system of church rulership. And we're endorsing this, producing it in our Review and Herald, churches are jumping all over it and have no idea where the basis comes from. And I can take Sister White's writings and tell you so many places where she says this is what's going to happen in the last days. Entire churches are going to leave and the basis of it is because we have jumped on these deceivers because certainly what they were doing looked so good, and it's so revolutionary, and it's better than the ways we've known."

No one in the Chattanooga panel seemed to agree with this man. Instead, several made affirmative remarks about the Rick Warren books. For example, one man said, "*The Purpose Driven Church* helps those who read it focus more clearly on who their church is or what their church ought to be. I like both [books]; I think both of them are very valuable. The area that's

difficult with that is there is a bias against any literature that is not Adventist, and that's probably the biggest difficulty with the material, not necessarily the concepts, but where it is published."

A woman said, "I'm going to comment on *The Purpose Driven Life* also. I read the book [because] I play the piano in the Methodist Church, and I went through the whole thing with them just because I was there. And I actually joined one of their small groups, and it has such an [effective] way of bringing the church together for a common goal."

Another man observed, "I don't see anything that's subversive or demonic, but there are very few [products] up there [on the list] that are actually leadership training or have leadership concepts in them. Somehow we have ... a hodge-podge philosophy of what we are supposed to be doing, and I'm thinking in my local church, it's almost everybody unto himself ... and there's no real sense of 'this is us.' The closest we come to it is *The Purpose Driven Church*. What's needed is something that would really facilitate the group effectively from A to Z, [that] helps you to think through, who we are and where are we headed as a team?"

The widely different views of the Purpose Driven materials expressed by the pastors and lay leaders in our focus groups point to deeper issues. It is surprising that the debate about these materials was in Chattanooga, where it would be easy to guess in advance that no one would want to admit use or support of these materials, and there was not much comment, although a number of reports of use, in La Sierra, which is in the Pacific Union Conference, in fact in the local conference where Mostert was president before he became union president. What is going on here?

Polarization about Cultural Issues

What repeatedly surfaces in both focus groups, in the discussions of the GraceLink and alternative curricula and of Rick Warren's books and elsewhere, are two very different ways of approaching contemporary culture. One is expansive, inclusive and emphasizes the contextualization of the Adventist mission and message. The other is defensive, fearful and focuses on distinctive Adventist concepts and identity. We found these two threads and the conflicted concerns related to them more pronounced in these two focus groups than anything we heard five years ago. These data lead to the observation that there is growing tension within the Adventist community between those who tend to be more reactionary and those who are more progressive in their attitudes.

It appears that some of the defensive statements of concern were pre-planned. "We have a couple in our church who have teenagers," a woman in the Chattanooga panel stated. "I don't know these two magazines, *Insight* and *Listen*, but evidently they do, and they told me that the pictures in those magazines were too revealing, and that they are too worldly, too graphic and not Godly. *Listen* magazine evidently, [had] a rock star on one of the covers and this rock star was appropriately dressed on the cover of the magazine, but whenever the children go to the record store or book store there is a totally different portrayal. So that's the complaint. There's not enough Godly information out there for teens and preteens."

The role of Ellen White's writings is one of the themes that received the most statements of concern. A woman in the La Sierra panel said, "I've gone through this whole catalog and with all respect for the writers and what they have written, all these questions and all these problems are solved in the Spirit of Prophecy and that series [is] not there." A man in the Chattanooga panel posed the same challenge. "What is the Spirit of Prophecy and the writings of Ellen White's role in the leadership books and how it is being considered by all of these materials? I'm wondering if it is still relevant in these books?" A man in the La Sierra panel complained that "we also have in our church leadership an elder saying we can't use it in church, we can't use it in Sabbath school. People are picking and choosing where it should and should not be used, and me personally I will use four or five Bible verses to one statement from Spirit of Prophecy, but when you have church leaders telling you specifically not to use it, pretty soon the Spirit of Prophecy is not going to have a place in our church unfortunately."

A woman responded to this comment by saying, "I can't understand why anyone would be embarrassed by Ellen White's writings or the Bible because I wasn't raised an Adventist, and even Einstein got his famous formula from the Bible. Sir Isaac Newton wrote more on the Bible than other topics. Ellen White wrote in *Counsels on Diet and Health*, and I should know because I went to medical school, and she was absolutely right. Just because she didn't use hypoglycemia or some of these other terms doesn't mean that she didn't know what she was talking about. I suggest that you go and read the Bible and also find the science in it, and then you'll be able to talk to some of these screwballs like that Barry Lynn from the ACLU."

Of course, nearly all of the materials written by Adventists included in the CRC catalogs do include quotations and principles from Ellen White, yet some individuals still raise this challenge. Some of these individuals seem to focus on an obscure view. A man in the La Sierra

panel said, “I don’t know if you have up there Ellen G. White’s books, but we, my wife and I, we just discovered some very, very interesting and important messages in there.” Another person in the group asked, “About what?” The man answered, “on Christmas,” which is certainly not one of the major themes of Ellen White’s work.

Others struggle with how to relate the Adventist heritage to the realities they live with in the 21st century. Another man in the same group asked, “In regards to Spirit of Prophecy, How do we get our children involved in on it? How do we just get people to read it? One problem is that some of the older people in our church push it in their face when the child is not ready for it. You know, timing is everything and as right as the Spirit of Prophecy is, you can’t put that book into their hands until it’s time. If you push it too soon, they will despise it later.”

In many ways the two groups seem to be talking past each other, neither hearing the other. A woman responded to the comment above, “When it comes to our young people, I will take that eraser and erase that whole board [containing a list of resources that churches are using] and in big letters, I would write the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. If we want to reach our young people, they have to have every explanation about the Bible in the Spirit of Prophecy. All the other things are fine and dandy, but we don’t need them for our young people.”

Music is another key marker in the cultural tensions that exist in the Adventist community today. A man in the Chattanooga panel said, “Many times we get DVD’s and many of the programs are presented with music ... and many in our congregation feel that the music most of the time is not worthy of the sanctuary, and so most of these programs are never presented and go in the trash can. So you may want to let them know, don’t even send them if we’re going to have the worldly music. Music is in the ear of the beholder, but some of it is very obvious.” Probed by the moderator to specify what is disliked about the sound tracks on promotional DVDs from the denomination, the man elaborated. “We don’t want the drum beat in the background and the upbeat dance music. [We want] something soothing, something with a pleasant melody perhaps, but we do not need to be entertained by the world, with their standards.” Yet, “coming from eastern Kentucky, a guitar is alright if played correctly.”

A woman in the same group reported that in her local church, “we’ve gone back in some very old song books, even some back in the early 1800s. Those are the songs our kids are singing and they love them. They think it’s something new. Their just soft and they just think their wonderful. ... I mean these were back, I think, just around the time of Mrs. White. ... They’re just wonderful old songs, and these kids are bringing these old, gospel songs back to life, and they’re beautiful, and the church members have no idea where we’re getting this music.”

A returned missionary in the Chattanooga panel expressed his concern that in the NAD, “I have also seen a trend that bothers me, a trend of attempting to look like the world. ... We need to be careful that we stand out as sore thumbs that represent Christ wherever we are, that we’re unique, that we refuse to conform to the forces of appropriate political correctness around us, a term that I grew to hate coming back [to the U.S.] because it threw out our differences, because as a true Christian representing Christ, we cannot but help but be different. So we do not and cannot lose our uniqueness in that area as Seventh-day Adventists who understand the great controversy,

who understand better maybe than anyone what it means to really be a Christian and what God is really after.”

A man in the same group took a somewhat different approach. “The thing that I appreciate about the Response materials is that they take the video and story in a direction which will reach the post modern mind without compromising the basic truths which we have, without buying into the anything goes, that your truth is your truth and my truth is my truth. But it goes into a way which can speak to a mind like that and basically say, I’m going to challenge your world view, but I’m going to do it in a way that you’re going to watch it all the way through. If all they have to do is belong, the next place that is more belonging, they’re going to go. But if you get them to belong and then you get them to believe, then you got them. And I think that’s a good balance.”

“We have two groups of young adults in the church,” said a pastor in the La Sierra panel. “We have the post modern [and] there is a youth group that goes with the traditional materials, the traditional revelation approach. ... We have a group of young people that use the traditional materials, and they end up inviting their friends to come hear Adventist doctrine. It seems like we need materials probably for both of those groups. That’s probably the bottom line, but just to personalize it, our young adults in the [name] Church are involved in the General Youth Conference and those kinds of things, and they tend to be the more traditional. So what I’m really saying is we really have two groups in the church and they have different interests, and we better make sure that we are appealing to both.”

A woman in the Chattanooga panel expressed her dislike for “gray areas,” explaining, “We have a lot of non-Adventist children from the community in our school. And our pastor got called in this last week to address various gray areas and he had a very difficult time trying to explain them to the children. He said, Give me examples. And they started popping up with examples because the children are seeing not just in the church, but as a whole, there’s a lot of disagreement so far as how to deal with this subject and how to deal with that subject or how to deal with this family or that family. So, our pastor this Sabbath had a sermon on gray areas. He said it is like driving into the fog where you have to slow down and refocus on what’s really out there. We had a lot of young people in church and they met with him after church to discuss what he had to say. I think we really have to be careful on what materials we use with our children because they’re already confused enough with what they see in our lives in the church.”

“Looking at this from an educator’s point of view,” said a man in the Chattanooga panel, “I see a lot of do, do, do and no plan and no tools to give people the ability to plan or to make choices and evaluate between what’s out there. What is needed is a tool to help people define their values, their goals and direction, and then be able to turn that into a set of standards for evaluation. Only then would we be able to actually evaluate the issues and options before us. Without that we are kind of like a guy in a boxing match swinging at anything that happens to go by. We are wasting our energy, the church itself is not going in one single direction, Its just a haphazard anarchy situation. ... There’s a whole process of evaluation that can be taught and learned. In fact you can go to the Internet, and there’s an American Evaluation Association [www.eval.org]. It’s about assessment; an ongoing, real process that one would use to define your values, who the players are and who would be impacted. You would understand the political situation and then with that information in mind you would define your goals, you

would define your standards, then actually turn around in the end and say, This will work. Or, Does it meet our standards? There is a rational process to deal with these issues.”

Another man in the Chattanooga panel picked up the same approach. “A lot of these processes that we’ve discussed—training our children and how we have done evangelism for a hundred years—I think one of the greatest resources we have is our church members that rub shoulders with the world everyday where they work and some kind of confidence in their connection with Christ, some kind of training on how you recognize the foot prints of the Holy Spirit as He’s working in the people around you. We think of our outreach as events, and I’m not sure as I look at my church that we even know who lives around us. We kind of talk to ourselves a lot, and after a few years that is the only language we can understand. Somebody else comes in and wants something a little different; we’re not ready to change. And we had some young people play a little music before worship this last Sabbath and the comments could be divided by age. I wonder if we are big enough to allow people with other tastes and other needs to really be nurtured in our presence. I wonder if we’re safe enough for non-believers to come and actually find God in our midst. Somewhere we just need to be stretched. It’s not about us, it’s about Him. When we’re on the job and things, can’t we love God more than the Adventist lifestyle? I’m not down on Adventist lifestyle. I’m just saying that sometimes I kill people for the irrelevant. When God stood in our midst, the most religious people on earth killed Him. I just have a burden to give our people the tools to love people, and let God use them where they are working, where they are living, in their neighborhoods, so that Christianity can be made visible. Adventist faith is not about events, it’s about Him. He infects us to the point where we infect the people around us with a love for God.”

A woman in the same group immediately responded, “I resonate completely with what he just said. Our biggest problem in leadership has been those people wanting to lead because of their own personality, but they’re not filled with the Holy Spirit, and they injure more people than not. It’s only those people who are humbly walking with God that you can really put in a leadership role because it’s a very difficult thing to represent a whole church in your leadership style. We have had major problems with people who are not actually walking with God who are trying to lead.”

This polarization between those on the one hand who are defensive of the Adventist heritage and uncomfortable with the contemporary context and those on the other hand who are grace-oriented and creative in ministry within contemporary culture is a reality that will not go away any time soon. It cuts across everything that CRC is attempting to do just as it cuts across each conference and every local church.

What I Like about CRC Products

Participants in both groups were asked to identify strengths that they saw in the resource materials produced by CRC and its affiliated organizations. Unfortunately, people did not spend as much time responding to this request as they did listing needs, sharing concerns or describing problems, but there were a number of important, very positive comments.

“To me it is a wonderful thing because we have this in our church,” said a woman in the Chattanooga panel, referring to ***Responsibilities in the Local Church***. “When you come out of another church into the Adventist Church, there’s a lot to learn, The responsibilities of the leaders are so different from other churches, Some other churches don’t even have deaconesses. My pastor had classes at the first of the year and we are using this material. It has helped me so much. In our church I never dreamed that we would have a lady elder, and so when they asked me to be an elder, I had no idea what I was suppose to do, and the elders’ job description has helped me so much.”

“I do like two things that I have used, ***Connections*** and ***Friend2Friend*** that are a pre-packaged deals,” said a pastor in the La Sierra panel. “If you are the one doing the lecture, it’s right there; all you have to do is follow it. It’s very good. Even though I know that some of these are adaptations from non-Adventist authors, I wish more of this kind could be produced where you have videos together with lecture notes and PowerPoint presentations and discussion guides. I want more with an instructors manual, syllabus kind of thing where somebody could just study up on it a little bit and could teach it. And you don’t have to be a pastor to do that. I want more of the curriculum resource that’s up to date in terms of multi-media and also using small group dynamics for discussions and exercises and with Adventist values and flavor, like ***Connections*** has that, and ***Friend2Friend*** has that. Those are the ones I use.”

A pastor in Chattanooga pointed out ***Spiritual Body Building*** and said, “I like that because when I’ve worked with churches, there are all kinds of books in this catalog that are helpful, but if any one thing resource is important it is ***Spiritual Body Building*** because it helps them study [the Bible] and in a small group context. It helps them understand the role of the pastor, the role of the laity, and how small groups work in the local church. And when those three components are understood through this study guide, it has an impact on changing the church. All these other books are good, but this one is foundational from my perspective.”

“I want to thank you for the ***Disability Ministries Handbook***,” said a woman in Chattanooga. “This is a very, very important because we have some people in my church, and I think that they need our help, and sometime I think we don’t know how to help these people.” Another woman in the same group pointed out the brochure, ***What’s a Seventh-day Adventist?*** “I’ve used that very effectively in meeting with non-Adventists who know nothing about us.”

More generally, a man in La Sierra stated, “What I like about the materials from Adventist producers is that they are familiar and they’re traditional. Our people are generally traditional. In fact they talk about change, but they really don’t want change. And if those materials were to go away, then we would be complaining. So there is a place for those traditional materials.”

What I Don't Like about CRC Products

Group participants were also asked about the things they did not like in the materials from CRC and its affiliates, but there was little response to this question other than to identify unmet needs or raise more general issues about the direction of the denomination and the issues about how to relate to the cultural context that we displayed above. The unmet needs are present in another section later on.

There was one major theme expressed in numerous comments. The participants expressed the wish in many different ways that all resource materials would be much more Bible based. “They are good things, but they need more clarity on what the Bible’s says,” was the summarizing comment in the Chattanooga panel. There were Amen’s and several nods of agreement. It was less strong, but the same sentiment was expressed in the La Sierra panel.

What does this mean?

A wide range of specific suggestions were made and sometimes implied in the discussion of specific projects. In general, we believe the following guidelines for all resource materials would serve to meet the expressed concern:

1. Every leadership guide, program manual or “how-to” book should begin with a chapter that lays out a clear, simple Bible study supporting the basic direction or focus of the material.
2. Key texts should be used throughout leadership materials, supporting each major idea or section with a clear, simple tie-in to Scripture principles or statements.
3. A Bible-based rationale should be provided for any major recommendations or significant action steps outlined in the material.

Although it is a different approach than has been taken by many of the authors of CRC products over the years, it is possible to write materials on the same topics using these guidelines. This will go a long way toward meeting the need for “more Bible-based” materials. It will not meet every criticism of the fundamentalists in our local churches. There were some participants in these focus groups who clearly have a pre-set idea of what is “Biblical” behavior and are making a judgment about how “Bible-based” materials are on the basis of these behaviors rather than the presence of Bible study materials or basic Bible principles. CRC cannot hope to entirely meet the needs of these individuals and use the same materials to meet the needs of the mainstream of the Adventist Church in North America.

Evaluation of Specific Products

Participants were asked to select items from an array of products from CRC and its affiliates that were laid out on tables. One by one the selected products were discussed individually by the group with the moderator asking for both positive and negative comments about each product. The products are listed here in alphabetical order, not in the order they were discussed in the consumer panels. Some items were selected and discussed in only one of the two groups.

Adventurer Club Manual

Positive comments: “This gives confidence to the leadership team that is trying to get one started, which we did this last year in my church. And I think this [book] was quite helpful for them and put them in touch with what they needed to be aware of, some of the issues in getting started, who to contact in the conference, how to approach the pastor and that kind of thing. So it’s quite good. ... And it gives you a break down for every meeting; what to do. ... I think it’s a very practical book. It was well organized. It’s got these little thumb tabs you can put in yourself.”

Negative comments: “One of the things I don’t like about it is all this chart marking in the back pages, which I suppose for a little kid is fine. But, the leaders, who are not kids ... It means you are copying pages that just makes more stuff you got to pay for.”

When the moderator asked for a show of hand as to how many have seen this product, 13 out of 32 did so. This is, in fact, one of the higher levels of recognition for the products tested.

Bridging the Gap

Positive comments: “It talks about postmodern generations and some of the things that have changed over the years. I got quite a bit of information out of it. It’s a real good book.” Another man said, “Our pastor he is always using it [and] that one is working very good.”

Negative comments: One of my pet peeves is this music that they have now days. I’ll never understand how in the world they can listen to that Christian rock music. I come from the olden days.”

Only one person had previously seen this product.

Celebrate Marriage: Family Ministries Planbook

Positive comments: “The focus is to recapture the institution and experience of marriage as it came from the Creator’s hand as it has been recreated in Christ. It has sermon resources. It has some seminars. I know this one could probably be put into PowerPoint and adapted for children’s story. And there’s more. It can be useful for pastors or for family life coordinators. Since I don’t consider myself an expert, I would rather invite an expert in to do the work, however they usually give you a one-shot thing. This could be something that you could use all year long for an on-going program. What I like about it is a variety of choices. It’s kind of like a

smorgasbord that you can choose what might be most useful for you.” (Chattanooga) “It’s a new one to me on what it is, but it’s basically in the defense of marriage. ... Basically it covers before marriage, during marriage with the blessings and the problems of marriage, and it approaches one of the things that a lot of us have problems with today, and that’s the same-sex marriages that are going through and that are being pushed all the way through the media and everything else and how to approach that. ... Basically it’s for the purpose strengthening the homes, blessing the homes, bringing the families back together again, and preparing them for Christ second coming.” (La Sierra) “I could have used this nicely if I would have had knowledge of it ... at the [name] Church. They asked me to come over and present a program there [for] a celebration of marriage on Valentine’s Day.” (A pastor)

Negative comments: “I would like to see more Adventist resources listed. It mentions some resources, but only one Adventist piece I noticed. Also, it doesn’t mention any DVD’s or CD’s or that type of thing that might be available.

Only one out of 67 participants had previously seen this product.

Children’s Ministry: Ideas & Techniques that Work

Positive comments: “The reason that I chose this one is because in our church we have children with special needs, and this book gives ideas on how to organize children’s ministries especially for children that have special needs. It also has how to help develop the faith of children ... different activities for children according to the need they have, if they have a special need, if they have a learning disability. So I saw it was a very positive way to introduce Jesus to children with special needs. And the book also has where we can order materials. I think it’s a good book.” (Woman in La Sierra) “It has something for all age groups.” (Man in La Sierra)

No negative comments were expressed.

Five out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Connections

Positive comments: “This is a training kit designed ... to help church members identify their spiritual gifts related to their passion in ministry and make sure that there’s not a disconnection with you passion and your spiritual gifts. ... It’s got a book right here which is the participant’s guide. It has a DVD containing PowerPoint slides and video vignettes, and what they call the Consultants Guide, and a Leaders Guide. I’ve used the version that Willow Creek published before this came out. They asked permission from Willow Creek to reformat this according to the Adventist situation, putting Adventist flavor into it and a lot of quotations from Mrs. White, that’s pretty good. I’m assuming it’s probably \$150 or probably closer to \$200. [Actual price is \$99.95.] (Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: “No it’s very thorough and that could even be its weakness because it gives you a lot of information in six weeks. So there could be information overkill. And another comment that I would have is that if you want to use this, you have to have the courage to

implement it, to follow through in connecting those people to where their spiritual gifts and passions really are and not just stopping after one session or one class. (Man in La Sierra)

One out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Crafting a Culture: A Guide to Successful Campus Ministries

Note: This is a highly specialized book, specifically about campus ministry on the campus of Adventist colleges and universities.

Positive comments: “It talks quite a bit about teaching to teach and about encouraging what you want to see. ... I think the outcomes would be good. I think it would build teams up.” (Man in Chattanooga)

There were no negative comments.

No one in the panel of 35 had previously seen this product.

Creative Bible Learning Activities for Primary Sabbath School

Note: This is part of the GraceLink curriculum resources.

Positive comments: “I know my church and teachers and kids was using this one. I’ve never seen this book before, but the activities, like doing the clowns and things like that, they are doing it at church. And it’s very good. Like 2 or 3 months ago, the children went outside and were doing some things and a lot of the neighborhood children came together with them because they were watching all the clowns and many games. It’s really helpful.” (Man in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

Only one out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Disability Ministries Handbook

Positive comments: “It says people with disabilities compose about 21% of North America population and in our membership is an under-represented group. The goal is to develop and implement strategies that insure equality and opportunity to worship. And they want the disabled to utilize their spiritual gifts. ... It has guidelines, what you need to do; tips, ideas and activities, so it’s everything we need in a user-friendly guidebook. We do have people in my church with disabilities, and so this is useful.” (Woman in La Sierra) “I realize more the importance of that book now that I’m disabled. I used to be the disabilities coordinator for the conference in [name], but it didn’t really grab me too much, but now I can understand. I could still walk then.” (Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: “I never new that we had this before.” (Woman in La Sierra) “I didn’t realize it was a ministry until what was just said. I didn’t even know that it existed.” (Another

woman in La Sierra) “It needs exposure because I’m the health ministries person [in my church] and we didn’t know anything about it, and we go to the NAD Health Ministries Summit. I have not found any of this at the summit in Orlando. I didn’t know anything existed, and do I have people in my church with disabilities? Yes.” (A third woman in La Sierra)

Two out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Experiencing Worship

Positive comments: “The purpose stated is to a complete worship planning guide for pastors, elders, worship team leaders, and worship teams. If you want information about different approaches to worship and why it’s important, the first part of the book covers that in detail. My eye caught the part about teamwork that tells you how to work together in a team to invigorate your worship service. And the last section I found most intriguing was actual samples of planning worship services, what the plans look like and the issues involved in planning. ... It has a good Adventist bibliography and it has nice additional resources, most of which are on line. If your church were to use this, it would probably challenge the way you do worship and have more creative, interesting, inviting, spirit-filled church services.” (Man in La Sierra) “I haven’t used it; I’ve seen it. For a while I was planning on purchasing it, several copies of it for my worship group. But, it hasn’t happened yet.” (Another man in La Sierra) “I could see it being a valuable resource if your church has a worship team that plans and carries out worship programs, something like this might be a very valuable resource. Or if you are a pastor who wants to try to do something different in a smaller church, this would be helpful advice.” (Third man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: “I actually found another book at the ABC, I think it’s from the Review and Herald, by Ed Christian, he’s an English Professor at [Kutztown State] University in Pennsylvania, but I found some of his comments even more helpful ... about planning a service. However, he does not talk about putting together a team.”

Just one person out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Family Evangelism: Family Ministries Planbook

Positive comments: “It’s purpose is how to strengthen the family so that they can reach out to other families around them. It is organized very well. It has some sermons, some mini seminars, children’s stories, lots of resources for family ministries. There are lots of resources in here on how to find other resources. It is a good thing that could really help the family ministries coordinator. ... I usually think of traditional evangelism and this is not really dealing with that. It’s not an evangelistic campaign for families. This is basically strengthening your family and making it a strong family that then can be an example to other families. So in that respect it is very good.” (Man in Chattanooga) “It’s a package targeting families, evangelism within the family. And it can be used on Family Day, could be used for home Bible studies. It could also be used by groups. It doesn’t say that, but it seems the materials could be used in those instances. It has ... individuals who have tried some ideas and give a little report of what they tried and how it worked out in their particular situation. I recognize a lot of the people who wrote the book.

Some of them were my teachers, and ... they are very practical, and that's one thing I like about it." (Man in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments about this product.

Only two out of 67 participants in the two groups had previously seen this product.

Family Ministries Handbook

Positive comments: "It's very intuitive. It has a lot of information in here. A lot of our churches don't know how to deal with domestic violence, divorce, people who are divorcees, teen suicide, death and grieving just to mention a few. This book handles that and tells you how to handle it within the ministry. I think it's a good handbook." (Woman in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

None of the participants could remember having previously seen this product.

From This Day Forward

Positive comments: "A seminar on marriage commitment on two DVDs, a total of seven sessions, and it should be something of value to almost every church. ... I think every church that is planning this kind of ministry or has a lot of young married couples could benefit from this. It's a really good source I think for this kind of situation. It comes with the helps you might need, bulletin inserts, sample announcements, workbooks, instructions on how to use these programs." (Man in Chattanooga) "This is actually what I was looking for coming to this meeting. I have a (unclear) burden for Christ and our families, so I really want to thank you for the opportunity to see this." (Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: "One thing that comes to my attention is the lack of oneness as a church and with Christ. Looking at all these things in the difference areas that the church has, I have seen, I think, the message of the Three Angels. But we are not united, and ... we have so much problem right now that we are looking at and discussing about. But, if this [seminar] could be done in [my community] maybe once a week or once a month, we could do so much for the community, for our church or our own homes, if we could have the same discussions." (Man in La Sierra)

Three out of 67 participants (all in the Chattanooga panel) had previously seen this product.

Heart Call: Reaching Women who are Taking a Break from Church

Positive comments: "This is basically a manual to do it kind of a program for hurting women. And it sets up the guidelines on treating, unifying the women in your church to set up a ministry. It gives you the structure; it gives you the outlines for program. It's a twelve week meeting or you can either bi-weekly or weekly, to help to train to your women as well as giving them resources in order to have that kind of a ministry. It's really a small group type of program ... it's

twelve meetings. It's like a 12-step group. It gives individual questions and activities to do in that group. It gives recipes because women like to eat in their meetings. It gives lots of resources for outside books and material that you could bring into your meetings. It lists the type of individuals that you need to conduct that meeting. ... I know in our church we're looking for strengthening our women's ministries. I feel like this would be a really good resource for us in reaching people who left the church for one reason or another [and] it's a type of women's ministry." (Woman in Chattanooga)

Negative comments: "I would like see material for once you've gone through these 12 meetings and you've kind of gotten your group of women going, then how do you continue it?" (Woman in Chattanooga)

Just one person out of 35 had previously seen this product.

Helping Hurting Members

Positive comments: "It's a handbook addressed to pastors and helping professionals. It talks about loneliness, grief and loss, divorce, depression, physical and sexual abuse, addictions, and adultery. And it gives definitions, an overview of each topic and then it gives strategies for spiritual encouragement. Basically it's teaches us how to encourage and support our church members. It's a nice book. It has a lot of nice tools in it to use." (Woman in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

None of the participants indicated that they had previously heard of this product.

Leading Adult Sabbath School

Positive comments: "This is a wonderful tool that's created to focus on Bible study and help the teacher/leader do a better presentation. ... If I was a Sabbath School superintendent and I wanted better trained teachers, we would meet on a monthly basis and go through this book because this book has topics on how people change, how adults learn, planning and preparing for learning, involving the learner, person-centered teaching, common teaching problems, teacher and leg work, sample lessons—things that in my opinion would revitalize Sabbath School. If the churches used this book, in my opinion, we would see more people coming to Sabbath School." (Woman in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

The awareness hand count on this item was lost in preparing the transcription.

Ministries of Compassion

Positive comments: "I believe this helps our churches to be centers of compassion. ... Doing this, then they know that the Adventist church is doing something good for the community. Case in point, I read somewhere about a church doing community service for the Muslim people in

Indonesia, and there was conflict between the Christians and the Muslims, and when a mob came to the Adventist church, people in the neighborhood said, “Don’t touch it. That’s the church that is doing something good for the community.” (Man in La Sierra) “My mother is community service leader at [name] church. ... The thing I like about [this book] is how concise it is as far as putting the steps to develop a program to be utilized by the community. So even though they have no experience, people can pick up that book, get together, develop a core network of people who all have the same passion, and get the job done. (Another man in La Sierra) “I bought it. We didn’t have a community service leader and as a fairly new Adventist, that book was very helpful for me to know what to do, what steps to take.” (Woman in La Sierra)

Negative comments: “It needs more exposure.”

Three out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Ministries of Health and Healing

Positive comments: “This is a book that’s put together by Dr. Dewitt Williams and over 45 other health professionals, and it covers a range of subjects such as the Adventist philosophy of health ministry, mission and organization of Adventist Health ministries, parish nursing, health education, developing community health centers and things along that line. And it’s well written, up to date. It’s a resource guide for developing a program in your community. I would recommend it because we started using this book over five years ago, and we have a core of four in our health ministries team, and we made sure that everyone that’s a leader in our programs has this book, so when we sit down to talk about developing a program, everybody’s on the same page. It’s a step-by-step how-to in following the footprints of Christ into the community. ... What else can I tell you, except do we use it.” (Man in La Sierra) “In our conference, if you’re a health ministries leader, they give a copy to you.” (Woman in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

Two out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Pathfinder Staff Manual

Positive comments: “This is an excellent resource for Pathfinder staff. And its purpose is to help train the staff to conduct, oversee, and execute a good Pathfinder program in the local church. I think if you follow this program, and the staff meets regularly to go over things, they’ll be very well prepared for leadership in Pathfinders. I like it because it was well organized. They did a good job on how to handle discipline, what to do, what not to do ... what constitutes abuse, all of the legal issues that might be involved in leading a youth group, which I think from a leadership point of view is very important. It is an excellent resource.” (Man in Chattanooga) “This is really well done. You can even register so they will send you updates. ... If you are just starting out with a Pathfinder Club or if you’ve got an established club you want to make a first-rate club, this is an awesome resource. It even gives you recipes.” (Man in La Sierra) “It’s an excellent resource as a leader because you can always go back when you have questions. You can always go back even including the uniform. It’s very comprehensive.” (Another Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: “The only thing that I would suggest is the one comment I get as a pastor about Pathfinders from others in the church is they are always gone. And the Sabbath School teachers say when the Pathfinders are gone, my class is gone, and they’re gone twice a month. Is there any way that we can build in some sensitivity on this? I think maybe if they would have just a little section here in this book about how their program impacts the local church on Sabbath it would be really good.” (Pastor in Chattanooga) “I did notice in this needs to be updated in the section on uniforms. It still has pictures of the old uniforms. So this is one thing that does need to be updated. (Another man in La Sierra) “It should list sources for teaching honors; resource people, including addresses, names, phone numbers.” (Third Man in La Sierra) “It does not have international information included.” (Fourth Man in La Sierra) Another man in the group prompted him, “This does say NAD.” The man responded, “OK, but there isn’t an international edition; there is nothing like this. There used to be a long time ago, but there is nothing now that serves internationally, so what they do [in other countries] is ask some of us who are ethnic pastors to buy if for them. So we go through this and don’t find international information.” (Fourth man in La Sierra again) [NOTE: It is on the GC Youth Department web site as a PDF download, 205 pages: <http://youth.gc.adventist.org/pathfinder/index.htm>]

A total of 20 out of 67 participants reported having previously know of this product, making it the most well-known product we tested in this study.

Pathfinder Staff Manual in Spanish

Positive comments: “This is the first time I’ve seen it in Spanish and I serve at a Spanish church. This is a great tool. It teaches you the structure of the Pathfinder club from the registration up all the way on down to going out to outings, programs, and so on. It teaches the philosophy and the objects of a Pathfinder club which I find very essential. And I think with this manual on hand you will run a very health Pathfinder program if you follow the structure that is in here. It is a very, very useful tool, and I will highly recommend it for any Pathfinder Club.” (Pastor in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

None of the participants were aware of the Spanish edition.

Practical Guide to Personal Ministries

Positive comments: “This book is designed for your personal ministries and lay evangelism leaders. It’s very well put together. The sections in here have to do the mission for the church, planning for church growth, organizing for outreach, keys to personal evangelism, and then it has projects and ideas. For example, have you ever heard of Holy Week Evangelism? Have you ever thought about how to put on a live nativity scene? Those things are explained in here. They’ve done a good job at showing how planning sessions. This is one from a Money management seminar ... a parenting seminar. ... I would certainly recommend this. I don’t think anything is perfect, but I don’t really have any suggestions for improvements. ... This needs to be in every church.” (Man in Chattanooga) “It’s purpose is to prepare and train your church for service to the community, using the strengths that your church has and that every church member has. The

ministries are visitation, Bible studies, so on and so forth. It will increase your membership and your visitors will be a lot. I speak from personal experience, last year I was personal ministries leader, and we followed some of the ministries that were suggested in this book. ... We have a small church. We weren't able to implement everything, but shortly after that we increased in membership and we increased in visitors which for very many years was a problem. Follow this book and you will increase." (Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: "The conference also has prepared a personal ministries handbook. Why re-invent the wheel?" (A second man in La Sierra)

A total of 10 out of 67 participants had previously seen this product.

Quick Start Guide to Family Ministries

Positive comments: "This is a real small document, about 10 pages, which is exactly what it says it is. It starts out with a list of possible support groups. It talks about how to do a needs assessment, and then gives some guidance in terms of the planning process that you would go through to get going on all of these things. So I thought it was pretty good from just a quick look at it. [Its purpose is] to have a whole lot of family ministries going." (Man in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

None of the participants had previously seen this product.

Quick Start Guide to Single Adult Ministries

Positive comments: "It is for the leader on how to get one started in your church, and it has examples of different activity planning that can be done with the adult singles, and how to incorporate them in your church program. In the back it has also different other resource materials that you could use." (Woman in Chattanooga) "The important focus of this ministry is to have a fellowship that provides opportunities and encouragement to single adults whether never married, divorced, or widowed for getting acquainted with other singles for the purpose of reflecting, discussing issues, studying God's Word, singing, praying, playing, interacting, resting, traveling and enjoying God's great others. It says that this ministry was only organized in 2003. But that is a very effective ministry for the singles for our very, very lonely, especially those who are only widowed, and so it says here that this ministry to the single adults in our church and community is a very relevant club because it will help the single be happy again and to be on the go in service. This magazine is only 19 pages, but it has lots of good information how to organize the singles ministry." (Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: "I'd like to see more of the resource materials in there and not just resources, but also a list of other books that you could use to help individuals that might be single because of a lost loved one or divorce, or singles adults with children, because this doesn't talk about that. It just talks about doing things with adults not with the single adults who might have families." (Woman in Chattanooga)

None of the participants had previously heard of this product.

Sabbath School Handbook

Positive comments: “Everything I do for Sabbath School is things I learned in childhood, but I have had no book like this. So I’m in love with book. I even took some notes just in case I cannot buy or take it with me today. Its about how to make your Sabbath School dynamic, and I’m in love with the book. I think it’s a great book. I would like to get one today. Some of the sections: Why you need Sabbath School and what is the mission of the Sabbath School, and how to organize the Sabbath School, responsibilities of the Sabbath School personnel, and also the youth and children. It’s a complete book, I like it.” (Woman in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

Three out of 32 participants had previously seen this product.

Short Term Missions: A Team Leadership Handbook

Positive comments: “It’s very detailed in its presentation of developing a body of volunteers to go into the mission field from your local church. It has a DVD with it with some instruction for those members who are choosing to go. It articulates very well the call for the local church to develop a mission project, quoting Biblical references about the call for discipleship throughout our community in the world. Its outcome, I think, is to increase and enhance and enrich the spirituality of both member and the receiver of this message that you are taking to them about Jesus Christ.” (Man in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

None of the participants had previously seen this product.

Sing A-long Memory Verses

Positive comments: “It really intrigued me, and it’s good. I thought the brochure was good. The sing-along is good too.” (Woman in La Sierra)

Negative comments: “I don’t know what you do with kids if you several different Bible versions because it’s kind of confusing. That paraphrase I would get rid of that one.” (Woman in La Sierra)

The awareness count on this product was lost in the process of transcription.

So You Want to be AYS Leader?

Positive comments: “In my particular church we do not have an AYS leader, and I know from my experience with predominately African American churches, they still have AYS leaders. AYS is Adventist Youth Society. This is a very good program planner. It also has, the last page

has some other resources where you can find some other companion books to go with it.” (Man in La Sierra) “I think it’s a good book because it’s something that I’ve always had a burden for, especially for new members that come in. The board or nominating committee will give them offices and they don’t know what they’re doing. And I think this would be a good resource for AYS leaders because it has all the planning for the whole year. And I think it would be a good thing for them. (Woman in La Sierra) “I would recommend every AYS leader have a book like this.” (Another woman in La Sierra)

There were no negative comments.

None of the participants had previously heard of this product.

The ABZ’s of Adventist Youth Ministry

Positive comments: “I think that it is a well-put-together book and I was pretty impressed with it, looking at it. I believe that if this book was used by all youth ministry people, they would be surprised at what they would be able to accomplish because it is very detailed; I mean exhaustively detailed about every particular problem young people could possibly face with resources on every item, multiple resources. ... I think that they really deal with the real issues the youth have. ... I’m in youth ministries, and you can never be too exhaustive. So I think you can learn to look through this.” (Man in Chattanooga)

Negative comments: “My only negative area is that I could not find ... I hunted and I found two items of publications for youth from 2000 on. And, they have [just] one little bitty title ... about homosexuality. And then as I read through it, it had little comment in the area of dealing with marriage, about developing proper relationships. There’s nothing that talks about homosexuality in those kinds of relationships, and that’s a big deal for youth. And I think that’s lacking.” (Man in Chattanooga)

Only one participant had previously seen this product.

Warm and Caring Welcome

Positive comments: “To me that is a very important part of the church, because that’s the first thing people see when they come to visit. And in here it really expresses ways that greeters should be. ... This book would be wonderful for them to have and to be selective on who and how, and teach them because it says to be careful how you dress yourself even though you’re a greeter not to over dress to make people feel uncomfortable. ... And we don’t want the people to feel like they can’t come to church just because they forgot their Sabbath clothes. And we’re very careful to make all our people feel welcomed. ... And our church is so small we really don’t have the people to park you, but our greeters do show you where to go into the sanctuary, and that’s important because it doesn’t show where we go in. And it’s a very good book and I would recommend it.” (Woman in Chattanooga) “‘Guest care for the local church,’ that’s pretty self-explanatory. The purpose is to inform local leaders and give practical suggestions on what we can do to improve the facilities, and grounds, and then our contacts with our guests, you know the impression that we are making on them through all these things. And the desired

outcome, it's improved appearances of facility and grounds, more diplomatic/ gracious visitor sensitive church and just to end with a statement that makes it. It's speaking of the greeters, but I think this is really the purpose of the book, that we constantly strive to see things from a guest point of view." (Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: "How is it supposed to be used? Well, that's actually unstated. It doesn't really give any suggestions on how it should be used. I imagine that you could present this to your church board or to the elders to the church. They don't give any suggestions on how to introduce this to the church. And it really doesn't have any other components." (Man in La Sierra)

Two out of 67 participants had previously seen this product.

What Is a Seventh-day Adventist?

Positive comments: "The purpose is to introduce who the Adventist Church is to the general population who may not know who we are. The content, I think is very good. ... The price is between 12 and 20 cents, depending on whether you get 200 or more. I think it's very good in the sense that it's colorful." (Man in Chattanooga) "It concisely introduces [the] Seventh-day Adventist Church. It mentions about its belief, history, hope and it's supposed to be used to give to non-SDA's as an introduction to the Seventh-day Adventist church. And I believe it's worth buying. There's a quantity discount. ... We ordered 5,000 and we distributed them because they are brief. We used to have a booklet, *Your Friends the Seventh-day Adventists*, and it was too long. This one is brief, but it has very beautiful pictures and is well written. And we had a lot of good response of it. ... We put our local address [on it] when we distribute [it] and then we have a response for Bible study and other things." (Man in La Sierra)

Negative comments: "As far as what I'd like to see changed if I could. The pictures are very good. I counted them; there are 17 pictures. Fourteen of them are grade school through academy or maybe into college. They have one retired couple, and the shot is a waist shot so you can't really have a good view of their face, and they aren't looking at you or anything. They are just two people there. And they have a good diversity so far as ethnic diversity, but in the 20s, 30s, and 40s, I think there are two people. So it's mainly grade school, or academy kids which I have no problem with that, but when we're looking at the Adventist church, I'd like to see a little more of a spectrum of ages, some 30 year old people, middle aged people, etc." (Man in Chattanooga) "I think it's a good appetizer, but it's not meat." (Man in La Sierra)

Nine out of 67 participants were previously aware of this product.

Women's Ministry Handbook

Positive comments: "Every church should have one. It's very relevant to women's issues. It talks about the church statements on relevant issues like abortion, sexual abuse, stem cells. But also it has 90 program ideas. It talks about what Bible study material we should use for women's ministry. It has a lot of good, good things. It has a survey of what your ministry wants to do. It talks about putting together a women's retreat, but the most special thing that caught my eye is

about what they call a pals program which is to encourage parents who have adult children who have wandered from God and the church. And it talks about the interceding for adult children who are prodigals. It's just nice to have for each church for your women's ministry, I think. I have wanted to organize something like this, and here it is. I'll buy it now." (Woman in La Sierra)

Negative comments: "I wish they had one for men's ministry. I wish men's ministry would have something like this. ... And it's a shame no one knows about this book. It's just that when we don't see it promoted ..."

None of the participants had previously seen this product.

What New Products are Needed?

A number of times throughout the day in each panel, participants reported that they did not see some particular kind of product in the resource catalog, on the display table, or on line, when in fact it is there. At times another participant pointed out the item they were looking for. In fact, little was suggested that is not currently available through some element of the CRC network of resource centers, publishers and producers. At times the participants themselves recognized this. For example, a pastor in the Chattanooga panel said, “I don’t see anything on church planting in the catalog. There’s two and a half books, yet I know there are hundreds of books on church planting, so ... Obviously we have the SEEDS Conference and there’s none of their resources in here. Those seminar presentations, DVD’s of those [could be produced easily].”

We have organized the suggestions below into two major categories: First are those suggestions which, so far as we can determine, no resource materials currently exist from an Adventist author or publisher. Second are those for which something is already available through AdventSource or one of the other CRC-affiliated organizations.

Aging Ministry—“The needs of the elderly, especially people who are near retirement age and still taking care of their elderly parents.” (Woman in Chattanooga) “I’d like to see more information on how the church can deal with members and families with Alzheimer’s [disease], dealing with the aged.” (A second woman in Chattanooga)

Children’s Story in Worship—“I’d like to see books produced with children’s stories to be told in worship. We have lots resources, devotional books and plenty of stories, but I’d like to just see something dedicated totally to the worship time where we’re telling the children’s story. And ... maybe even a multi-media kind of children’s story ... somebody else telling the story and keeping it right at five minutes.” (Man in La Sierra) “I’d say amen to that.” (Woman in La Sierra)

Conflict Management—“Something on peacemaking, conflict management.” (Man in Chattanooga)

English as a Second Language (ESL) Curriculum—“An ESL program manual ... there’s plenty of textbooks, but we need a manual for our church for outreach as ESL classes. The label now being used is ELL, English as a learned language, because for many of these people it’s a third or fourth language, so they have changed it to English as a learned language.” (Woman in Chattanooga)

Family Ministries Materials—“I think it might be nice to have, like some organizations like Focus on the Family have, bulletin inserts with family life education messages; maybe if they had some things you could photo copy once in awhile stick some pertinent things in your church bulletin would be kind of nice as a resource.” (Man in Chattanooga) “In family matters I was looking [in the catalog] and I don’t notice any materials by Jim and Sally Hohnberger. They have a significant amount of books related to parenting and *The Spirit, Reclaiming Your Manhood*, and there’s *Empowered Living*. I don’t see any of those in here and they are pretty well-attended

speakers in the Adventist Church related to family and marriage issues. ... They're published by Pacific Press and some by Tyndale House." (Another man in Chattanooga)

General Leadership Skills—We need “a category on leadership. All through the catalog we're talking about nuts and bolts for people who are positions in leadership, but we need a category of leadership; and we have none. It's all broken down by departments and there's a need for generic leadership materials.” (Man in Chattanooga) You know we see a lot of how-to material and it's excellent. You need the foundation, but you don't have the practical applications. Once you have started, how do you continue? That's what we're lacking. And I've gotten [similar] comments from others; what we need [is] the practical applications, not the theological application, but practical, hands-on work.” (Man in La Sierra) “Some of the things we talked about before [on the topic of] leadership are definitely missing. There are none of those books here. We used to have books in this area, but they're not here. We used to have a book ... something on ‘I'm Chairing a Committee.’ It's not there: Basic leadership skills, how to deal with the church [and] conflict management. One area where you've got a little bit, but it's really missing, [is] the use of computers and the Internet. This is a big area which the church has really ignored ... the technology that in the next few years will be the most influential, it's going to control everything.” (Second man in Chattanooga) “There needs to be some leadership tools developed ... an adaptation of the evaluation and assessment from education and how to go about doing it. ... We do it all the time [with our schools]. ... But it would have to be broadened and simplified and then it would need to be set up in a step by step process.” (Third man in Chattanooga)

Membership Management Software—“I was going to mention the need for software for church ... member lists, spiritual gifts and a lot of different things to help organize your church. I think church organization software is extremely important. I don't see the software listed here. ... [It is about] how to organize ministries and how to work together. ... Yes, there are several programs out there. I know that Parson's had one that we used for awhile, but it was not user friendly. I think our pastor just went somewhere and found the software program he loves. He just purchased it. I haven't seen it yet. He said he saw it at a seminar that was non-Adventist; that they have a big thing on church membership software and he thought it was much more user friendly, so he just purchased it. ... This is so important because if you can determine who your members are, what positions they held in the church in the past.... I mean we're in an age of information and these data are there. And if we have to go back and someone has a memory or the church clerk has a great memory.... You know that's kind of archaic. We need to get modernized and this will make us more efficient and allow us to communicate better, allow us to know things about our members better, allow us to do things in a social sense better. We just need to put that down; you put it in there once you got that data base, that's power. ... Maybe it's a new module for E-Adventist.” (Man in Chattanooga)

Men's Ministries—“We need more in terms of men's ministry. We have two books here on how to generate a positive men's ministry. As it relates to women's ministry, we have two pages. So that's a problem there for me. In addition to that, we focused on men's ministry [in my church] and we have a lot of issues that men have that are not addressed at all. Someone mentioned here in this group they were happy to see something on teen sexuality. ... It's not just teens that have a problem with sexuality, but it's not addressed. I haven't seen it. ... Well, in that same line many problems that men face in addition to sexuality and sexual problems, and in particular for

my group, African-American men, we don't touch on anything." (Man in La Sierra) We need "more Men's Ministries resources. Well, just compare that with pages 40 and 41. You've got a two-page spread for Women's Ministries and you've got two boxes for Men's Ministries. My Men's Ministries leader is complaining about inadequate resources. He says I can find all kinds of things for Women's Ministries, but when it comes to Men's Ministries.... So I looked in the index and [Men's Ministries] wasn't listed in the index." (Man in Chattanooga)

Mental Health—"Add something to help with people who suffer with mental illness. We have several in our church and it's a tragedy in their lives. And it would be helpful to have some guidelines for that." (Woman in Chattanooga) "I saw a little book, *Healing the Broken Brain*, but it didn't look like it would go much into the preventive mode. But we are learning more and more that our lifestyle and our diet effects our mental functions, and can predispose us to ADD, depression, or anxiety. I think we need to have more about keeping our brains healthy. Alzheimer's, dementia and all those things are affected by our diet." (Man in Chattanooga) "From a conference standpoint, I face this discussion quite a bit right now. It is kind of what [a man who spoke about *The Purpose Driven Life*] was saying; the Celebrate Recovery program [faces] the same situation. There are a lot of pros and cons on this around the conference. So the answer for the people who use it is 'well it's better than anything that's available.' I'm on the NAD committee for health ministries and I brought this up. They are upgrading Regeneration. I guess my point is, if you feel that there's not an adequate program that matches Celebrate Recovery, why do we not speak up and demand it within our denomination? ... Rather than just grabbing anything that we see along the way that looks attractive, why do we not speak up and demand that we produce better programs or resource materials. I would think that this [panel] would be a place where we could say these things." (Man in Chattanooga) "There's probably some fact to it [that it is an] attractive program. For example if you go to the web site for Celebrate Recovery, it is much better organized, much more attractive material, a better-looking program than some of our own programs such as Regeneration. So I guess what I'm saying is ... I think we need to take another look at what we are producing and make changes so we don't have to follow the world." (Another man in Chattanooga)

Military Relations—"I want to go back to the gentleman here who talked about the military. I am a mother of two boys from the military who have been to Iraq and Afghanistan. What I'm dealing with now is; 'You don't understand; you don't understand what I went through.' So we have a lot of our youth and a lot of our churches who do have military kids that have gone over there and I don't know how to ... talk to my boys because I don't have an understanding of what they went through while they were over there. They've lost their best friends. My son just before he got out lost his best friend in a helicopter crash which was right next to him. So they're quiet when they come home, they're withdrawn. I would love to see a book in here where all of us leaders in our churches can reach out to our youth that have gone. A lot of them have turned away from the church. Fortunately, I have a son who accepted Jesus while in Afghanistan. I have another one who turned away from the church. ... I wish I had something where it can give them that they can relate to, and say, 'This is what I went through; this is how we can help you.' I think we have a lot of our youth that come back confused. A lot of them, like I said, have turned away [from Christ], turning to drugs, turning to alcohol. I would like to see our church ... reach out to those youth and bring them back." (Woman in La Sierra) "Having served in the military, I did not see anything related to that. Maybe it's in the smaller book, but I did not see anything

dealing with how we related to the military and what should our young people do about that?” (Man in La Sierra)

New Generations—“The white middle class church in America, including the Adventist church, will pass away. These resources that have been listed are church organization supported, and that is anathema to the next generation. So we’re supporting a whole group of things here which the next generation wants nothing to do with. With maybe the exception of some of the things about Pathfinder and young children programming ... we have basically almost nothing from my perspective in Adventism and very little outside [for these new generations]. Most of it is through contacts with somebody who is trying something, or you hear somebody talk about it. I really can’t go to web pages and find stuff about it.” (Man in La Sierra) “There are several things missing, I think. [There is] nothing at all on spiritual formation; nothing that discusses anything about a philosophical cultural landscape ... like the different world views that are out there, like the post modernism and things like that ... to give us like an umbrella understanding of what we’re dealing with in our culture; nothing about ethics, ethical behavior of Christians, Adventist Christians specifically; ... nothing about the Spirit of Prophecy for today’s generation. If we are lamenting the fact that the Spirit of Prophecy is not being read by the young people, then why don’t we have anything that teaches them in maybe step-by-step guidance ... like Spirit of Prophecy 101.” (Another man in La Sierra) A woman said immediately, “I agree.”

Recreation Ministries—“We need resources for recreation and things like that ... because it’s an activity that the church will [do more]. They will come for the high Christian standards ... all ages.” (Man in Chattanooga)

Religious Extremism—“I was thinking of something along the lines of extremism.” (Man in La Sierra)

Sabbath School Curriculum Alternatives—“I also liked [the idea of] the Sabbath School where every department is studying the same thing. That seems that that would also bring some kind of ... We make a little printout we send home with the parents and the whole family is studying same [story] and it kind of makes it easier. And we find that there is more involvement from the families because more of them study.” (Two women in Chattanooga)

Small Group Bible Study Guides—“I saw a lot of how-to materials, but hardly any Bible study, small group material. There’s not a lot of selection on that.” The moderator then asked this participant (to clarify), “You didn’t see any small group materials?” The woman continued, “There is one, but hardly any selection. You don’t have a broad selection of anything.” A man in the same group picked up the same idea. “I want to say something about that. The brother over here that does men’s ministry, he’s talking about finding resources that you can study in a small group. That’s not in here. What you have in here is kind of how-to stuff. I think that’s what she’s referring to. And somebody mentioned on this side [about] Serendipity and Nav Press. Those are two people that understand the need to study the Bible and help people think about the Bible. And we’re weak on those resources.” (Woman in La Sierra) “I do wish that we do more of the study guides to go along with it, so that we can use it for discussions, you know, like each chapter has some kind of a study guide or discussion guide. A lot of books these days are being produced in the larger Christian circle, they do that now. And although this is not exactly what

you are asking at this time, but I might forget it, so I'm going to say it anyway.” (Man in La Sierra) “I do believe that these are very good materials. Some need to be a little more concise. I'm thinking of a Bible study setting as an example. If is it one hour or 45 minutes, it should be something that could be completed in that hour, not to drag it out. ... Also, often these things target a particular group, but then another group is using it. Is it going to be something that could be used by all the groups seeing how [diverse] we are? ... Is there something that the black or the middle class or the suburban or the urban churches could use? Could pictures be illustrated in a way that could represent every group because we are becoming a global village, you know.” (Another man in La Sierra)

Training Opportunities—“What I appreciate about ... some of the resources for leadership, [is] that we can train our local members.... I know [the conference] puts on training seminars here, but we are so strapped with our school—the tail wagging the dog—that we can't send all the people we would like to these seminars at the conference even though I'd like to take them all down there and stay there; I'd like to have my own apartment there. But the challenge we face is how to train them without undue expense. If I can say I can have an elder's training seminar and I can get DVD and we can walk through that and it would cost \$100 that's different than spending \$1,000 in sending 10 elders wherever.” (Man in Chattanooga) “I'm treasurer of the church also. How come the conference office twice a year can have all of our treasurers come in old, new, young, whatever it is, and they are trained as to what and how to take care of the books. ... Why can't that be done for other ministries, like men's ministry?” (Man in La Sierra) “One of the things that I appreciated here [is] the leadership things. I remember when I first started pastoring, I really didn't know what I was doing. I just had to assume that everybody else did. And I think some of us just hardly move beyond that. I'm just beginning to figure out that I need to go on to the next level. So, if there were some resources to help us train people and of course, we would learn in the process, all of us would learn together. [Resources] where you can help deaconesses be deaconesses, you can help deacons ‘deac,’ you can help elders ‘elder,’ you and help Sabbath School superintendents superintend and your children's divisions, and just give them a sense of being trained so they can strive to be excellent instead of just survive until the next nominating committee.” (Pastor in Chattanooga)

Visitation Ministry—“I was looking for visitation ministry [resources] and I didn't find any. If you want me to, I will talk about it because it's my job now. Or if you want me to talk about how to reach (unclear), I can say something. Which one do you want me to speak about?” (Pastor in La Sierra)

Young People Not in Adventist Schools—“There's a lot of our young people going to public schools, more and more so over time. There's also a very large segment of home schooling families that are part of our community. And I don't see any resources for these people. ... I almost think that there's an anti-home schooling feeling in the leadership of the church. ... And it's manifested here again in that we don't seem to see the value or even the potential income. And that's how I really think they look at it. There are so many resources being developed and sold outside the Adventist system. Somebody's making a bundle of money. ... I wish that our church would develop materials for home schoolers, and that they would be in here.” (Man in La Sierra)

Suggestions that Already Exist

A woman in the Chattanooga panel said, “There are two things that I don’t see in here. Number one, we need some resources to educate our people about AIDS ... that they don’t have to be afraid of it, how to love people with AIDS, how to help people with AIDS, how to work with them, not just in our church, but in our community. Number two, homosexuality. I didn’t see anything on that. Someone mentioned it was barely touched on in one book: How to talk about it; how to counsel on it; how to deal with it if it’s present in your church; how to talk with young people about it, about homosexuality and from a biblical standpoint.” Later she added, “I didn’t see anything in here having to do with especially talking with young people about the gay lifestyle and things like that. And I know that’s a big issue right now with splitting churches, not Adventist churches, but other denomination churches. [We need material on] how to effectively talk to young people about [that].” In fact, the Biblical Research Institute has published a comprehensive book on the Bible’s attitude toward homosexuality and the General Conference has published a statement, which is available on the denomination’s official web site, that is designed to teach our members about this topic. ADRA continues to provide a range of resources on HIV-AIDS and *Ministries of Compassion*, the Adventist Community Services handbook published by AdventSource, includes a chapter on AIDS Ministries.

A woman in the La Sierra panel stated, “I have gone over our resources and I’ve gone to the ABC, and we’ve searched high and low for women’s ministry Bible studies for small groups. And they don’t offer anything that would come close to what we need. On the other side, we’ve used Beth Moore where she has expounded on issues and questions and answers. It’s hard to introduce something that’s not Adventist and yet it’s a good resource for women’s ministries. I’m thinking if we can repackage Ellen White materials that would be a good resource for women’s ministries, but look at Beth Moore and look at that format; that would be a good format for us.” In fact, a number of Bible study group materials specifically designed for women’s groups have been published by AdventSource, Pacific Press and R&H in collaboration with the Women’s Ministries Department.

A woman in the Chattanooga panel suggested the need for resources for “ministry to the young adult, the young single adult specifically.” In fact, together with the Center for Youth Evangelism, AdventSource has published several items designed specifically for this type of ministry.

Another woman in the Chattanooga panel asked for “a monthly magazine for pre-teens and early teens that would cover all the issues that they are experiencing at that very young age physically, mentally socially, spiritually, sexually—all those things.” Of course, R&H publishes just such a journal entitled *Insight*. It also publishes *Listen*, a journal that covers many of the same issues and is designed for young people among the general public.

A man in Chattanooga saw a need for materials “dealing with family crisis, illness, and special things we already mentioned—ADHD and parents dealing with significant health problems which is a big deal within our church. There are a lot of suffering families; they don’t have anyone to help them on a church basis.” These topics are addressed in the book *Helping Hurting*

Members published by AdventSource and prepared by the School of Social Work at Andrews University.

Another man in the Chattanooga panel suggested materials on “how to deal with the homeless. That’s a national crisis, but also many churches are facing it with members who might be homeless and living out of their cars. And it would be really neat for churches to understand how to deal with those kinds of members and those issues and the homeless and those issues.” Adventist Community Services produced a video specifically entitled *Helping the Homeless* which is distributed by AdventSource and there is a chapter in *Ministries of Compassion* on this topic.

A third man in the Chattanooga panel “saw an emptiness in the area of God. It would be neat to see something that talks about God for the secular mind. There’s a lot of spirituality out in the neighborhood, and I think a lot of people are looking for some understanding of what God is really like, and it might be good if we were able to talk about that. Another area that I saw had some emptiness on it was developing a meaningful devotional life.” The How to Know God Seminar published by Concerned Communications and distributed by Seminars Unlimited is specifically designed along these lines and Jon Paulien has written *Meet God Again for the First Time*, published by R&H, specifically with the focus suggested by the man quoted above.

Another man in Chattanooga asked, “How about dealing with some of the issues that are starting to come up relating to the Trinity and the Godhead? I think it’s an issue we are seeing more of now than in the past.” R&H has published *The Trinity* by three professors from Andrews University specifically to meet this need. In addition, *Understanding the Trinity* by Max Hatton has been published by Autumn House and is distributed through the Adventist Book Centers.

Another person in the Chattanooga panel asked, “How about resources for home schooling?” Of course, Home Study International has been operated by the General Conference for decades precisely for the purpose of providing home school resources and is widely recognized for this service, including among many homeschoolers who are not members of the Adventist Church.

One panel participant said, “But the thing that I think would be helpful would be downloadable forms [for Adventurers Club and Pathfinder Club]. In the back [of the Pathfinder Club manuals] there are a lot of different forms that you can fill out. Of course you could copy those, but if you had areas for several of these books that you could actually download from your website, it would pull people into your website, and then they could see other options too available, so that would be helpful.” In fact, AdventSource has many free eFiles on its web site related to Pathfinder Clubs and Adventurer Clubs. Progress is being made to add to these products as funding becomes available. One reality is that as more and more material is made available free through this medium, then it will become necessary to subsidize the resource organizations that produce the content and provide customer support. This is a reality that CRC must carefully consider as it develops future distribution of free materials via the web.

Referring to *Responsibilities in the Local Church*, another participant in the Chattanooga panel said, “I see you have it in PDF file, but I wish that we could do it editable for some of us would like to add things that we have added locally. ... So you would like to have word files that you

could adjust and personalize to your congregation. ... I just don't want to pay for the full produce either. ... I used to be able to go into your website, click it, highlight it and drag it, and drop it over and drop it over into whatever program. And now you don't have that; you got smart." So far as we can determine, the current edition of this publication continues to provide editable text files, although the free copies provided on the web site are PDF files, which any individual who purchases the Standard Edition of Adobe Acrobat can also edit.

A woman in the Chattanooga panel observed, "I don't see anything up here ... that deals with getting our young people back to the basics of Seventh-day Adventism, you know, our founding fathers ... in teaching our Cradle Roll children and up, especially our Juniors, ... how the church began and up through the years. We used to have it with the children, but ... we're letting the [church] schools deal with that." A man in Chattanooga added, "Church history in Sabbath School would be good; maybe do it in two quarters. Most Adventist adults don't know our history, how our church came into being. What we see now as you come into this church is all these millions of people, but how God called us out to be a special people [is important]." Another man in Chattanooga followed through with the observation that "a lot of adults [need this] too. We are the Laodicean church, and most of us, if we're not born Adventist, we go to an evangelistic series and are exposed to these basic truths, and then after that, unless you go to another evangelistic series, you don't ever hear them again. I think that somewhere the adults should be exposed on a regular basis again." In fact, this is the purpose of many of the materials used by the Youth Ministries Department of the denomination. For example, *Church Heritage* has been prepared by the General Conference and is published in both English and Spanish by AdventSource, as well as downloadable free from the General Conference Youth Department web site. *Keeping the Faith* by V. Bailey and Judith Gillespie is published by AdventSource and *How to Teach Basic Adventist Doctrines* by Daniel Belvedere is available in Spanish. Of course, the General Conference Ministerial Association makes available *Adventists Believe* and a full curriculum for both baptismal classes and the Pastor's Bible Class.

Ethnic Minority/Multicultural Needs

The participants in these consumer panels suggested that there are unique needs particular to congregations that focus on ethnic minorities and those that are multicultural in character, where no major ethnic group has a majority of the membership. For example, a man in the La Sierra group stated, “We serve an about 85 percent Hispanic community, so when we’re looking for resources we have to create our own if we can’t find them. And most of the time we wind up having to create our own. ... [We spend] lots of time translating, sometimes creating from scratch.” Clearly, he wishes that far more material was being published by the CRC network in the Spanish language and adapted to the particular needs of Hispanic communities. The man continued to make similar statements later. “I think in a nutshell, we’re looking [for] something ... that I could use because we have different cultures, different sayings, different upbringings ... because we come from different cultures, our churches [are] different.”

Another man in the La Sierra panel pointed out that even the delivery system for resource materials must given attention to the different needs of various cultures. “Whoever the sales people are, they can [go to] areas where pastors meet, where convocations, camp meetings [are held]. ... I don’t know if some of these books are targeted to certain churches. There are so many churches, if you take some of this into some of our ethnic pastors, they tell you now that they have never seen them. I don’t know if this is on purpose or for whatever reason. ... Maybe some of the books are targeted to certain groups or certain cultures, but if that’s the case, that’s fine then. But I also think in a magazine like this, probably all authors of all the ethnic groups who have done work ... should also be promoted.” A third man in the group agreed and pointed out, “I think you are going to have different kinds of communication media for different kinds of people.”

The complexity of immigrant congregations as they mature and move into new generations is highlighted in the remarks of another man in the La Sierra group. “My church ... is a multi-ethnic church. But it often is second and third generation people who now belong to one of these other groups that have ethnic names on them. ... The children of these people or the grandchildren will no longer identify themselves as an ethnic group. They’ll want to become part of a mainstream congregation [rather] than be identified as Indonesian or Filipino or Spanish or whatever. And we have those in our church. We often now have the grandparents coming who were the first generation because they want to go where their kids are going. But their kids are ‘Americans’ in the sense that their thinking is more in the post modern mindset than in the traditional mindset, either ethnic or white.”

Yet another man in the same group continued comments along the same line. “I’ve been here in this country for 24 years, and the pastor of my church has American teenagers. My oldest is 21; he’s in college now, so he’s the kind of guy he’s talking about. Thank God [my son] is still in the church, but he has questions that my Africanness cannot answer or resolve [and] it seems to me that if we as leaders will find out what resources are here, find a way to repackage them to appeal to [the new generations], rather than go out over here to get whatever resources that other Christian groups have ... I think this is where we might start to look for [an answer].”

Marketing and Access Issues

It is clear from the low numbers of participants who recognized most products displayed in each panel that the materials developed and distributed by CRC and its affiliated organizations continue to have a serious lack of visibility among pastors and local church lay leaders. A man in the La Sierra panel put it this way: “You know, all of these materials are excellent materials, but one of the biggest problems that we have had in our churches is lack of exposure to these materials. ... We have these resources that are available. They’re excellent resources. The only thing is that the exposure is not there, and that’s where I have a problem.”

The moderator then asked the panel, “Why do you think so few people know about these resources?” Another man quickly answered, “They are not promoted.” A third man jumped in. “I think that is a big problem. I think the church could be doing a lot more along these lines. I have an idea that maybe they ought to send out [something] like Mission Spotlight DVD’s ... send out a five-minute little spot ... to be shared with the church board in particular. ... People aren’t readers as much as they used to be.”

A pastor in the same panel said, “If out of the 40 people in this group only seven have seen the catalog, then that shows that if they are coming [to the local church], it’s not coming to us. And I can honestly tell you, I don’t know what happens in other churches ... Don’t send it to me as a church pastor to pass it to my board ... people don’t have that time. I don’t know how many pastors finish their agenda in their church board meeting, but [I don’t have the time]. ... As I’m thinking here, one way could be to go into the ... pastors’ meetings. This thing should be brought out and displayed and pastors can have free copies to give to the churches. That would be one way to go. Another greater way would be to identify the ministry leaders in the local church and direct it to them in an information package; not just words, but pictures and bulleted outlines [of] how this will help. Believe me a lot of our people don’t have time to read, I’m sorry to say, I have [too many] books, and ... I’m not looking at the ones that I’m going to read and study, I’m looking at the ones that give a quick outline of what to do.”

Another man in the group disagreed that there was a problem getting information out. “I don’t feel like I’m a victim of lack of information. I know where AdventSource is on the web. I know how to use the web. I have a phone. I know how to call AdventSource. I know how to call the conference office. I think sometimes we like to pass the buck a little bit too much. I personally feel responsible for what I know and don’t know. That’s it.” Another pastor agreed with him, citing “a culture of miscommunication, because I’m thinking now, somebody has flashed up on the screen, ‘here’s a copy of some books you can pick up at your local ABC.’ You know, I continue reading my book.” The moderator interjected the clarification, “You’d tune it out?” The pastor agreed and continued, “Because, you know, there’s no history that I have that this is really going to be helpful for me. There’s a lot of good information out there ... So, I think it’s not just telling me there’s a new book, but it’s necessary to establish a relationship.”

Is There a Need for Church Resources?

Perhaps the lack of awareness indicates that there is really no need for a Church Resources system in the denomination. The moderator tested this possibility by asking, “Would you say that

these resources aren't helpful to a local church leader, and that's why they are not being circulated?" Immediately a number of people in the panel responded, "They are very helpful!" No one in either panel was ready to agree to this explanation.

Is it important to provide support services for local leaders such as an 800 number for coaching, information sources for questions and answers, training events, and web sites? A number of participants in both groups immediately responded that there is a need for "all of the above."

One woman in the La Sierra panel explained, "The reason that we are saying 'all of the above' is because as new people come into the church and take positions, a lot of times the older folks, the mature folks that had those positions before, do not train the new people. They don't want to be bothered. They are so tired of that position, they leave, and they don't train the new people. So the new people have to have a way to get this information. I'm talking because I'm a prime example."

A man in the group stated, "I think all these books and all of the material that you have brought, are crucial for the survival of our church. We cannot do without it. At the same time, you know, I've been an elder for over ten years, and I have never seen an *Elder's Digest* until it was handed to me at a meeting in LA when the GC came out. I was told that it gets mailed to all the elders, yet I have never received one. That was the first time I had ever seen it; never had been exposed to it until then. There is a lack of exposure, and I think that the GC or whoever, maybe our local conference with all of their events, training seminars, ... all of these materials should be taken to all of those trainings and exposed at those seminars so we know what's available out there. I've been in different ministries, and I didn't see the resources I'm seeing here today."

How to Get Information to Local Leaders

What is the best way to get information about resources to the lay leaders in the local churches? This was a key point of discussion in both panels on several different occasions. It was a theme they kept coming back to again and again. A woman in the Chattanooga panel reflected, "I know that our VBS people get information constantly and so does our pastor. ... I'm the Sabbath School secretary [and] I get advertisements all the time. It says, 'please forward this to the appropriate people.' I take it ... to the Sabbath School superintendents and all the children's divisions and the pastor." Another woman in the same panel agreed that there is a flow of information. She is a church secretary. "I go through all the mail and put it in everybody's mailboxes."

A pastor in the Chattanooga panel said, "It seems that it has to start at the local church. In the ideal setting, the church is evaluating its situation, its mission, its plan; how do we achieve those goals, what are our needs, and then what resources it would take. Sometimes people who think 'we've done things awhile' don't feel they need any help. They're doing just fine, thank you. So if you bring the resources to them, they don't need it. If you can establish a need, or we need some training, or we want some resources, then here's some catalogs, here is your area, look and see if any of these things would be helpful to you."

A layman the group felt that information needs to be sent directly to each individual lay leader. "Our conferences are getting lists of church officers. That's a starter. ... They would be the ones it could be channeled to." The moderator followed-up this comment, "What information is asked of you, the church leader: Street address, home number, e-mail?" The man responded, "The conference list has all that. ... If the conference won't get it, then the church would have that information ... whatever it takes, either e-mail or street address or whatever." The moderator continued to press the issue with a conference departmental director who was in the group, asking specifically, "Do you release your information to be given to those who would share information with you about ministry?" The departmental director responded, "We do it within the conference [and] only Adventist sources," implying that there are restrictions and possible breakdown in the system.

"The church board should communicate with AdventSource," stated a lay woman listening to the exchange in the previous paragraph. "You won't have 100 percent compliance of all 6,000 Adventist churches across North America. There's no perfect system. ... An acceptable percentage is probably around 65 to 70 percent," said a man in the Chattanooga panel.

One woman in Chattanooga suggested that "each church should have a library where all these resources can be kept for everybody to access ... that way you don't have duplicates. You don't have two people ordering the hundred dollar things. Make all the church members aware of the library that these resources are there, and you have a stack of catalogs there. Then, anybody who's interested can add to the library." Another woman in La Sierra responded to the same suggestion, "On the other hand there are those that are coming in as leaders that don't know that these resources exist, don't know what resources the conference has or the NAD has that could help them do better in their positions as leaders. Unless they have the initiative to go to the conference, and say, 'I'm this leader; what resources do you have for me?' ... they don't know, they're not going to use the resources that are available."

E-mail Communication

"Why not have E-Adventist set up so that the church clerk once a year clicks the buttons on the names of those [who are lay leaders] and what their position is, and then that can be used to send an E-mail to those people," suggested a man in the Chattanooga panel. There were several affirmative statements in the group, but one woman pointed out that "elderly people or those that are not computer savvy ... just don't go to computers very much."

Another man in the same group also objected to this plan. "There are a few of us who are in information overload. I get anywhere from 100 to 300 E-mails a day. If I don't know who it's from, I hit the delete key. I glance at the information coming in because I'm a computer scientist. I teach security. I look at all kinds of stuff coming in, and I choose just by glancing at the title line because I do know which ones [I want] and I move through it in an hour at the most; all those E-mails. I can't spend more time. So if you send it to me by E-mail, it's a good chance I won't even stop to look. Amazing Facts; I bought something, they got my e-mail address. I hit the delete button. I don't have time for it. ... If it's your name, and I recognize you as a name, I will answer it." The moderator probed, "What will get your response? A magazine? "Well, of

course we get junk mail too,” the man admitted. “So it’s a relational connection that is absolutely necessary,” the moderator concluded.

The same suggestion to use E-mail for direct promotion of resources came up in the La Sierra group with similar responses. “That works for E-mail readers,” one man said. “It doesn’t work for non-E-mail readers.” A pastor among the participants asked the group, “How many people here don’t have E-mail?” Two out of 32 raised their hands, but another man quickly said, “Don’t send me any more E-mail.”

A pastor in the La Sierra panel pointed out that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for communicating about resource materials. “People’s preferences are real clear. They’re going to tell you, ‘I want it in E-mail or don’t send it to me in E-mail.’” The moderator asked who would collect those preferences. “I guess our church secretary,” the pastor responded. “Then we update it. Its just information we maintain.” The moderator probed, “So, how would AdventSource or the ABC find out how to send you an E-mail?” The pastor responded, “I don’t know how they found me for this meeting. I got a call. I know we put a lot of effort into confidentiality, and we do have a kind of permission thing that some people give for certain purposes, and every year it keeps getting more and more sophisticated because you’ve got to be real careful about that.” The moderator explained, “Here’s how you got contacted. You were in the conference directory.”

“What would work for me,” another man stated, “is, being in men’s ministry, if they would send me [an Email with links to] a sample of the latest things out on men’s ministry. I could view it right there on line. These are the latest books out on men’s ministry, and here’s a little excerpt from this book, you know you can click and open, and oh, look at this one, the title looks interesting and click it open, and I’ve got a little sample from it. Well, then you know what, I can go right there and order it on line and have it delivered to my house. That would work for me. And of course when I’m selected to be men’s ministry leader, I can say put my name on the directory, put my E-mail; I want to get that information.”

The computer scientist in the Chattanooga panel, reflecting on the complex views expressed on something as simple as building an E-mail list to send out information on new resources, said, “It might be, the conference needs to get [local] church leaders together and talk about some of these issues in communication. ... It’s got to be personalized.”

Key Role of Pastors

It is ancient wisdom among departmental workers in the denomination that the pastor is the “gate-keeper” in communicating with local lay leaders and his or her cooperation is essential to any successful promotional strategy. A participant in the La Sierra panel said, “I am a pastor myself [and] it takes pastoral leadership to disseminate this information, and it’s as easy as handing us a few more copies of that catalog so we can distribute them to whomever we think it applies to. It’s as easy as that.”

A pastor in the Chattanooga group expressed a similar view. “My experience tells me that an ignorant pastor leads an ignorant church. If the pastor isn’t aware of these kinds of materials, so that when a person is voted in as [a ministry leader] you can talk to them and say, ‘there are

materials that can help you; can we order those or let's go to the library and look them over.' ... some sense of accountability and training with that. For instance for me today, I raised my hand almost never on these materials that were presented. Now, it's true the last few years I've been back in pastoring, before that I was in radio, so I was kind of out of the loop for some of this stuff being created, and this has been very enlightening for me. Much of this material is going to be utilized because I am aware of it now. I don't know how to get from where you are into the pastor's head, but I think he's the already in-place person that people would expect to know where the Adventist church resources are. If you can't educate the pastor, you cannot educate the church."

A possible alternative was suggested by a layman in Chattanooga. "We [need] a church resource officer at the church. If we had a primary person in that responsibility who could go to [each leader] and say, 'What are your needs? Here's a catalog which has some resources for you. If you need help, I'll take this back to the board and let the board deal with it. That way you don't have to worry about computers or anything else. Any church could have somebody designated for that position."

Advertising in Adventist Journals

A man in the Chattanooga panel urged that CRC sponsor "an advertising campaign in our *Adventist Review* and so forth for AdventSource stuff." The moderator probed the group, "Have any of you seen of those ads [in] the *Adventist Review*? Have you seen anything in your union paper?" There were a number who said, "Yes."

A man in La Sierra emphasized, "If you have to pay to advertise some of this stuff, do it! Find the money to do it, if you really want to get the word out. ... We do have television ministries and so forth that are out there that could be used [and] again, if you have to pay, [do it]. They might not want to do it, but in any case attempts should be made to get into every single media we have to get the word out. If you want to do advertising, you don't just do it on the radio. You do it on sign boards, billboards, magazines, television. You know, you take advantage of everything that's out there. To just try one approach; I mean, E-mail is free, that's neat, and a lot of people will read that ... but some of us get so much E-mail that we just hit cancel; can't read it all."

The moderator followed this up by probing the group. "How many have seen advertising about AdventSource in your union paper?" Seven out of 32 indicated they had seen it. "How many have seen it in the *Adventist Review*?" No one in the group remembered seeing it. Of course, the circulation of the *Adventist Review* is much less than that of the union paper. Only one member in 20 gets the *Adventist Review*, while nearly all members get the union paper. "How many have heard about AdventSource at a church gathering like a camp meeting or ministries convention or anything like that?" Three out of 32 responded. "How many have heard about AdventSource at your local church?" Two out of 32 said they had.

The Strategic Importance of Networking

A number of participants in both panels repeatedly pointed out that advertising and promotional information alone will not be effective in creating an awareness of the resources available to local church lay leaders. Personal relationships are vital. A woman in the Chattanooga panel said, “We find that pamphlets and brochures and things [like that] don’t really work. It’s a personal contact and a person to person invitation that draws them into the program or ministry; it’s a hands-on thing.”

A man in La Sierra expressed the same idea. “There is a disconnect from the church and from the conference as to the resources that may or may not be available. Most of the books that we have come across have been from individuals saying, ‘check out this book.’ ... So there may be books ... that are there on that board that I would find interesting and meaningful for me, but unless I know someone who has read it, I’m not suggesting it to my group.”

A man in Chattanooga picked up on this theme and went further with it, suggesting one aspect of the networks that could be used to get the word out about resources. “The personal thing is very dead-on. To me a repository probably has already existed in the GC or whatever for all the churches in North America ... but one thing that should be [used to disseminate this information] to some extent within every church should be [the] nominating committee and church board. Those committees ... are probably standard to all our churches, and they are the ones that are going to be responsible for who are the leaders in that church, so if you can get some information to those church boards and to the nominating committee, so that when they make selections of the leaders, they know the material that is available and when they talk to these people about being leaders, they can say, ‘here are material that go with this particular category you’re taking over. Let us know what you may need or what you may want.’ Then, I think you get the personal touch, and you also have a means of being able to talk to every church ... and you can start bombarding these churches with that information for their church boards and for their nominating committees.”

One of the reasons that CRC has encouraged and supported a number of resource centers, such as the Center for Youth Evangelism and Seminars Unlimited, is to provide focal points to connect with networks of individuals interested in particular ministries. These resource centers become ways of building and maintaining relationships with the people who purchase resources instead of simply commercial operations that sell materials. This networking element is one of the reasons why the largest business sector at AdventSource continues to be the Pathfinder Clubs, a network which the organization has had a relationship with for more than two decades now.

Problems with Promotional Mailings to Churches

A number of panel participants suggested a various times the distribution of the AdventSource catalog and other marketing materials through local churches, and almost as often this was met with a series of comments about the problems with this approach. A woman in the Chattanooga panel said, “Having been for ten years the secretary of the Collegedale Church and having been encouraged by a pastor this week-end who knew I was coming, I would like to ask, Is there any

way to have better communication with the NAD and the GC about materials mailed without request? I periodically have to go through our work room and throw out boxes of leaflets sent to us unsolicited. I don't know if small churches have this problem or not, but I mean millions of dollars of peoples' sacrificial offerings are being wasted on unsolicited and unused leaflets and flyers. ... Both NAD and GC [departments do this]. Religious Liberty Day and all world wide programs ... here come the FedEx big boxes. I sign for them. They are put in the work room and never used, so every two or three months I go through the work room and say, 'Pastor are we going to use these?' ... And in a church our size of 3,000 it's a very significant amount." A man in the group said, "It resonates with all of us." The moderator asked, "How many of you have a closet of items that you haven't recycled yet?" About 10 to 15 hands went up out of 35 individuals present.

Later on a man in the same group said, "Church bulletin inserts [are] a lot of expense that probably won't get to the people. It gives the kids something to scribble on. At our church we used that for awhile, and were told that it's nothing more than garbage. That nobody reads that." A woman in the group reported that in her church the "Sabbath School superintendent just found three years of *Our Little Friend* and *Primary Treasure* that were stacked up on a pew. ... They've been coming to the church and they didn't get anywhere. So does that tell you something? It comes to the church and it doesn't [get taken home]. Because we are a small church, we don't have secretary or anyone to open the mail, so it just gets put in the kitchen, gets put wherever. And eventually we show up and we go to clean up a room and we find all this material. I know that at times my husband, who is in charge of health ministries, and so they'll send [materials] directly to the house, but he's gone six months out of the year, so it just stays at the house or he forgets to take it to church and do something with it. So I'm not sure that's even the answer."

A comment by another man in the Chattanooga panel reveals an even deeper level of resistance to information about resource materials. He suggested that catalogs be distributed in church board meetings, and then said, "Then they're going to want some of this stuff and we're going to have to pay for it." Is it possible that the real, bed-rock reason why many local church lay leaders do not pay much attention to resources provided by CRC-affiliated organizations is that they simply do not want to make the extra sacrifice of time and money to conduct some of the ministry activities encouraged and supported through these materials? There is evidence in the FACT 2005 Survey of a general decline in almost all areas of local church ministry.

Promotion in the Adventist Book Centers

One man in the Chattanooga panel suggested, "In the ABC, all the ABCs, why don't you have a poster people can see as they are leaving. 'If you didn't find it here, call this number, go to this [web site] place.' And refer people to AdventSource?" Another man in the group immediately picked up on this idea and said, "Instead of putting up a poster, why don't you work with the ABCs to put in a computer terminal so [people] can order what they can't find right there? Or even one step further ... put one in each local church and get your resources there?"

Distribute Catalogs in Church Board Meetings

A man in the Chattanooga group suggested that a major channel for promoting resource materials should be the distribution of catalogs at church board meetings. “The church board includes a lot of the people who hold the offices in the church and if I were in a church board meeting and given one of these catalogs, I’d do what I’m going to do now; go home and look through it and order a number of products. There are things that look good to me and people, officers in the church who come back and ask the committees to purchase those things that are needed. So I think it might be a good idea to just send some catalogs to the boards.” A woman in the same group immediately responded, “I agree with him. I’d rather ask the catalogs be passed around the leadership team than have all those pamphlets or bulletin inserts.”

Another man in Chattanooga added to this the concept of a preview DVD designed to be shown in church board meetings or during the announcements in Sabbath worship. “How about a DVD with 13 replacements for bulletin inserts ... a 60-second video production on whatever it is. ... It certainly would be cheaper than color printing. You could produce a lot of one-minute clips on a single DVD.”

Promote CRC Products on 3ABN

It is not clear from the transcript if he was kidding or being serious, but a man in the Chattanooga panel said, “Have Danny Shelton promote them on 3ABN. Make infomercials about the products you want to sell.” Another man in the group, perhaps sensing the nature of the suggestion, immediately said, “the Hope channel might be easier [to get on] but not as many people would see it.”

Need for a Master Catalog

Several things I want to go over quickly. I think what we need here is a master catalog, like a mother of all catalogs putting not just AdventSource material but our Pacific Press, Review and Herald because I do know that what’s missing here, I’ve found them at Pacific Press and Review and Herald and things like that. So if we could put them together so we could all see it in one place, in one catalog would be good.

Need to Market the Concept of Marketing Church Resources

A man in the La Sierra panel suggested the need for a strategy to introduce to local church lay leaders the need for the marketing of church resources. “I think one thing that needs to be done is to articulate the need for sharing personal information [such as Email addresses, etc.]. For example, as a result of this meeting, we know that there’s material out there ... and because of the review of that material, we know that it’s helpful and useful and can serve a great need. I need to find it out. Now if you couple that with there is a way for you to get this information if you allow, if you consent to some information that is closely guarded being ... given to specific vendors, I can say, ‘Do that’ because that’s how it is in life. I do that in other things.” CRC leaders and affiliated organizations cannot assume that it is self-evident why they need information such as the Email addresses of local church lay leaders. Individuals at all levels in

the denomination need to be led through the same process of discovery and understanding that this man experienced during the consumer panel.

Issues with the AdventSource Web Site

The www.adventsource.org web site is listed in the catalogs that were distributed during the panel sessions and in both panels there were individuals with portable computers at hand who immediately accessed it. “I like the variety that’s available,” said one woman in the Chattanooga panel. “There’s more than one thing so that you can pick and choose for your congregation, your needs.”

A man in the same group reported that “the search engine needs to be improved. It’s slow. You need to look at a search engine or some way of being able [sort items better]. I just typed in leadership, and I just got a whole screen that doesn’t have anything emphasizing leadership; it’s got everything mixed in.” Another man in Chattanooga reported that he could not find Heart Call on the AdventSource web site. “I went back to Google, typed ‘Heart Call’ [and] it linked to NAD Women’s Ministries, and they had a place where I could click on it that took me to back to your website. I used several methods of trying to get into your website. ... I used search for book. I searched for this and that and it just didn’t find it on there. Something needs to be done to your search engine.”

A man in the La Sierra panel suggested adding the ability for customers to add comments to each product. “Many [web pages] allow me to first of all have a rating system. But I don’t trust peoples’ rating systems because they’re different than mine, so I always read the comments. Comments are far more powerful to me. But the second thing, I don’t even trust their comments. I really like to sample the wares and know what I’m getting. I’ve been a teacher in high school, teaching religion and math, for the last 20 years, and I can tell you I don’t get resources until I’ve actually looked them over and see whether they fit what I do or not. So those on-line services that provide me a chance to look through a book to see what’s there, I’m much more likely to buy. Or if it’s a DVD resource, to at least give me a sample of what I’m going to see.” The moderator probed this suggestion with the question, “Would you like some kind of return policy that would allow for you to review and return?” The man responded, “My answer is no. I would much prefer a sample system than a return policy. That’s me. Other people may like the return policy better. For me to get a resource [I want to use] in a month, by the time you’ve sent it to me, I’ve sampled it, and sent it back, and I’m looking for another one, I’ve lost my window [of opportunity].” The moderator asked the others, “Let’s see a show of hands on this idea, would you like to see a sample?” Three out of 32 indicated they would.

Another man in the Chattanooga panel suggested if worksheets for Pathfinder Club and Adventurer Club activities were available on the AdventSource web site, “it would lead people back to buy the material so they would know how to use the form.” Yet another man in the same group suggested that DVD products have a free sample on line. “Could you not take a little, 30-second or one minute splice out of that on your website so people could actually watch some of this.”

Pricing Issues

Several panel participants expressed the feeling that products should be less expensive. A man in the La Sierra group said, "I just looked up the price of this, and ... I find that this costs \$19.95. I was flabbergasted. I think it's way, way over priced." The moderator probed, "Okay, you thought it would be more like?" The man replied, "A couple of dollars or three dollars, something like that would be more reasonable. Some things may be priced low here, but this is way over-priced. I think it's a good resource, don't get me wrong." It is unclear from the record what specific item this man is referring to.

A man in Chattanooga revealed a more complex set of attitudes about pricing. "Having been an old purchasing agent, what I would like to see changed about it is [the cost]." He is referring to a DVD training package. "I know that you can buy in the Orient these CDs for a nickel or a dime, so all of the cost of this \$99.95 ... goes into printing. The case costs more than the CDs, but you've got royalties, etc. It is well worth it to anybody in need, but again I have many issues." He is a bit cynical, but not really opposed to the pricing of resource materials, but wants inexpensive literature for general distribution. "We're told to give the truth in printed form as the leaves of autumn. And unfortunately, if I had my example here, we are producing golden leaves, gold plated leaves. I can buy this for a quarter from the independent brethren over on Sand Mountain. They want a quarter for these two pages glued together, printed both sides, and they're not even quite a page. I think we should ask our conference, our General Conference to at least once a year produce something at cost and have our brothers in the Philippines print it and get it for a penny a piece."

A man in La Sierra said, "Now we are talking about pricing issues, and I have seen like Dr. Phil's book is \$27.00 [and] on Price-Plus you could get it for \$13.99. So, what I'm looking at is ... if we market division wide through the Internet, it could be lucrative, but yet could be much less expensive."

Shelf-Life Issues

"I'm wondering how they can decide when to take something off the market," a woman in the Chattanooga panel asked. "I know you can't leave everything on forever because then there's just not enough room to leave it on, but ... the video *Midnight Cry* is excellent, telling how the church got started. People that want to know, and I lost my copy, and I can't get it another one. And when I asked about it at the ABC, they said, 'Yes, that's one we should still have. We have a lot of people that would like to get a hold of that again.' Basic stuff like that seems like it should always be available."

Publish More Material on the Internet

A man in the La Sierra panel suggested, "It would be tremendous [if] we could just go on the Internet and have all these programs right there, with a single key for a particular one making copies for small groups and such, you know. And it would be worldwide."

Marketing Issues with Catalogs

During each of the consumer panels the participants were given copies of a catalog from AdventSource and asked to leaf through it and notice things that they liked and did not like, as well as things they found were “missing.” The majority stated that they had never seen this kind of catalog prior to this event. In the La Sierra panel, 25 of the 32 participants had not seen the catalog prior to that day. In the Chattanooga panel, 21 of the 35 participants had not seen an AdventSource catalog before. This fact led to discussion of the methods by which the catalogs are distributed.

A man in La Sierra reported that he had seen the catalogs “because I called and requested it.” A woman in the group immediately asked, “How did you know it exists?” The man stated that it was because he had held various church offices in the past. “I always call Nebraska; I always call AdventSource and talk to them. I even remember the names of two of them that answer at nine o’clock Pacific Time, so that’s how frequently I call.” Others in the group seemed stunned at this comment, stating that they had no idea such a service was available.

A man in Chattanooga said, “I’d like to ask a question. What is your normal procedure for getting these out to the churches?” A conference departmental director was in the group and he too was surprised at how few of the participants had seen the catalog. “I know that we try to send things out from our department, but I just saw all these hands where people had never seen these things, and I’m wondering are you sending them directly or are you sending them to the conference or the church?”

“I think typically we get one copy for the church,” responded a laymen in the group. He immediately suggested one reason why lay leaders may not have seen it; “The pastor takes the copy home. Maybe the church should request enough copies for each department leader to have one.” Another man immediately picked up on this idea, suggesting that catalogs should be sent “one to the personal ministries leader, one to the adult Sabbath School superintendent, one to ...” Another man interjected, “Health Ministries leader.” Yet another said, “All departments.” The first man agreed with the others and continued, “Or the church could request ... ten copies to give to our leadership. Then we have them to distribute.” A woman in the group then said, “But in a small church one person could be getting five of them, so that wouldn’t work for us.” Of course, data is available at AdventSource about the size of each congregation and such a plan could be tailored to church size.

Again it was suggested “use E-Adventist.” Local church leaders simply do not understand the current policies of the NAD relative to E-Adventist that seem to prevent the delivery of services in a rational manner. (See the discussion of this issue above.) The conference officer that was present in the panel seemed somewhat defensive about the failure to use the E-Adventist data base to distribute the catalog. He stated at this point, “Whenever we have a church ministries event, whatever department it is, we take these to our training events, boxes of them. And whoever shows up to the event, they get to take home whatever they choose.” Of course this is not really an answer to the question raised by the lay leaders in the group—you have a data base of church members with information about the church offices they hold; why is the denomination not using it to get needed information to the local leaders?

Non-Adventist Products in the Catalog

A man in the Chattanooga panel stated, “We have noticed there are resources here that are not Adventist. On page 12, the DVDs and the magazine [are] Catholic.” In fact, it is unclear that this is true or why the man thought the particular products were Catholic, yet the basic issue was important to many of the participants in the Chattanooga panel. “How can you know if it’s from our denomination or other denominations? ... Is it supposed to distinguish Adventist resources from [others] we borrowed? ... For example, [one item is] from Zondervan. I know Zondervan, but [I don’t always know the various publishers].”

A pastor in the group said, “I think we can see quite quickly any book that’s published by other organizations.” The first man responded immediately, “Not really [name of pastor], because I’m seeing HART” and he was uncertain as to whether it is an Adventist organization or not. Despite the example of confusion, the pastor insisted that it was not a problem. “In my church anyway the people who we ask to be in leadership positions are smart enough to fair through some of this stuff. I don’t think they’re gullible.” Clearly there are differing views on this issue.

A pastor in the La Sierra panel expressed the same perspective as the Chattanooga pastors. “Supplementing other information from non-Adventist sources, [the menu] becomes complete.” He explained that his local church serves a number of different kinds of church members. “The oldest members want us to order books from [overseas, from the country they immigrated from]. In the middle, [for] the young families ... we have the things from AdventSource. ... The youngest ones ... we have a mixture of Adventist books and DVD’s and non-Adventist materials.”

Catalogs Need to be Tied to a Relational Dimension

Panel members again returned to a theme mentioned above—the essential relational dimension of an effective resource delivery system. “I know it would make your catalog a little thicker,” said a man in the Chattanooga panel, “but on page 65 there’s a subliminal message with a smiling young lady with a [telephone headset] on her face. I get some of other catalogs, and they have these things strewn throughout. And their subliminal message is we’re happy to have you call us. Some of the areas where you are dealing with [in the catalog]—youth, for example—you have so much content that there’s no people, and it is people who communicate. A picture of a person or a group of people ... the subliminal communication that goes on in a catalog is very important. It is much better than just the words because you see the picture of the book, but people talk to you.” A woman in the group reinforced his point; “On page 25 it says ‘the AdventSource web site has ministry ideas, training events, a directory of Adventist resource organizations and much more.’ I think it’s very thorough.”

A man in the La Sierra group described AdventSource as much more than a catalog marketing organization. “It’s a plethora of services from any most of the departments within the Church, from Women’s Ministries to Pathfinders to Adventurers. What I love about their service is that it’s on line, and you can ... log on at any time. ... They have DVD’s on how-to’s, like Mark Finley’s how to share your beliefs with other people and other how-to stuff.

In the La Sierra group, the moderator asked the participants to raise their hands, “Has anybody else gone to AdventSource.org?” He got six hands out of 32 participants. Obviously there is a need to disseminate more widely the availability of the web sites provided by AdventSource and the other resource centers affiliated with CRC, as well as the 800 numbers that provide live, knowledgeable individuals for local leaders to talk to. The full array of CRC resource organizations provide a wide scope and deeper specialization than any local conference could possibly afford to provide.

Positive Things in the Catalog

The moderator asked the La Sierra panel participants to list things they were seeing for the first time in the catalog that they immediately liked. There was a quick outpouring of responses. “The Pastor’s DVD on page 12,” said a pastor. “The Disability Ministries Handbook,” said a layman. “Establishing a Prayer Ministry,” mentioned a woman. And then several more people quickly added, “*From Spectator to Disciple ... How to place ads on radio and TV ... A Practical Guide to Personal Ministries*—it has all the ministries in here and tells you how to do it. ... the one on teen sexuality.”

Missing from the Catalog

The moderator also asked the La Sierra panel to list what kind of products were missing from the catalog that they would like to see included. Again, the ideas came thick and fast. “Religious liberty materials,” said one man. “Ellen White books,” said a woman. Materials on “worship change,” said a pastor. (In fact, there are several products in the catalog on that topic.) Information about “Peace Makers which is how to resolve conflicts in the church,” was requested. Others mentioned “motivating members to witness ... reaching the post-modern mind.”

How difficult it is to personalize the church resource system and get information to those who need it is illustrated by a man in the La Sierra panel who asked for more materials along the lines of a small pocket guide by Mark Finley that includes a section on each religion and how to share Adventist beliefs with people from that background. “If we could expound on that in a comparative religion series, knowing ... common beliefs with different ... denominations, and also where we differ and how you approach it. He has this small book, but if you could expand [the material] that would be great because ... we have people around us that sometimes we don’t know how to approach.”

Another man in the group pointed out a series that included “Witnessing to Jehovah’s Witnesses” and several similar titles was listed on page 69 of the catalog. “That page is not enough,” the first man declared and went on with some emotion, “I’m saying, my dear brother ... [and] my heart is full ... we need to understand that this country is becoming multi-religious not just multi-cultural. First, can we see more faces from people who have done it and it worked? I don’t mean to be emotional about it, but I’m simply saying that if you have someone who has tried to do evangelism or do church growth and it worked for them, we need to see their faces and how they did it. You know, I am personally tired of reading books by people who will tell how to do it and they left the pastorate years ago ... but simply because they’re prolific writers, we have them

there. What I'm saying is we need to have more books on how to reach Muslims in this country, on how to reach immigrants in this country, on how to reach Buddhists and whatever. We need to have some of those here and have churches deal with that diversity and pluralism in the church."

Conference Staff Role in Resources

Participants in both panels mentioned the local conference staff as a key source of ideas, information, training and resource materials. Both the Georgia-Cumberland and Southeastern California conferences have exceptionally large departmental staffs with a number of specialists who have the opportunity to work full time in resourcing pastors and local churches.

“Georgia Cumberland Conference puts on a training program for elders that’s superb,” volunteered one layman in the Chattanooga group, “a series of maybe ten ... different topics pertaining to elders. It works towards elder certification.” A pastor in the same group mentioned one of the conference staff by name that “has a program that we use [for] assimilating new members. ... We followed that for a year and we were able to hold 80 percent of our new members.” A woman stated that this conference “also does the church ministries training workshop ... for all kinds of different ministries.” A conference staff member was part of the panel and he explained, “We have a training event in every region of the conference ... in virtually every one of these categories. And we send announcements to departmental directors as well as the pastor of the churches. Almost every area we’ve talked about today is covered in these training events.” At the same time he pointed out that “in the Chattanooga area ... I don’t think that [the lay leaders] always take advantage of these training events,” hinting at the well-established notion that larger congregations often ignore conference training events.

In the panel in La Sierra there was a less positive attitude toward the conference office resources, although it should be taken into consideration that no conference staff person was present in the group as was true in Chattanooga. “It was my understanding in years past that the conference departmental leaders were the ones to help the churches identify these resources,” stated a pastor. “It seems to me that this function is no longer there ... and this is why we are getting into the problem of getting personal information [for] AdventSource.” He saw “AdventSource [as] independent of the conference [and] wanting to sell the products to help the churches minister, [but] we need to let you hear that we are emphasizing ministry, not AdventSource. We want to emphasize ministry ... whether the materials are sold by AdventSource or the ABC. Let the departmental leaders have a role in guiding us because they are our leaders. If we call ... AdventSource or get some materials at the ABC and the conference department head doesn’t know about those materials, it’s so disjointed. So ... is it possible to find that balance in which the local leadership can have a part in knowing about these resources, so we from the local church can come to our departmental leaders and say we need this and this, and they can share them with us as well?”

A layman in the La Sierra panel was more positive. “You know, every time I call the conference, they give me stuff. They send it for free. I call the conference, I say I’m so-and-so and I’m in this department; I need some help. And the last time I did that, the person on the other end of the line said, okay give me your address, and they sent me all kinds of materials for free. Don’t spend your money; the conference has it all.” Later in the discussion, he added, “If you want to save yourself time and money ... in regards to getting materials, call the conference. Your personal ministries leader is the liaison between you and your ministry and wherever that information is, whether it is the ABC or wherever else you can find it. The personal ministries leader is supposed to get you the books and materials you need whether it be for Men’s Ministries,

Women's Ministries, VBS or anything else. That is one of the duties of the Personal Ministries Department [at the conference office].”

It is not clear that everyone in both panels felt the same way about the role of the conference office staff, although there was no significant disagreement with these comments. Very different comments may have been made if panels were conducted in small conferences with few staff and limited budgets that may not be able to provide all the services that these two conferences provide to their lay leaders and local churches.

The ABC vs. AdventSource

Since the beginnings of the CRC in the establishment of the NAD Distribution Center—the original name for what is today AdventSource—and the Materials and Marketing Committee (“M&M”)—which has evolved into the CRC—there has been confusion and tension over the role of the resource delivery system operated by CRC and that of the Adventist Book Centers (ABCs) operated primarily by two General Conference publishing houses located in North America, Pacific Press and the Review & Herald. Despite numerous attempts at open communication, collaboration and a generally cooperative attitude on the part of the staff involved, that confusion still exists today, at least in the minds of some of the panel participants in this study.

A woman in the Chattanooga group emphasized the importance of the ABC. “If someone accepts an office [in the local church] and they are serious about doing a good job in that office, they will find their way to the ABC. They will look in the store [to see] what resources they find.” She believes that shopping in a store is better than direct mail or catalog marketing because “usually when we check our mail, it’s in the middle of something else, and a lot of times we don’t give it the time of day we really should.” She would prefer that CRC distribute resource materials primarily through the ABCs. “I don’t think we need to spend money on putting something else in the mailbox or anywhere else. ... I don’t see any of these ... resources at the ABC, [although] they will order it and ... have it delivered to your home.”

Others are displeased with the ABCs and hint that this channel may not be as cost-effective as direct marketing. Another woman in the Chattanooga group, after listening to the woman quoted in the previous paragraph, said, “Since the ABC came up, I want to say that it is a shame that when we go there, we have to pay more than if we went to another Christian book store for ... the same thing. I just feel like something should be done if possible about that. We’re not here to make money. ... It’s outrageous. ... You get to [feeling] resistance because you want the thing, but you know you are going to pay a quarter to a third more than if you go online.”

“What is the relationship between AdventSource and the ABCs,” asked a man in the La Sierra panel. “I want to know ... because it seems to me that some of these materials ... are at ABC and not included here. And then some of the things here are not in the ABC. So, could you explain that?” The moderator asked the group, “Can somebody explain this?” Another man replied, “I don’t proclaim to know, but I think, if I can make an analogy, it’s like security in this country pre-9/11 and then after 9/11. Now we have one national security organization. We don’t have that [in church resources]. It’s like the left hand is in competition with the right hand, and they don’t want to reveal what the others have because they want a bigger piece of the small pie.”

To clarify, the moderator asked the man, “So you are saying that they are competing organizations?” The man responded, “Practically. And who suffers? We do; the church members.” Another man jumped in at this point, attempting to clarify, but demonstrating how confused the view is among lay leaders. “The way I understand it is the Review and Herald and Pacific Press—they are the publishers. The ABC’s are the outlets, and AdventSource is the one giving information on what’s available for the church.”

Based on this partially correct and partially incorrect understand, yet another man in the La Sierra group stated what he saw as the problem with the AdventSource catalog. “This is not all the published materials we have. It’s not representative at all. It’s very incomplete.” The man who started this exchange then restated his concern. “I really hope that my question will be dealt with because ... there is money involved here [and] competition involved here. What I’m hearing him say is that AdventSource is the source for information [and] there are a lot more things that are being used now that are not here. Therefore, Is it fulfilling it’s role? And why are they selling also, if their role is to give information? If it’s an alternative to ABC, then we need to know that so we can go where the price is cheaper.” The issue in the minds of these lay leaders is really the integrity of AdventSource and the other CRC-affiliated resource centers.

Another person stepped in at this point and said, “You could read the letter on the first page. It’s a letter [describing] what AdventSource is and what it’s suppose to do. The letter is from Don Schneider [president of the NAD]. ... It says ‘AdventSource is a non-profit company organized as part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. We provide resources for local church leaders in NAD and around the world. AdventSource is a member of the Church Resource Consortium [CRC] and partners with other member organizations to develop, produce, and market leadership resources in a wide range of ministries.’ So it’s a member of a consortium and it’s a non-profit company organized as part of the Church.” The first man responded, summarizing what he had heard. “So it’s ... something related to the ABC, or Pacific Press or Review and Herald. ... So this is one publishing association, one marketing [source], one resource. If that’s what it is, then it’s clear my head.”

The man who read the letter from Don Schneider continued, “The old name for AdventSource was the North American Youth Ministries Distribution Center in 1985, so they changed it to AdventSource. And basically what it says here is that the new identity focuses on ... providing resource for the leaders in local churches. In 1982 it was just for Pathfinders and then in 1985 it added on Sabbath School materials. ... It became necessary to change the name when the NAD organized a Church Ministries Department as the umbrella for all ministries, so the North American Division Church Ministries Distribution Center became AdventSource.” A woman in the group responded to this by stating her view. “The ABC and AdventSource to my understanding are two different stores. ABC carries a lot of these same things and more, and the same thing with AdventSource. If you want to go through on line and buy it from that source, then [you can]. But you cannot order from AdventSource through the ABC because I’ve had that experience before. I needed material from AdventSource that they don’t carry, and I had to get it from AdventSource. So they’re two different stores owned by our non-profit organization.”

The group continued to try to figure out the relationship. Next, a pastor said, “In my way of understanding, and I could be totally wrong, this [CRC, AdventSource] is about ministry, direct ministry. The ABC is about ministry and theology, and history and Ellen White books and Bibles and stories. This [CRC, AdventSource] is about ministry.” A laymen in the group disagreed with him. “I think you are wrong, pastor. ... I don’t know where we are going with this. It’s OK, I’m satisfied by simply saying we have two sources where we can go and buy [resources] period. But, when we begin to say this is ministry, we throw away the ABC. That’s where I go to buy so many things for ministry and we all do. It’s more about ministry in the church [including] Bible studies that are not here.” The pastor responded, “I don’t know how to clarify it. I go to Penny’s

to buy certain things for my ministry. That doesn't mean it's a ministry store. What I'm saying is that [CRC's or AdventSource's] focus is on helping the leaders in their group make their church stronger. Now that isn't to say that [the things I buy at Penny's] don't help my church."

Another person who had been online during the conversation interject as this point: "It is worth noting, if you're looking at the ABC web site it says that all information and contents are copyrighted by only two companies, Pacific Press and Review & Herald. When you look at AdventSource, it's a hodgepodge of publishers and suppliers and all that. That gives you an idea as to the [focus of each]."

A similar discussion occurred in the Chattanooga panel. One man said, "I have a basic question and then a suggestion. Is AdventSource seeking to be the source people go to find things?" Another man in the group said, "That's what it says in the catalog." The first man continued began to list a number of things that were not included in the catalog. "For instance ... there's nothing for cooking schools. There is the Griffins and the Finleys and others who have videos and all the how-to's. ... That's just an example. In other words, is ... AdventSource ... the referencing source, not just the selling source? In other words, there are apparently some people who are producing [materials] that have not decided to let it be sold through AdventSource."

The moderator responded, "What does the catalog tell you about what the role of AdventSource? Is it clear there?" Another man picked up the thread: "It says to write or call if we need more information about a resource. And right here on page 25 [it says] why is not everything listed in this catalog. You can always go to the website and get anything that is not listed in the catalog." The first man persisted in his concern: "But in the backs of our minds is this is, Are we going to buy through you instead of connect with [another source]?"

Another person pointed out that it might be useful to have one, central source of supply. "It would be helpful if there was ... one general place to get information. We've got Pacific Press, we've got Health Connections, we've got all these different sources. For example we've got 15 different recommended programs through NAD for health outreach, and some of them may be listed here and some there. It would be good if there was a place that brought it all together."

Another person agreed and observed, "It looks like that they're all competing against each other and you [have] to go to each one of them for what you want. Like there's nothing, very little in here on exercise, very little on cooking schools, as he said. ... For example, Bible studies: we keep hearing people mention all types of Bible studies for correspondence, yet they're not all listed here. For instance the one we use in our conference with the most success—Bible Research—most people don't even know anything about them unless they hear us talking about it. So it's just an example. I think we could improve."

Another man pointed out that there is even competition and confusion between the General Conference and the North American Division, which are supposed to be the same organization. "I went to an elder's seminar down in Atlanta and they came with a lot of the resources, but it was General Conference, not NAD. Why wasn't the NAD there with this stuff? I mean you have the right. It is NAD's role to be at every one of the GC presentations. Why weren't you there? It

is church policy. The General Conference departmental staff are actually are not allowed to travel in overseas division without being accompanied by division personnel.”

The general lack of coordination and the apparent competition between various providers of resource materials create great confusion in the minds of the laity and even pastors. They also tend to distrust the situation, fearing that funds are being wasted through inefficiency or that the Plus Line operation at AdventSource cannot be trusted as an objective source of information. They do not understand why denominational professionals behave the way they see them behaving in this arena. This is an issue that CRC has a founding mandate to address.

The CRC leadership must not fail to understand how important an issue this is in the field. One man in the La Sierra group gave a heart-felt appeal: “I appreciate what you are doing here and what is happening today. ... I appreciate the process. Reading this [catalog] and telling the people what helps are available; I appreciated that and I’ll go back to my congregation and let them know what we have. But if there is a message I want to share with you, [it is] I would like to see the organs of our church work together. I’d like to see this resource and other resources work together and not foster and perpetuate this division that is troubling us in the church. I’d like to ... go to an Adventist organization to buy a resource [and] if it’s not [available] order it through them and know that we’re in the same church. ... I need my church to be united. ... We are God’s church for the final days, and that ought to be reflected in what we do and what we print. I don’t want to go to the ABC and not find these things there or go to this catalog and not find things.”