



Christ's Mission in Medina

Report to the
Medina Seventh-day Adventist Church
and Medina Community Services Center

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May 2008

The Medina Seventh-day Adventist Church began in the fall of 1955, meeting in the homes of members. Early the next year, the First Christian Church on South Broadway was rented for Sabbaths and on March 24, 1956, Marvin E. Loewen, president of the Ohio Conference, officially organized the congregation. It had a charter membership of 26. Later Sabbath gatherings were relocated to the lobby of Hausted Manufacturing Company.

In 1959, land was purchased and on May 21, 1961, a groundbreaking service was held to start construction of a church building with a seating capacity of 200. The first worship service was held in the completed sanctuary on March 23, 1963. By 1965, membership had grown to 58.

About this time, church members began to develop the Community Services Center. Betty Ahnberg was the key leader. Her obituary in the *Adventist Review* of December 11, 1986, states that "she directed the Community Services in Medina, Ohio, for 24 consecutive years," which would place the origins in 1961 or 1962. Richard W. O'Ffill served as district pastor in 1964-65. He was later to be the international director of SAWS up to the time that it was re-named ADRA. He is quoted in the Medina newspaper during his pastorate, announcing that the church had organized "an active chapter of the World Adventist Health and Welfare Service."

Up until 1971, the center operated out of the basement of the church, according to a report in the January 1987 monthly issue of the *Adventist Review*. Protestant churches in the community and other organizations helped it move into a building of its own.

At least by 1973, if not earlier, the center had established itself as a community-based organization. It was "generously supported ... by other churches and organizations," reported an article in the April 19, 1973, issue of the *Review & Herald*. "Only four of the Center's regular staff are Adventists, but more than 100 people work for it" as volunteers. "Clients are sent to the Center from all over the county, since it is the only major one of its type in the area. It receives referrals from public welfare agencies. ... The Center enjoys a high reputation in the community. Many organizations send clients and assist in its financing. Two non-Adventist churches include the Center in their regular church budget. ... Many civic organizations are contributing money, as well as" volunteers.

"The United Way provides a yearly appropriation," notes the 1987 *Adventist Review* article. "Last year [the center] served approximately 10,000 clients with the help of about 70 volunteers." In 1982, "Betty Ahnberg ... saw the need for a new and larger facility." It took three years to raise \$320,000 in cash and another \$50,000 in the donated professional services, equipment and supplies to complete construction on the new building. At the time it was "the finest of its kind in the denomination." Betty died on September 15 and the official opening for the new building was held on November 9.

Your Story Hour radio ministry located its headquarters upstairs in the same building and Ralph, Betty's husband, continued to be a key leader in the congregation, as well heading the Hausted Company, started by her father. In September 1998 the Hausted Company was sold to Steris Corporation of Mentor, Ohio. By that time the family had a reduced role in both the church and the community. The center has survived the passing of the founders and continued for another decade or more.

Church Growth Trends

Medina Church doubled its membership in its first decade and grew by 50 percent in its second decade. During the second half of the 1980s, growth flattened out at somewhere between 80 and 90 members. The average Sabbath attendance in 1990 actually exceeded the membership of the congregation, a very rare occurrence in American churches of all denominations. Since 1990, attendance has declined significantly although membership remains around 80. (See graphs on the next page.)

Recently an analysis was completed of the current membership list. The majority of the members (57 percent) attend church at least once a month or—in one or two cases—are prevented by disability from attending, but keep in touch with the congregation. About one in ten members (9 percent) no longer live in the state of Ohio or in the region, while a third (34 percent) have simply quit coming to church. Some have not attended for seven to nine years or longer.

Goals of this Study

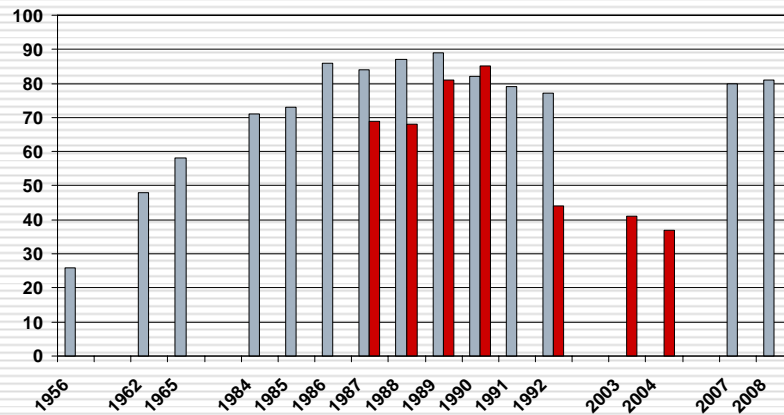
When I joined the staff of the Ohio Conference last year, Pastor Chester Hitchcock was asked me to help him and the director of the Community Services Center to conduct a study of the congregation and the community. In September 2007 we agreed on the following goals for this study:

1. Find a church growth strategy that works for Medina and takes advantage of its investment over the years in community involvement.
2. Strengthen the Community Services Center, preparing it for “the next level,” and broadening its services to both meet needs from middle class people and go beyond basic survival services for the poor and unemployed to empower them to change their lives.

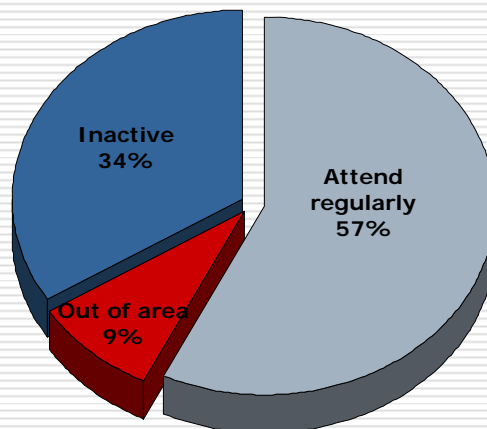
I bring to this task my commitment to the mission of Jesus in our world and some 25 years of friendship with leaders of the Medina Church and the Community Services Center, as well as 40 years experience with hundreds of similar projects.

Monte Sahlin
Director of Research and Special Projects
Ohio Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Membership & Attendance



Membership Analysis



The Mission Field

Medina is an outer suburban county in the Cleveland metropolitan area. It has nearly 170,000 residents based on the American Community Survey conducted annually by the U.S. Census between the every-ten-year counts. They live in about 62,000 households. About 30,000 people live in the town of Medina, the county seat and the largest town in the county. There are two other towns of similar size, Brunswick to the north and Wadsworth to the southeast.

The Medina Church is the only Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the county. There is about one Adventist to every 2,100 population, a very low level of penetration comparable with such mission fields as Myanmar (Burma) and Cambodia in Asia, Benin in Africa and Hungary, Germany and the United Kingdom in Europe. For comparison purposes, there is one Adventist to every 305 people in the United States and one Adventist for every 434 people worldwide.

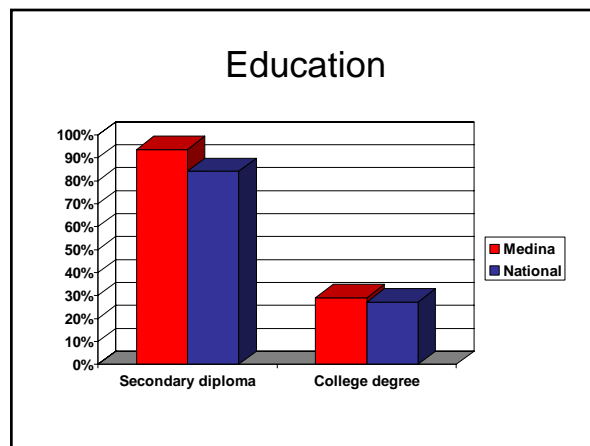
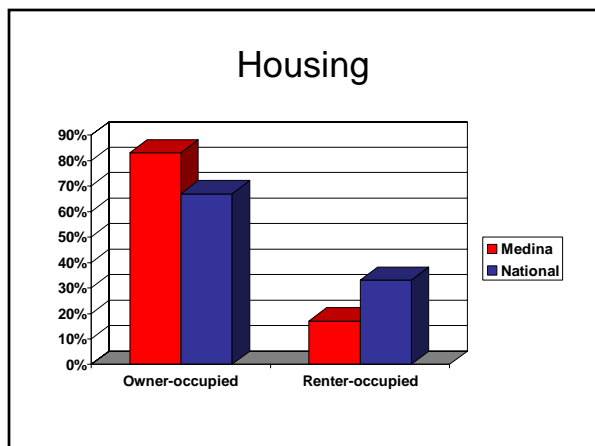
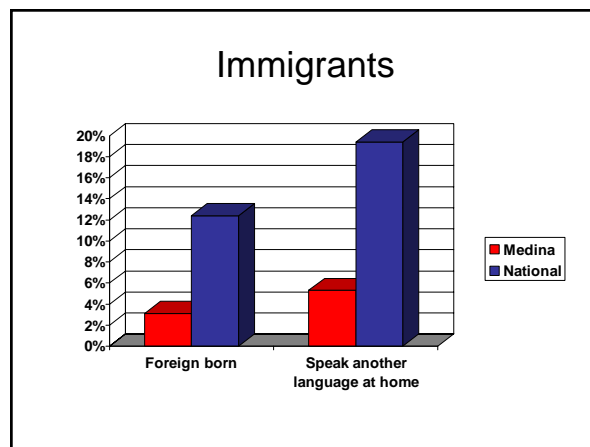
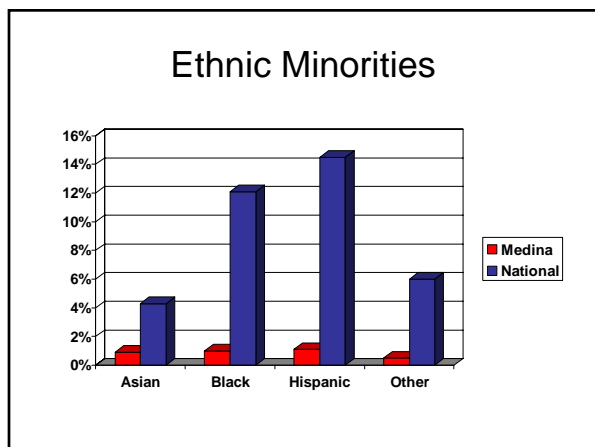
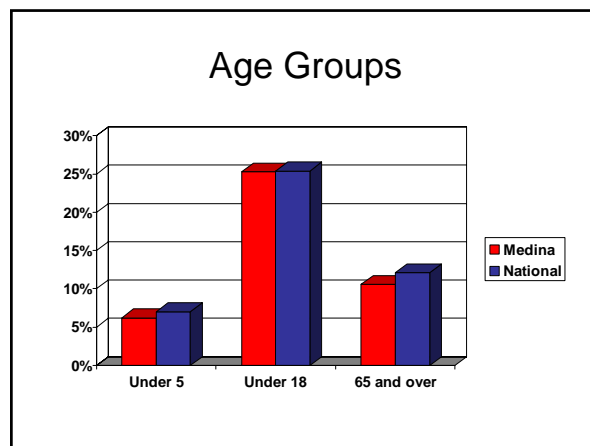
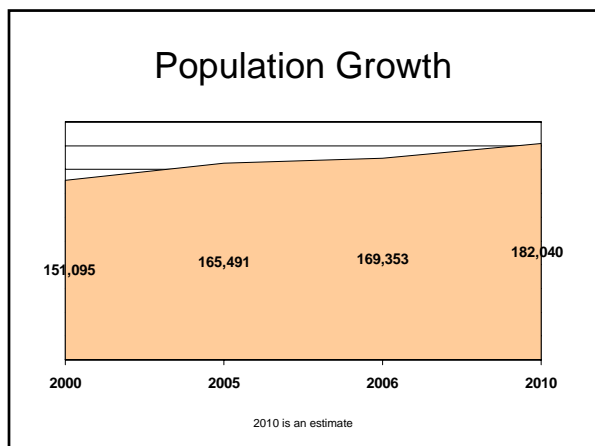
Some traditional mission fields have a much higher level of penetration than Medina County. For example, New Guinea has one Adventist for every 25 people. Zambia in Africa has one for every 22 people. The Solomon Islands in the South Pacific have one Adventist member for every 14 people, and the Cook Islands have one for every 16. Belize, in Central America and where mission trips often go from Ohio, has one Adventist for every 10 people. The Island of Montserrat has one Adventist for every four people. ***Where is the mission field? In the faraway places that the church has traditionally considered “mission fields,” or right here in Medina?***

Demographics

Medina County is growing at about two percent annually, a moderate growth rate. Much of this growth is the result of families moving out from Cleveland and Akron. If the current rate continues, the population of the county will reach 182,000 by the end of the decade. (See graphs on the next page.)

About one in four residents of Medina County is under 18 years of age. This is about the same as the national average. It means that activities for children and youth, particularly the schools, are important to the people in this community. In addition to the public and parochial schools, the Parks and Recreation Department, sports leagues for young people, Scouting and similar programs all consume significant adult volunteer time and funding.

Medina County has very few ethnic minorities. More than 96 percent of the population is made up of non-Hispanic Whites. The proportion of immigrants in the community is also way below the national average. Although civic leaders pride themselves in having a community with no problems in welcoming newcomers from diverse backgrounds, it is



likely that if we were to conduct an anonymous survey among the few minorities in Medina County, we would find that there are instances of racism or insensitivity.

More than four out of five families in Medina County own their home. Relatively few are renters. The proportion of home-owners is well above the national average. Many of the renters are young, single adults, including some single mothers who struggle to make ends meet.

The level of education in Medina County is somewhat above the national average, although a large majority of adults have not completed a four-year college degree. Many of those who have not completed a degree have attended some college-level classes over the years.

Two thirds of the adults in Medina County are currently married. This is above the national average and means that there are relatively fewer numbers of divorced and never-married singles. Medina is largely a family-centered community. Family values are important to the majority of the residents, yet there are significant needs related to family life, marriage relationships and parenting. (See graphs on the next page.)

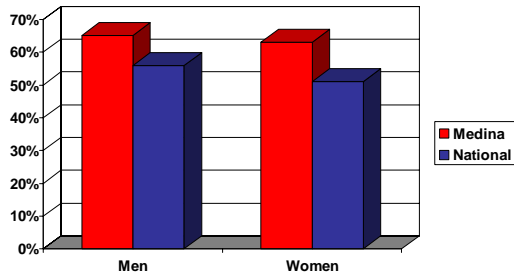
There are two categories of Americans who have special needs and receive special services. The disabled include the blind, deaf, paraplegic and many people with other problems that require that they learn to adapt to an environment that can be challenging. About one in ten Medina residents are classified as disabled, which is significantly below the national average. A somewhat larger number of Medina residents are veterans of military service and there is some overlap in these two categories, although most veterans are not disabled.

The median income for both families and all households in Medina County is significantly above the national average. The majority of the population falls into the "middle-middle" and "upper middle class" categories. There are some neighborhoods populated by quite wealthy homes, although even these people very likely think of themselves as "middle class" as do most Americans.

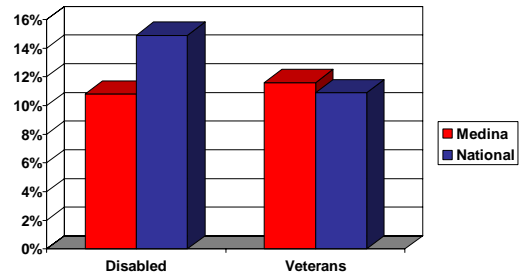
Some 72 percent of the population 16 years of age and older is in the work force. Considering that ten percent of the population of beyond retirement age and some teenagers do not work so they can concentrate on education, there are relatively few full-time homemakers. In the 2000 Census, six in ten women were employed outside the home. The largest portion of workers (40 percent) are employed in sales, office and service occupations. A third are professionals, management personnel or in related occupations. Only 26 percent work in construction, mining, maintenance, production, transportation and other "Blue Collar" jobs, despite the reputation of northeast Ohio as an industrial region. Less than one percent work in farming, fishing and forestry.

Poverty is not a major problem in Medina County. The percentage of the population that lives below the poverty line is about one third the national average. There are pockets of

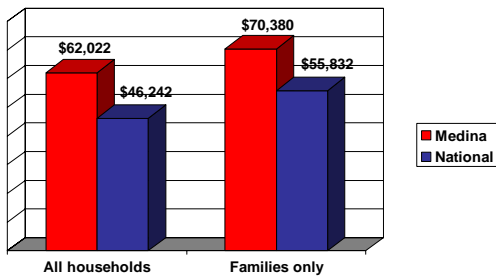
Married



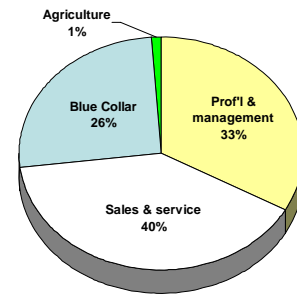
Special Needs



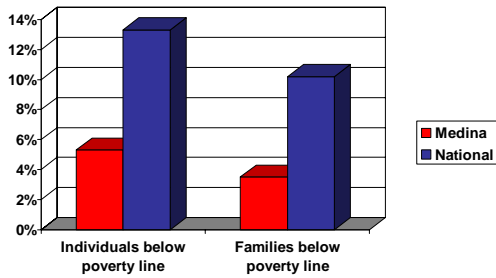
Median Income



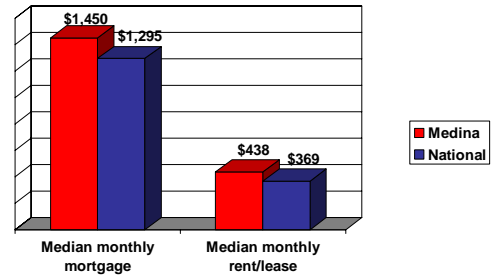
Occupations



Poverty



Cost of Housing



the poor, especially among those with little education, disabilities and broken homes. The majority of the poor are women and children. The major cause of poverty is fathers who leave their wives and do not provide adequate support for their children. One of the most effective ways to fight poverty in Medina is to strengthen families and provide the services necessary to keep marriages together.

Housing costs are only slightly above the national average in Medina County. Given the general level of affluence, this is an exceptional location to find a home at a reasonable price, both for rentals and for purchases. All in all, most Medina residents live a comfortable middle class life.

Religious Profile

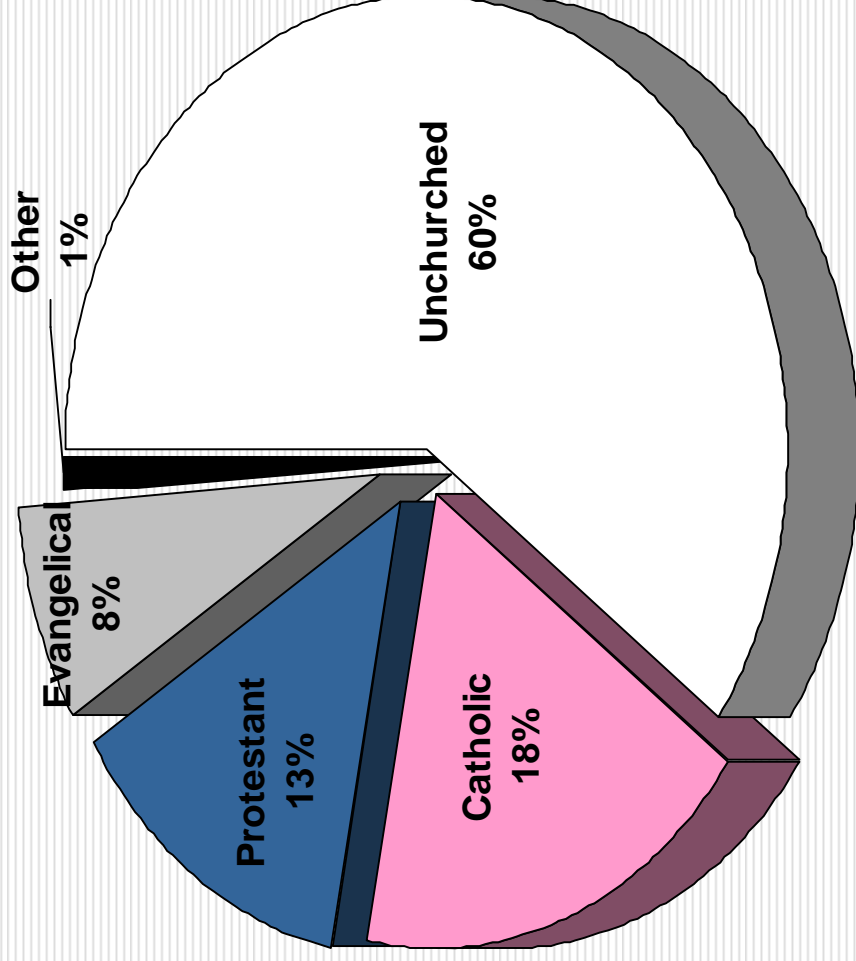
The majority of the residents of Medina County do not belong to any church or parish; 60 percent are “unchurched,” meaning they do not have an affiliation any of the organized religions in the United States. A few of these may actually participate in some church and most believe in God. The majority will tell pollsters that they have a preference for a particular denomination, but they do not actually join any religion. Of those who are affiliated with a religion, research has shown that a third to a half are completely inactive. The bottom line is that no more than one in three Medina residents goes to church regularly. And maybe it is as few as one in five. (See graph on the next page.)

Catholics make up the largest portion of the religious adherents in the county. One in five (18 percent) of the population, more than 27,000 individuals, belong to one of the 13 Roman Catholic parishes.

The second largest group consists of the 13 percent of the population who are members of ***Mainline Protestant*** denominations such as the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These four denominations account for more than 18,000 out of the 20,112 adherents in this category. Together they have 40 congregations in the county.

Conservative Protestants or Evangelicals constitute only eight percent of the population of Medina County. There are no more than 13,000 individuals in this segment even when unbaptized children are included in the count. The largest denominations in this cluster are the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Regular Baptists and the Assemblies of God who have about half of the total individuals in their 18 congregations. There are many small churches in this sector, the smallest being the Free Methodist Church with 19 members. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is included in this category.

Religious Profile



Source: Religious Congregations
and Membership 2000

Community Needs Assessment

What are the needs of the people in the Medina community? What are opportunities there for new and expanded ministries? To answer these and related questions, we have the benefit of four sources of information. First, the Community Study Team conducted personal interviews with 15 civic leaders. Second, the United Way of Medina County shared with us the data from their 2006 Community Needs Assessment, as well as more recent data regarding community priorities and calls to 211, the community information and referral service. Third, we obtained a copy of the *Partnerships for Success Need Assessment Report* published in 2006 by Medina County and the Family First Council. Fourth, over the last couple of years the Medina Church has experimented with some new initiatives in community service.

Interviews with Civic Leaders

A small Community Study Team was selected at the request of Monte Sahlin, director of research and special projects for the Ohio Conference. It consisted of Michelle LaMar, director of the Community Services Center; Pastor Chester Hitchcock; Barb Allen; Julie Been; Janet Kramer and Sahlin. Interviews were conducted with managers of local businesses, media professionals, directors of nonprofit organizations and government officials, including the mayor of the town of Medina. A standard interview guide was used, but the interviews were open-ended and unstructured, allowing the conversation to move to other topics. Notes were taken and an analysis of the results is presented here based on those notes.

The needs in the community that were mentioned the most often by civic leaders have to do with the slow-down in the economy over the past several years. New construction has slowed significantly. New businesses are not being started as often. Jobs are more difficult to find and wages and benefits are being reduced. For at least the last four years, Ohio has suffered from an economic downturn and the negative affects are felt in all sectors of the Medina community. (See the table on the next page.)

An equal number of civic leaders mentioned the impact of the economic downturn on home ownership. "Foreclosures are up 59 percent," reported Julie King, executive director of the United Way of Medina County. Managers at banks, credit unions and real estate firms told us that there is a need for home ownership classes, educating consumers about policies and procedures in the financial services industry that may be used against them, and how to better manage family finances.

About one in five of the civic leaders mentioned the need to help people, especially young adults and teens, develop basic job skills. It is more difficult to find a good job and there is high turnover in some areas, business leaders told us. People who are looking for jobs need to understand what leads to success as an employee and

Needs Listed in Interviews with Civic Leaders

<i>Needs Mentioned</i>	<i>Number of Civic Leaders who Mentioned</i>
Slowing of the economy	5 — 33 percent
People losing their homes; foreclosures; need for home ownership education; consumer education	5 — 33 percent
Job training; class in basic job skills	3 — 20 percent
Poverty, the disadvantaged; marginalization of low-income families	3 — 20 percent
Teen center	2 — 13 percent
Affordable housing	1
Better shopping for high-end clothing	1
Gap in health care and prevention services for young adults and the middle-aged	1
Help for prisoners returning to the community	1
Increase in non-violent crime	1
Juvenile delinquency	1
Twelve-step groups or seminars on alcohol, substance abuse	1
Senior transport	1

increases in pay and benefits, as well as how to best present themselves in their first contacts with prospective employers.

“Poverty has increased 29 percent in the last five years,” Mrs. King stated. Other civic leaders, including business owners, expressed concern for the disadvantaged, including the physically disabled, and for the marginalization of low-income families who are often forgotten in such an affluent community. This concern also ranks high among the civic leaders we interviewed for this study.

Smaller numbers mentioned a number of other needs. Because we interviewed only 15 individuals, an item that was mentioned only once still has considerable significance. The needs of teenagers, young adults without good access to health care, seniors without transport, individuals returning from prison to the community, and those with bad

health habits or involved in alcohol and other substance abuse are all important. Lisa Strepler, director of nursing for the Medina County Health Department, said in her interview that the ratio of people per primary care provider (physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner) is 1,156 per provider as compared to 852 per provider for the State of Ohio. This is a solid indicator of a lack of health resources in this community.

We also asked the civic leaders about their awareness of the Adventist Church, the Community Services Center and for specific suggestions. In response to both questions, the majority have heard of the church and the center, but not in the overwhelming numbers that might be expected given the center's long history and considerable visibility over the years. A total of 57 percent of those interviewed had heard of the Adventist Church, while 43 percent said they were entirely unaware of it. Some who were familiar with the center said they "knew nothing about [the] church or even where it was located." The majority of those who knew about the church "did not know of the center's affiliation" with the church. One business leader said, "I've driven by [the church] for years and didn't know it was related to the center," but the "memory banners have caught my attention; I have a bad memory and need help." Others indicated that they knew of the church "through the Community Services Center."

Almost two-thirds of the civic leaders we interviewed (64 percent) had heard of the Community Services Center and some had very affirmative things to say about it. Yet, it is surprising that more than a third (36 percent) said they had never heard of it. This includes one man whose office is only a few blocks away. There is a clear split between the business leaders we interviewed, most of whom told us they had never heard of the center, and the government and nonprofit leaders, who were all very familiar with the center. This is, in part, due to the fact that people pay attention only to what they are interested in, but it also indicates a need to not only do good works, but also to tell the story of the good work that we do.

The comments about the center were almost all positive. It is known to a number of civic leaders as "the number one food provider in the area for the hungry" or "the major provider of emergency social services in the county." An editor at the *Medina Gazette* said, "I do not know how you can do so much." A county official said, "the Center provides a wonderful service to the community." Others had nice things to say also, but at least two of the civic leaders we interviewed also have very specific concerns about improvements in the center and its activities.

United Way Needs Assessment

In 2006, the United Way of Medina County contracted with the Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron to conduct a survey of the residents. A random sample of 1,074 individuals were included in this survey, which means that the data are very reliable.

“When asked to indicate the most important issue facing their household or family, the leading response was the cost of living or making ends meet.” More than a quarter (27 percent) of Medina residents gave this response. “Other leading issues facing families included” the quality of the public schools (12 percent) and high taxes (8 percent). Smaller numbers mentioned “personal health issues and the rising cost of health care and prescriptions.”

“When asked to name the most important issue specifically facing the children in the household, the leading response was peer pressure” (19 percent). Other leading issues said to be facing their children included getting a quality or affordable education (15 percent), an uncertain employment outlook (8 percent), safety concerns and developing appropriate social skills.

Nearly a third of respondents (31 percent) “reported their household was worse off financially from a few years ago” and a larger number (37 percent) said it was difficult to make ends meet. One in ten “indicated that they have had to make a choice during the past year between buying food, paying rent or utilities, or purchasing medication.” Only 37 percent “reported their household was better off financially.”

The needs of young people are also highlighted in this report. About 13 percent of the families in Medina County have a need for an after-school program for their school-age children. “Of those ... from households with teenage children, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) saw a need for an after-school and weekend activity center.” A strong majority (59 percent) “indicated that someone in their household would actually use a preteen or teen center program, if it were available.”

People were asked some specific questions about their health habits. Only 38 percent exercise four or more times a week, while 38 percent exercise only once or twice a week and 17 percent never exercise. The majority (59 percent) would like to participate in a fitness program if an affordable one were available in their community.

Tobacco use has been greatly reduced in America over recent decades and this is true in Medina County. Only one in five households (21 percent) have at least one resident who uses tobacco daily. This explains why the stop smoking programs that the Adventist Church conducted in past decades have declined in attendance. “The Five-day Plan has become the five people plan,” stated a pastor in Philadelphia several years ago and that appears to be true in Medina also.

At a less personal level, when residents were asked to the “most important problem” facing Medina County, more than two in five (41 percent) listed traffic congestion, over development and population growth, all of which reflect a wish to retain Medina’s small-town, rural atmosphere as its suburban character becomes more pronounced. Almost as many (37 percent) mentioned affordable health care, including prescriptions and other services for senior citizens. Nine percent are concerned about funding for the

public schools, seven percent see a need to improve or expand health facilities in the county and smaller percentages mentioned a number of other items.

This survey also gives some important indicators related to church growth, although that was not the purpose of the researchers. “Nearly half of respondents [48 percent] noted they had lived in the county for over 20 years.” Over 43 percent have worked for the same employer for more than ten years. Both of these are indicators of how deeply rooted much of the population is, which has historically been a real barrier to Adventist evangelism. Other research has shown that almost all converts to the Adventist Church come from households that have moved in recent years, and nearly none from people who have lived in the same community for more than five years.

In Medina, people facing pressing personal needs can dial 211 to get help. These calls come into the information and referral desk at the United Way, and they shared with us the data for a typical quarter last year. Requests for help had increased 57 percent over the same quarter in the previous year and averaged 372 per month or 93 a week. The ten top requests include:

1. Help with paying utilities (to prevent termination)
2. Help with paying rent (to prevent eviction)
3. Looking for a homeless shelter
4. Emergency groceries
5. Transportation expenses
6. Clothing
7. Help with mortgage payments (to prevent foreclosure)
8. Access to public housing
9. Furniture

The largest number of these people were sent to the Community Services Center for help. It is the number one referral agency, according to the United Way’s own reports, and that was verified in an interview with Julie King, executive director of the United Way of Medina County. The Community Services Center operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church is extremely important to the Medina community in terms of these emergency needs.

Family First Council

In 2005, Medina County was one of five counties in Ohio selected to pilot the Partnerships for Success (PFS) initiative. PFS is an effort to build the capacity of communities to meet the needs of children and teens. Medina County was given a grant to develop a five-year strategic plan for youth and family services by June 2006. The goal was to engage the entire community, include in the plan the activities of every relevant organization and set strategic goals based on the best information available and widely-shared agreements. The result was a new, inter-organizational coordinating

group called the Family First Council. Along with all of the other organizations in Medina, the Community Services Center was asked to participate. The council has developed a widely-supported plan that asks all organizations to focus on these six goals:

1. Decrease behavior associated with mental illness
2. Increase school success and Kindergarten readiness
3. Reduce substance abuse
4. Reduce violence
5. Reduce delinquent behavior
6. Reduce teen pregnancy

Although the Community Services Center has always focused on emergency needs of adults and their families, these new priorities suggest that there are other community goals that perhaps the Center should pay attention to. Because of the nature of the Medina community, there is considerably more attention focused on children and youth than there is on the needs of the working poor.

Experiments with New Approaches

Since Chester Hitchcock became pastor of the Medina Church, he has offered a new type of community ministry that had not previously been tried in this area. He has developed expertise in the field of memory education, helping people to expand their capacity to remember information of various kinds. He has offered to the community basic memory courses and more specialized classes such as the Gospel Memory Course that helps people remember the structure and key themes of the Bible.

One of the civic leaders interviewed by our team told us that she had seen the signs at the church advertising this program and that she was attracted to it, feeling a personal need in this area. With limited advertising and promotion, a number of people from the community have enrolled in the courses that have been offered to date. Clearly this meets a need in the community that no other organization is currently addressing.

Medina is a largely middle class community and the community ministries of the Adventist Church in this area need to reach beyond the needs of the poor and also provide programs that meet the needs of the middle class. Recently, a number of educational events have been offered at the Community Services Center. These experiments demonstrate that this is an area of need in the community.

Summary

All four sources of information clearly show that there continue to be needs in the Medina community of the type that the Community Services Center has addressed for several decades—emergency social services for the working poor. The Center is

recognized as the primary provider of these services in Medina County and civic leaders continue to count on the Center to play this role. These needs are made more complicated by current issues in our country—economic dislocation and the lack of universal health care—which means that additional services are needed to adequately respond to these new aspects of need.

In addition, there are other needs in the Medina community that touch the lives of a far larger percentage of the population. These include needs related to children, youth and family life, and educational needs of middle class adults, most of whom have not completed a college degree, but are under constant demand to increase their knowledge and capacity in order to maintain effectiveness in their jobs, their role as parents, and other aspects of life. If the Medina Church wants to reach a wider audience, it needs to consider a wider range of needs than those already addressed by the Community Services Center.

Congregational Survey

A survey of the congregation was conducted at the Medina Seventh-day Adventist Church during the fall of 2007. A standard questionnaire was used that has been tested in large numbers of Adventist and other Christian congregations across the United States over the last ten years. It was created by the Center for Creative Ministry in collaboration with the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University and the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership based at Hartford Seminary. For many of the items comparative data is available from national surveys of Adventist churches as well as interfaith surveys of all denominations, especially the U.S. Congregational Life (USCL) Study.

Everyone who attended over several Sabbaths had an opportunity to fill out a questionnaire and participate in the survey. A total of 31 completed, usable surveys were returned. This is the equivalent of two-thirds of the active members who attend church regularly, although some of these responses were from people who are not baptized members in Medina. This is a good response rate and gives a strong indication that the information from this survey is reliable.

Demographics of the Congregation

A third of church members are over 62 years of age, while 30 percent are from the Baby Boom generation—44 to 62 years of age in 2008—and less than one in six are among the new generations under 44 years of age. This contrasts markedly with the age profile of the general population in Medina County, which is a significantly younger group than the Adventist membership. U.S. Census data was obtained to compare with the demographic items from the survey. (See top graph on page 30.)

Nearly seven in ten church members are women (69 percent), with a much smaller number of men. This is typical of Adventist and other Protestant churches in the U.S., but quite different from the more even balance of the general population both nationally and in Medina County. No one has ever come up with a satisfactory explanation of why women are more likely than men to join Protestant churches, but this is true throughout the country as well as in other Western nations.

Socio-economic Profile

The median annual household income for the congregation is about \$40,000 which is significantly less than the median for Medina County at more than \$62,000 per year. The membership includes twice as many people in low-income households (under \$25,000 per year) as the general population and less than a third as many in high-income households (\$75,000 or more per year). A number of church members could not currently afford to purchase a home in Medina County with the median value at \$178,500. (See bottom graph on page 30.)

Education and Family

The congregation is, on the whole, better educated than is the general population in Medina County. Twice as many church members have completed a college degree as is true among all adults over 25 years of age in the county. This is true despite the fact that Medina County residents are somewhat more likely to have higher education than is true across the country. (See top graph on page 31.)

Six in ten church members are married, including some married to spouses who are not members of the congregation. National surveys of Adventists suggest that it might be one in five of the married people. Never married, divorced single and separated adults are less likely to be members of the Medina Church than they are to be residents of Medina County, while there are more than twice the proportion of widowed singles in the congregation as among the general public. This is, in part, related to the age profile of the congregation, but it is also true that Protestant congregations are often skewed more toward married people than singles. (See bottom graph on page 31.)

Ethnicity and Immigration

Medina County is overwhelmingly made up of White, native-born Americans, as are many communities in the Midwest. Ethnic minorities make up only four percent of the general population, and immigrants just three percent. The congregation includes a much larger number of ethnic minorities: 21 percent are Black, 7 percent are Asian and 3 percent are from Other ethnic backgrounds. This is typical of Adventist churches that are usually far more diverse than the surrounding population where they are located. (See top graph on page 32.)

More than twice as many church members (7 percent) were born outside the United States as among the general population. Immigrants constitute the majority of baptisms in the Adventist Church in North America, making it a much more international group than the surrounding population. (See bottom graph on page 32.)

Church Attendance & Membership

The attendance pattern for the congregation is somewhat weaker than for the average Adventist church in America. There are more than twice the proportion of people who report that they attended twice out of the previous four Sabbaths and a significant decrease in the percentage who attended almost every Sabbath. Younger respondents, those under 40 years of age, are more likely to attend less often, as are those with a college degree. Respondents from low-income households and those who have volunteer responsibilities at church are more likely to be among those who attend every Sabbath. (See top graph on page 33.)

Three out of four respondents (77 percent) indicate that they are members of the Medina Church, while 23 percent are not baptized members of the Adventist Church. Considering that all of the respondents are adults, this is a significant level of attendance by non-members. It indicates that a number of prospective members are sitting in the pews each Sabbath. These are more likely to be people under 40 years of age. (See bottom graph on page 33.)

Spirituality and Witnessing

More than two-thirds of the people who attend Medina Church (68 percent) say that worship at this church helps to “a great extent” with their everyday lives. Another 21 percent report that it helps “some.” Only 11 percent indicate that it helps only a little or not at all. Surprisingly, those who do not attend as often are more likely to find it helpful to “a great extent.” (See top graph on page 34.)

More than three in five people in the congregation (61 percent) report that they have grown “much” in their faith over the last year, and another third (35 percent) say they have grown “some.” Just three percent indicate they had “no real growth.” Those 43 years of age and younger are more likely to have experienced “much” growth. The same is true for those from households where the income is less than \$50,000 a year. Older members are more likely to say they had only “some” growth, as are those from higher-income households. (See bottom graph on page 34.)

The congregation is more likely than the average Adventist Church in the U.S. to say that they had “much growth through this church.” The same is true for those who say they had much growth through some other group outside the Medina Church.

Six out of seven Medina respondents indicate that they are certain or very certain of eternal life. Only 14 percent express a degree of uncertainty or reservation on this item. There is a greater degree of assurance about salvation in this congregation than is true for Adventists across the country. (See top graph on page 35.)

All in all, the spiritual health of the Medina congregation is somewhat above average. At the same time Medina members are somewhat less likely to share their faith with acquaintances outside the congregation. Less than one in five (18 percent) say that “almost daily” they have information conversations with non-members about family or personal needs or spiritual topics, as compared to one in four Adventists in major metropolitan areas of the U.S. Medina members are also less likely to say this happens at least once a week, but much more likely to indicate that it occurs “once in a while.” Those respondents in Medina who are under 44 years of age are more likely to say it only rarely or never happens, while those over 62 years of age are more likely to say it only happens once in a while. (See bottom graph on page 35.)

Church Involvement

Six in ten of the people who attend Medina Church (61 percent) report that they currently have a volunteer role at church or in some related ministry. Those over 62 years of age are more likely to give this response, as are those without a college degree, those from lower-income households and those who attend less often. Those under 44 years of age are more likely to say they have no volunteer role, as are those with a college degree. This is a slightly higher percentage of involvement as compared to Adventist churches across the nation, although not statistically significant. (See top graph on page 36.)

The Medina congregation is markedly less involved in three other church activities. A little more than a third (38 percent) regularly participate in a Sabbath School class. Only one in four (24 percent) belongs to a small group, and just one in seven (14 percent) has given at least one Bible study to a non-member in the last year. Respondents who are over 62 years of age are more likely to participate in these activities. Those from lower-income households and with little education are more likely to participate in Sabbath School classes and small groups, while those from higher-income households are more likely to give Bible studies.

On each of these three measures, Medina is at about half the national norm for Adventist congregations. This may be related to the low level of membership increase in the congregation. These three activities are often tools in bringing new members into a church.

The majority of the people who attend Medina Church (57 percent) say that someone asked them personally to volunteer time in some ministry of the church during the last year. That is typical of the percentage reported in similar surveys in other Adventist churches. Those who already hold a volunteer role are more likely to be asked, as are those over 62 years of age. The majority of those under 44 years of age have not been asked. (See bottom graph on page 36.)

Evaluation of Sermons

Three out of four respondents (74 percent) indicate that the sermons preached at Medina Church do “very well” in Bible content and another 22 percent say that they do “fairly well.” Just four percent report that Bible content is weak. Those from lower-income households are more likely to say that this dimension of the preaching ministry is strong. (See top graph on page 37.)

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (63 percent) give the highest rating to the sermons’ “relevance to everyday life” and almost another third (30 percent) say they are “fairly” relevant. Just seven percent evaluate the preaching as not relevant. Younger members

are more likely to give a positive evaluation to this aspect of the preaching, as are those who attend church less often.

The majority of worship attenders (52 percent) report that the sermons at Medina Church do “very well” in encouraging spiritual growth. Another 41 percent say they do “fairly well.” Only seven percent disagree. It is those under 63 years of age and those with college degrees who are more likely to give high marks on how well sermons encourage spiritual growth.

The numbers are the same on how well the preaching at Medina Church does in stimulating thought. Again, it is those under 63 years of age and those with college degrees who are more likely to give a positive evaluation of this aspect of the sermons.

Almost half of the congregation (48 percent) say that the sermons “do very well” at encouraging personal evangelism and another 45 percent indicate that they do “fairly well” in this aspect. Just seven percent of the respondents think the preaching does not accomplish this outcome at all. Younger members and those with college degrees are more likely to be positive on this item.

Where the sermons at Medina Church get the lowest rating is in addressing social problems. Only 41 percent of respondents indicate that they “do very well” at addressing social problems. Some 15 percent the listeners report that the sermons are poor in this aspect of preaching. Baby Boomers, 44 to 62 years of age, are more likely to be negative, while the younger respondents are more likely to be positive.

The evaluation of the sermons at Medina Church is about the same as has been found in most Adventist churches across the country. Both the strongest element—Bible content—and the weakest element—addressing social problems—are very typical of the evaluations of Adventist preaching nationwide.

Music Preferences

Two-thirds of the respondents prefer traditional hymns for worship. Each respondent was asked to select two preferences from the list of nine types of music and 40 percent also selected praise music or choruses. A third of the congregation prefers gospel music, and almost as many (30 percent) like contemporary Christian music. There is a definite age dynamic in these responses, with a strong preference among those over 62 years of age for traditional hymns and the majority of the younger members preferring other kinds of music. (See bottom graph on page 37.)

Smaller numbers expressed a preference for classical music (13 percent), jazz (10 percent) and Jesus Rock (7 percent). The numbers are too small to indicate the demographics of these segments, yet clearly there is considerable diversity in the kinds

of music that Medina members would prefer to have as a part of their worship services. Just 3 percent indicated that they did not have a preference.

Perceptions of Medina Church

More than nine out of ten respondents (93 percent) agree that “this congregation is warm and friendly.” Both young and old, poor and affluent, active and inactive members agree on this. Not a single respondent disagrees, although a handful say, “I am not sure.” Perhaps these are newcomers not yet ready to give an opinion. Clearly those attend Medina Church find it an affable fellowship. (See top graph on page 38.)

A very similar, overwhelming majority (86 percent) agree that Medina “is a grace-oriented church.” Only one respondent disagrees. Again, virtually all demographic segments are in agreement.

Three out of four in the congregation agree that, “The church has a clear sense of mission and purpose.” Just seven percent disagree, while 18 percent are not sure. Those over 62 and under 44 are more likely to agree, while those 62 to 44 years of age (the Baby Boomers) are more likely to disagree. Those who attend church less often are also more likely to sense a mission-driven dynamic in the congregation.

More than two-thirds of respondents (68 percent) believe that “our activities strengthen personal relationships among the congregation.” Only seven percent disagree, while the remaining 25 percent are not sure. Those under 63 years of age are more likely to agree, as are those with a college degree and those who attend church less often.

The same percentage agree that “church programs are well-organized,” while just four percent disagree and the remaining 28 percent are not sure. Young respondents, under 44 years of age, are more likely to agree, while the middle-aged are more likely to disagree.

A little more than half of the congregation (54 percent) say “new people are easily assimilated into the church,” while fully a quarter disagree and 21 percent are uncertain. Members over 62 years of age are more likely to think that the congregation easily accepts newcomers and makes them feel at home in the church. Those who disagree are from all demographic segments.

Just 39 percent think that the members are excited about the future of Medina Church. This the lowest-ranking item among the perceptions of the church tested in this survey. Only seven percent disagree and think that members are **not** excited about the future of the church, but the majority of the congregation (54 percent) are not sure. Younger respondents are more likely to be excited about the future of the church, while middle-aged respondents (Baby Boomers) are more likely to be negative.

Overall, the members of the Medina congregation have large positive perceptions of their church—some more positive than is typical for Adventist churches across America—but there is also a level of concern about getting new members on board and about the future of the congregation.

Sense of Belonging

More than nine out of ten of the people in the congregation (92 percent) say they have a strong sense of belonging to Medina Church. Those from low-income households are more likely to say that they not only have a strong sense of belonging, but it is also growing. The same is true for those over 62 and those younger than 44, while the middle-aged group (Baby Boomers) is more likely to report that while their sense of belong is strong, it is “not as strong as in the past.” (See the bottom graph on page 38.)

No respondent indicated that he or she did **not** have a strong sense of belonging to Medina Church. But, seven percent said they do not know on way or the other. Some of these may be newcomers who see themselves as “just visiting.” This segment is too small to provide reliable demographic data for these individuals.

Involvement in Decision-making

Nearly nine out of ten individuals in the congregation (89 percent) feel that they have been given the opportunity to participate in making important decisions for Medina Church. The majority (52 percent) indicate that, “I have the opportunity and occasionally get involved.” Middle-aged Baby Boomers and those who have volunteer roles in the congregation are more likely to give this response. Those who “often participate” (15 percent of the total) are more likely to be over 62 years of age. (See the top graph on page 39.)

Nearly a quarter of the congregation (22 percent) report that they have the opportunity, but “don’t usually get involved.” Those from low-income households are more likely to be in this category.

Only a handful in the Medina congregation (7 percent) feel that they have been denied the opportunity to participate and are unhappy about it. This group is too small to extract reliable demographics.

Overall Evaluation

The respondents were asked to evaluate ten basic aspects of the Medina Church, using a five-point scale from “poor” to “excellent” for each item. For the purposes of this report, the “excellent” percentages include those who selected the top two ratings, the “poor” percentages include those who selected the bottom two ratings and the

“uncertain” percentages include those who selected the middle response (number three).

Every respondent—100 percent—rate the Medina **Community Service Center** and the **parking** at the Medina Church as excellent. This extends across all demographic segments. (See bottom graph on page 39.)

More than four out of five members (81 percent) say the **pastor’s leadership** is excellent, while just 8 percent indicate that it is poor and the other 11 percent are uncertain. Those under 44 years of age and attenders who are not church members are more likely to say the pastor’s leadership is excellent, as are those from the lowest-income and the highest-income households. Middle-aged and middle-income respondents are more likely to be critical of the pastor’s leadership.

An equal number (81 percent) evaluate **worship** as excellent, while only four percent evaluate it as poor. Again, those under 44 years of age are more likely to say the pastor’s leadership is excellent, as are those from the lowest-income and the highest-income households. The number who evaluate worship as poor is too small to calculate reliable demographics.

Nearly two thirds of the members (65 percent) rate **help for individuals** as excellent. Just four percent rate this aspect of Medina Church as poor. Respondents under 62 years of age are more likely to rate it as excellent, as are those from households with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more and those who attend church less often. The number who evaluate help for individuals as poor is too small to calculate reliable demographics.

A majority of the congregation (54 percent) rate the **church board** as excellent, while just four percent rate the church board as poor. Those over 62 years of age and those under 44 are more likely to rate the board as excellent, as are those who attend church less often. The number rating the board as poor is too small to extract reliable demographics.

Nearly half of the respondents (46 percent) indicate that **small group ministries** are excellent, while nearly a quarter (23 percent) rate small groups at Medina Church as poor. Those from low-income households are more likely to evaluate small groups as excellent, as are those with only a secondary diploma or less education. Middle-aged Baby Boomers are more likely to rate small groups as poor.

A third of the members (35 percent) rate the **evangelism activities** of Medina Church as excellent, while 23 percent rate it as poor and the largest number (42 percent) are uncertain. Younger members, under 44 years of age, are more likely to give evangelism an “excellent” rating, as are those with a college degree and those who attend less often. Middle-aged Baby Boomers are more likely to rate the evangelism activities of the church negatively.

The same number (35 percent) rate **children's ministries** as excellent and poor (23 percent). Younger respondents, under 44 years of age, are more likely to think children's ministries at Medina Church are excellent, as are those from higher-income households. Middle-aged Baby Boomers are more likely to say that children's ministries are poor.

Half the congregation report that the **youth group** at Medina Church is "poor," while only 12 percent say that it is "excellent," 38 percent are uncertain. Middle-aged Baby Boomers are more likely to be negative about the youth group, as are those with only a secondary education. The number who think the youth group is excellent is too small to provide reliable demographics.

Outreach—What Works?

The congregation was asked, "What have you observed to be the most effective method for bringing new members into this local church?" They were given a list of 13 of the most common outreach and evangelism methods used by the Adventist Church as well as an "other" choice with a blank that could be filled in. With repeated use in a number of surveys, this has proved to be one of the most interesting ways to identify what kind of outreach and church growth methods really work in the Adventist Church today.

"Personal contact with friends, relatives, etc.," was the item most commonly selected by the respondents. A solid majority of the congregation (54 percent) picked this item, which is labeled **Friendship Evangelism** in the graphics, as the best way to add new members to Medina Church. Those with a college degree are more likely to mention this item. The same is true for people from higher-income households. (See page 40.)

Two in five members (39 percent) have seen new members come into the Medina Church from **community service**. Those over 62 years of age are more likely to make this observation, so this may be something that happened more in the past than currently. For example, a report on the Medina Community Service Center in the April 19, 1973, issue of the *Review & Herald* (currently named the *Adventist Review*) states that "at least 12 persons from several families who have had contacts with the Center are attending the Adventist church on a regular basis and are planning to be baptized. The Center can count at least ten persons who have already been baptized as a result of their contacts with it."

More than one in five members (22 percent) report that **small group ministries** have been effective in bringing new members into Medina Church. Middle-aged Baby Boomers are more likely to mention small groups.

Almost as many (18 percent in each case) selected **Revelation Seminars** and **concerts** as methods that they have seen as effective in bringing in new members into Medina Church. These responses are spread evenly across all demographic segments of the congregation.

One in seven respondents (14 percent in each case) say that **community health programs** and **public evangelism** have each brought new members into the Medina Church. Again, these responses are spread across all demographic segments and not associated with any particular segment or segments.

Personal Bible studies and **literature** were each selected by about one in ten respondents (11 percent in each case) as methods they have observed to bring new members into the church. The numbers involved are too small to extract reliable demographics.

A handful of respondents also mentioned **youth and children's ministries** (7 percent), **media ministries** (4 percent), **door to door witnessing** (4 percent) and **other methods** of outreach (4 percent). In each case, the numbers involved are too small to extract reliable demographics.

The Medina congregation is more likely than the average Adventist church in the country to say that Friendship Evangelism, community service, small groups, Revelation Seminars, concerts, community health programs and literature have been successful in bringing new members in this local church. The members are less likely to see public evangelism, personal Bible studies, youth and children's ministry, media ministries and "other" methods as effective here. The difference is marked when it comes to community service. Medina members are four times as likely to say that community service has brought new members into this congregation as compared to the average Adventist congregation in the U.S.

Visibility in the Community

Three out of five people in the congregation (59 percent) say that the Adventist Church is "somewhat known and occasionally visible in the news media" in Medina County. Older members, over 62 years of age, are more likely to give this response. Only one in ten indicate that it is "very well known and often visible in the news media," while nearly a third (31 percent) are of the opinion that it is "not very well known and almost never mentioned in the news media." Younger members, those under 44 years of age, and those from households where the annual income is \$50,000 or more are more likely to give the more negative response. (See top graph on page 41.)

This congregation is more convinced that the Adventist Church has some visibility in this area than were the Ohio Conference members in the Columbus metro area in a survey conducted in 2000. They are somewhat less positive about the visibility of the Church here than were the members in the Dayton area in a survey conducted in 2006, but clearly more positive than the Adventists in Pittsburgh and three major metropolitan areas along the east coast—Baltimore, Philadelphia and Newark. This response is clearly related to the involvement over the years of the Medina Church in the local

community. It also indicates that more needs to be done to achieve greater community visibility despite all that has been accomplished in community service.

Where Do Members Live?

Half the congregation live in the same Zip Code where the church is located, an area that includes the entire town of Medina. Another 20 percent live in Medina County. Less than a third (30 percent) live outside the county. Older members, those over 62 years of age, and those from low-income households, are more likely to live in the town of Medina, while younger members (those under 44 years of age) are more likely to live in other areas of Medina County, and middle-aged Baby Boomers are more likely to live outside the county. (See bottom graph on page 41.)

The Medina congregation is much more likely to live in the community than is the typical Adventist congregation across the country. Typically the majority of members live outside the community where the church is located and this is a major barrier to effective community service and evangelism in many churches. Medina Church is well positioned for an effective community-based ministry.

Community Involvement by Members

One measure of how involved individual church members may be in the community is the extent of their membership in service clubs and other civic groups in the area. Just seven percent of the Medina congregation report that they belong to one or more such community organizations. Older members, those over 62 years of age, are more likely to belong to a civic group, as are those from higher-income households. (See top graph on page 42.)

This is a little less than the percentage found in similar surveys in other Adventist churches across the country. That fact is somewhat surprising given the exceptional involvement in community service on the part of this church. Two realities may be revealed in these data. (1) The older generation that started a tradition of community service in the 1960s may not have been successful in passing this heritage on to younger members. (2) Community involvement has been invested entirely in the Community Service Center to the exclusion of other kinds of participation in community groups. To the extent that either of these possibilities is true, it undermines the missional effectiveness of the Medina Church.

Needs in the Community

To get an idea of the congregation's sense of community needs in Medina, respondents were asked, "What is the major need in the community that the Adventist Church should address?" Among those who responded to this open-ended question, the largest number (39 percent) mentioned needs related to health and poverty; "employment ...

the homeless ... health care ... 12-step groups [to help alcoholics, addicts, etc.] ... disabilities.” Nearly a third (31 percent) listed spiritual needs, with one expressing concern for “those who have left the church.” (See bottom graph on page 42.)

A small number in the congregation (11 percent) mentioned other needs, including “family and marriage” issues and the needs of prisoners. One in six (15 percent) said they did not know enough to respond to this question, which indicates that despite the extensive community involvement of the Medina Church, some members are still not very engaged.

Willing to Get Involved

Members were also asked which specific community ministries they might be willing to get personally involved in. A list of 16 possibilities was included in the questionnaire and respondents were told to “check as many as you wish.” There was also an open-ended item for other suggestions, not on the list.

More than three out of four individuals (77 percent) selected at least one ministry from the list or wrote a suggestion. Many respondents selected more than one ministry from the list. A few checked off several items. All of this is good evidence that most of the members in Medina Church are ready to get involved in a continuing and even greater impact on the community.

The largest response (33 percent in each case) is among those willing to help with a ***support group for people who need to reduce weight*** and those willing to join a ***disaster response team***. Perhaps predictably, middle-aged Baby Boomers are more likely to be interested in the weight management program as are those from middle-income households and those who attend church less often. All demographic segments were equally interested in disaster response. (See page 43.)

Nearly a third of the respondents (30 percent) expressed a willingness to help with a ***support group for people with diabetes***. Younger members, those under 44 years of age, and those from lower-middle income households are more likely to be interested in this activity.

More than a quarter of the members (27 percent) say they would like to assist with ***health education classes*** across the board. All demographic segments are equally likely to be interested in providing health education classes to the community.

Almost a quarter of the congregation (23 percent in each case) are ready to get involved with three other programs—a ***free clinic*** for those with no health insurance, ***helping people find jobs***, and ***health screening events***. Good Neighbor House in Dayton provides a model for the free clinic concept, while good resource materials are available for the other programs. Younger members, those under 44 years of age, are particularly

interested in the free clinic and health screening concepts. All demographic segments are equally interested in a job-finding service for the unemployed.

One in five respondents (20 percent in each case) are interested in providing a **drop-in center for neighborhood teenagers** (like Teen Esteem in Cleveland) and **after-school tutoring for underprivileged children** in the community. Members from low-income households are more likely to be interested in the idea of a tutoring program, which may indicate that some families have an interest for their own children or grandchildren, as well as neighbors.

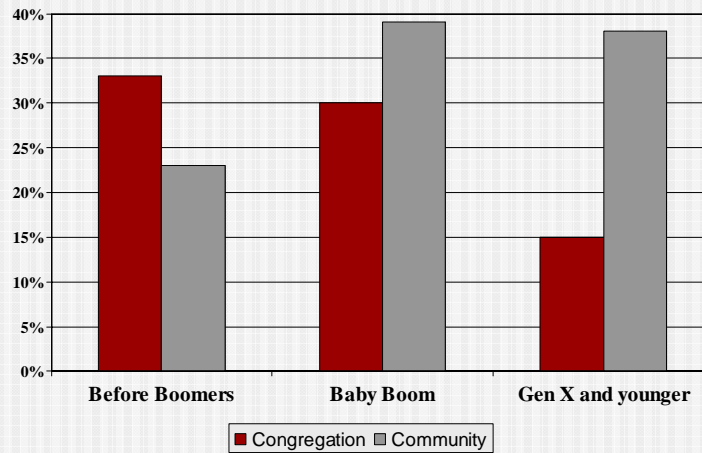
Almost as many people (17 percent in each case) are willing to get involved in four other possibilities—a **stress management** program, a **thrift store**, basic **job-skill training classes** and a **homeless shelter**. Older members, over 62 years of age, are more likely to want to get involved in a stress management seminar. Middle-aged members are more likely to get involved in a thrift store, and younger members, those under 44 years of age, are more likely to want to get involved in a homeless shelter. All demographic segments are equally interested in offering job training classes.

Smaller numbers indicate they are interested in four other community ministries. None of the 16 ministries on the list received zero responses and one or two members wrote down additional ideas.

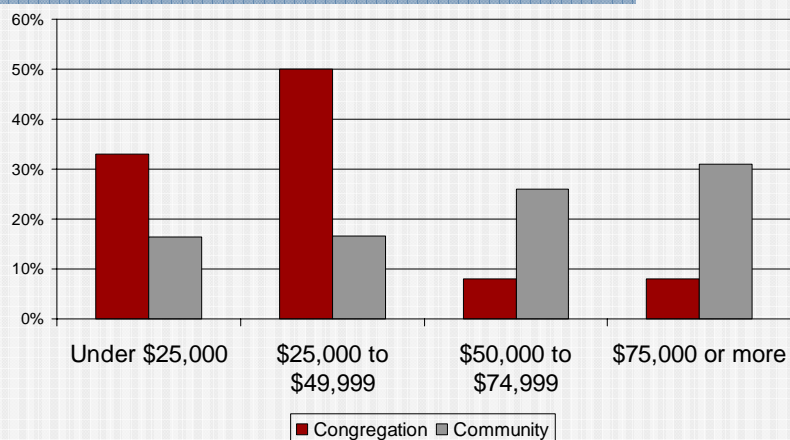
Summary

Medina Church has a strong tradition of community mission embodied particularly in the Community Service Center, and this can clearly be seen in the response of the congregation in this survey. An above-average number of the members live in the community and are interested in getting involved in community ministries. There is a consensus that the Adventist Church is somewhat more visible in Medina than is true on most Adventist congregations. At the same time, there are issues that must be faced if the Medina Church is to continue and build upon its heritage of community involvement. The demographics of the congregation are tilted toward older people on retirement incomes. Outside of the Community Service Center, the members have little other involvement in the community and many of them are not involved in the center. There is evidence that the center did result in church growth in the past, but that may no longer be occurring at the same rate. The Medina Church has many strengths, but it also has to address some weaknesses. The group that started the Community Service Center 40 years ago is now aging and there is a real need to renew this heritage and pass it on to new generations of Medina members.

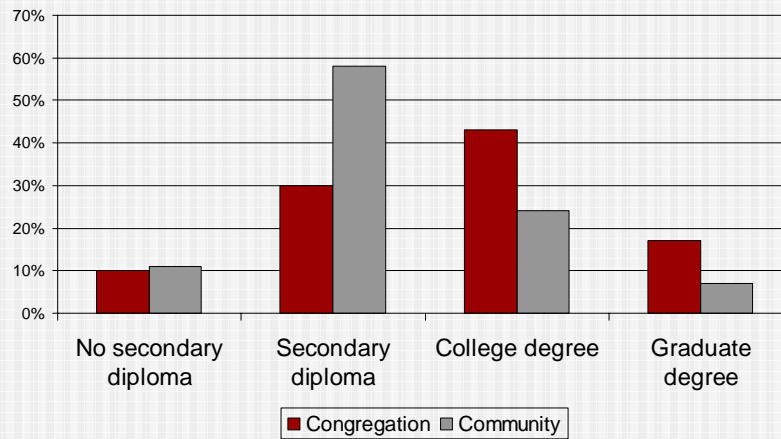
Age groups by generation



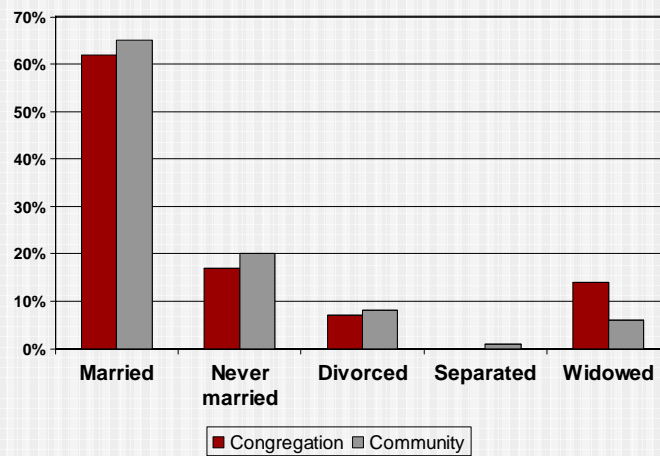
Annual household income



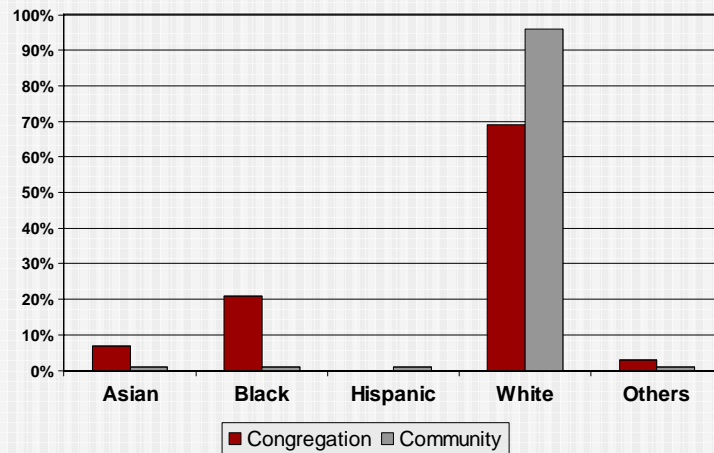
Level of education



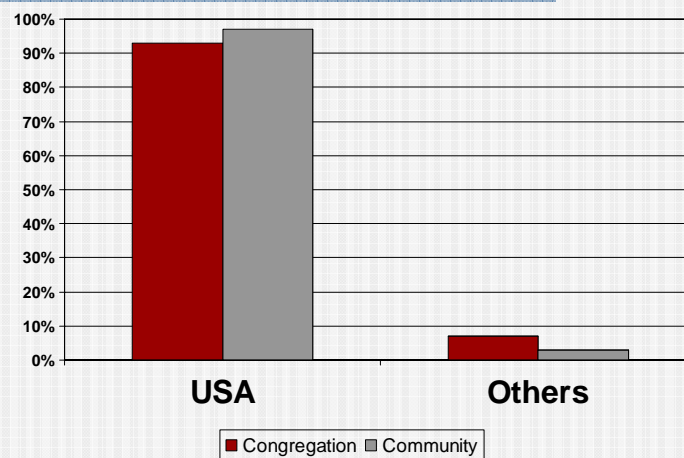
Marital status



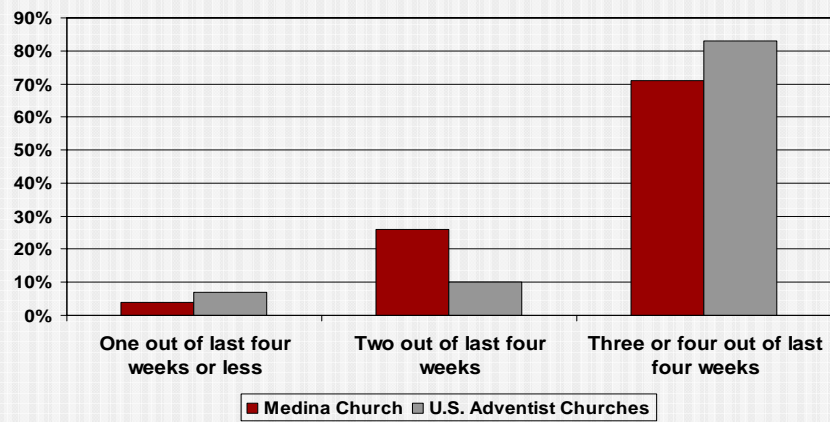
Ethnicity



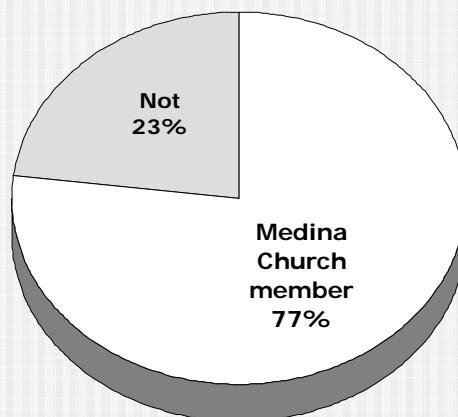
Citizenship at birth



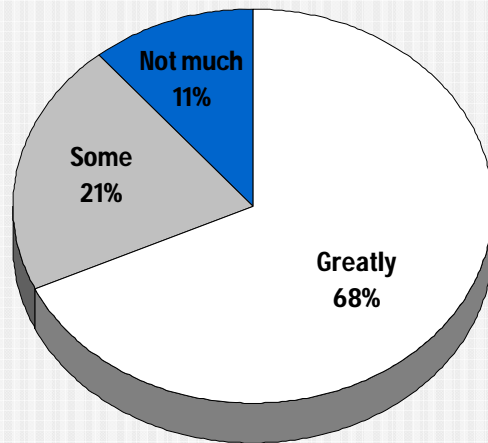
Attendance



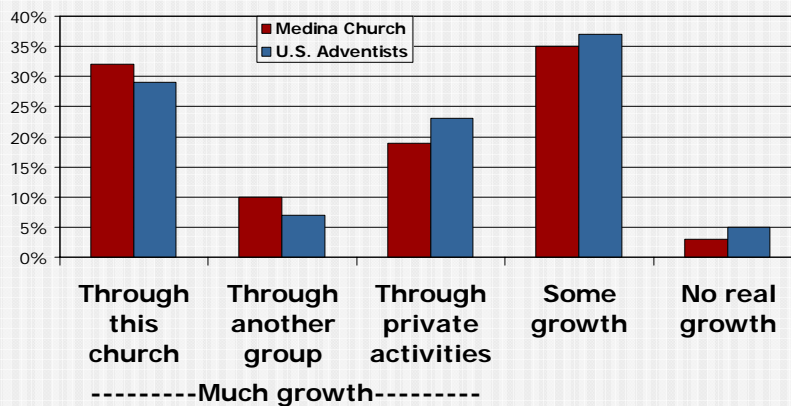
Church Membership



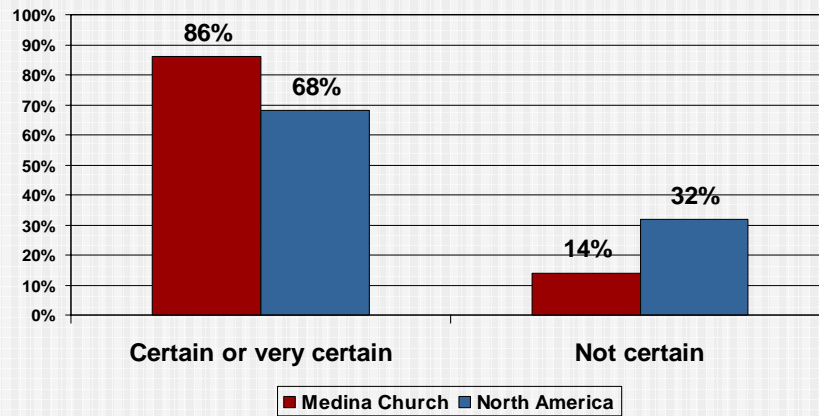
How much does worship at Medina Church help you with everyday life?



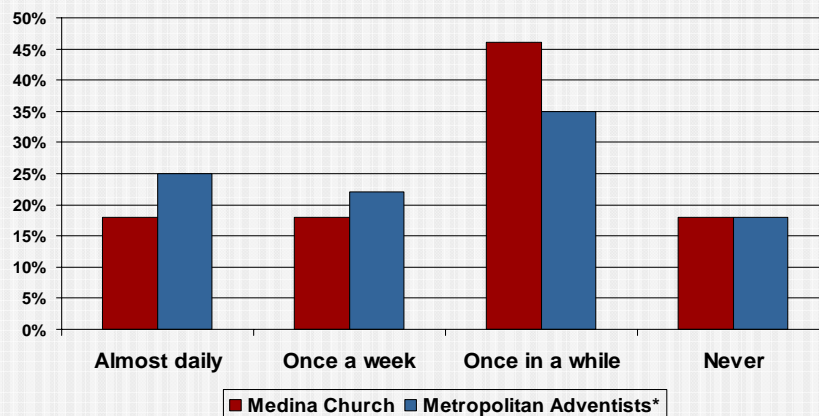
How much have you grown in your faith in the last year?



Assurance of Salvation

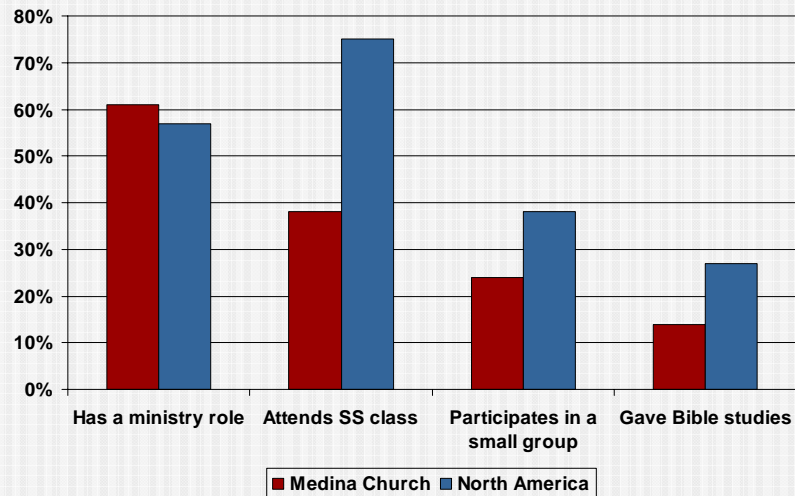


Conversations with Coworkers about their Personal or Family Needs or Spiritual Topics

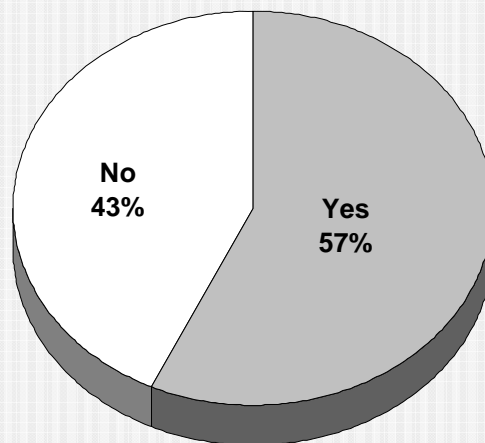


*Mission in Metropolis, p 110

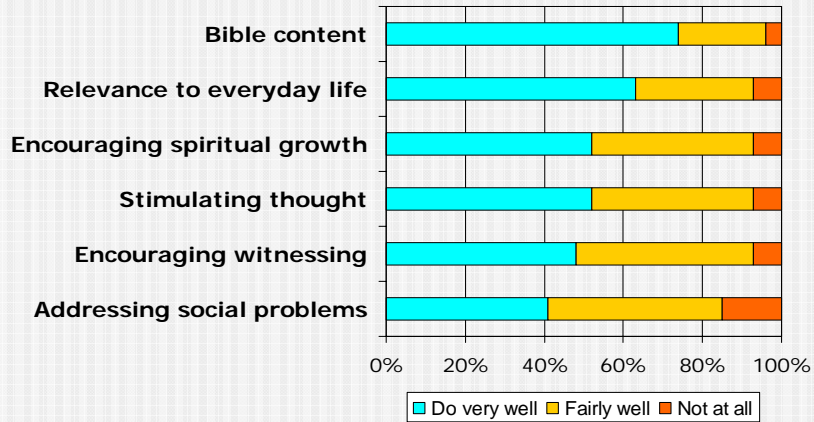
Church Involvement



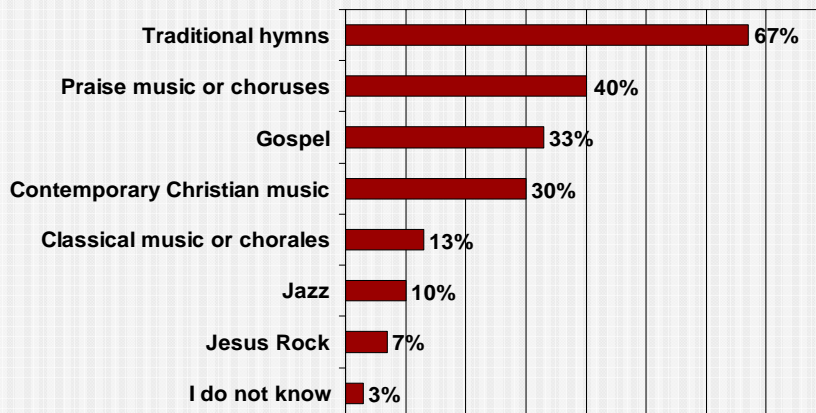
Has anyone asked you personally to volunteer time in the last year?



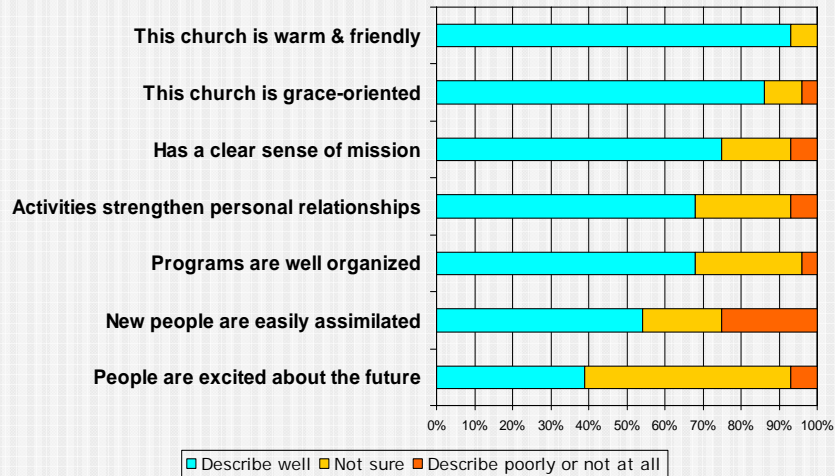
Evaluation of Sermons



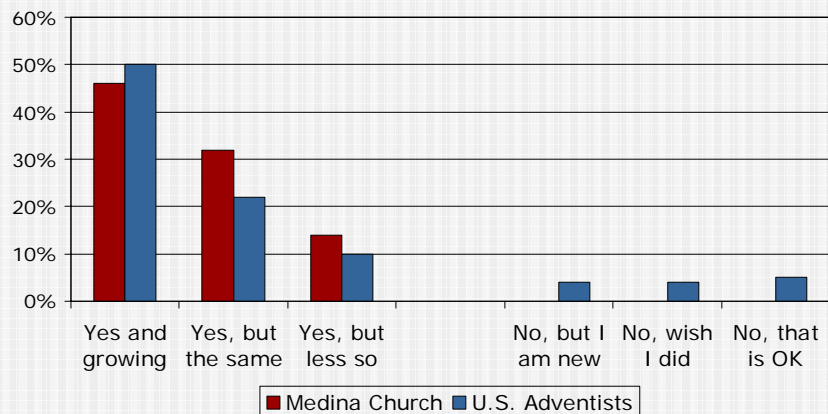
Music Preferences



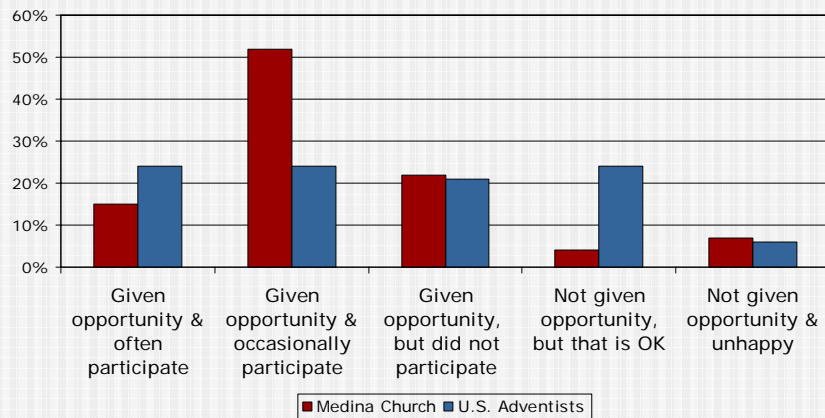
Perceptions of Medina Church



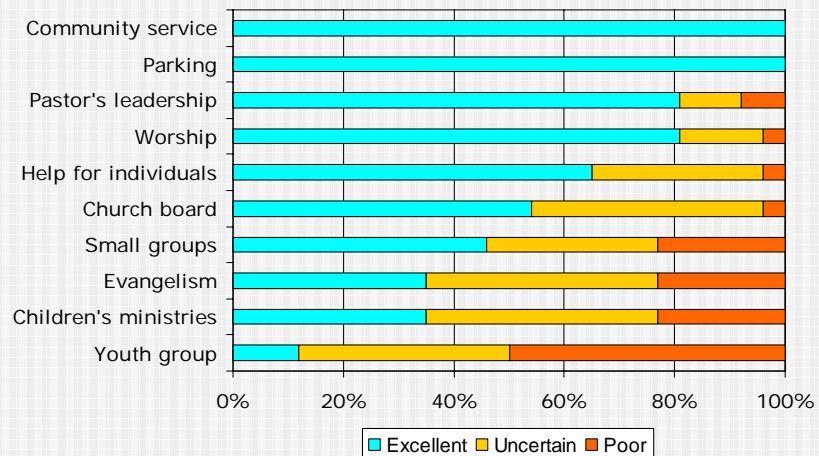
Strong sense of belonging to Medina Church



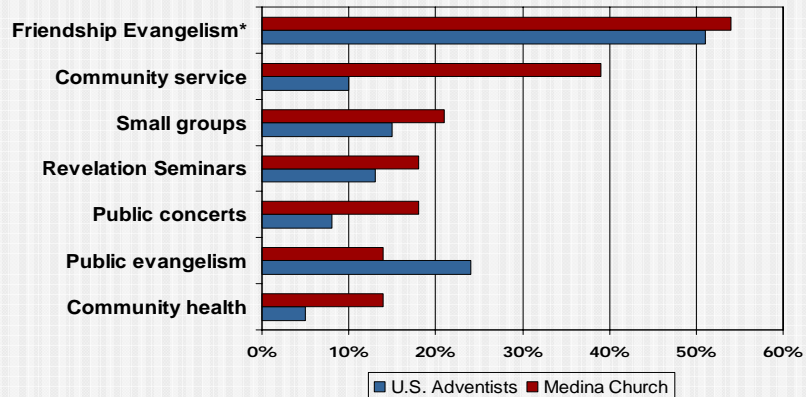
Involvement in making important decisions



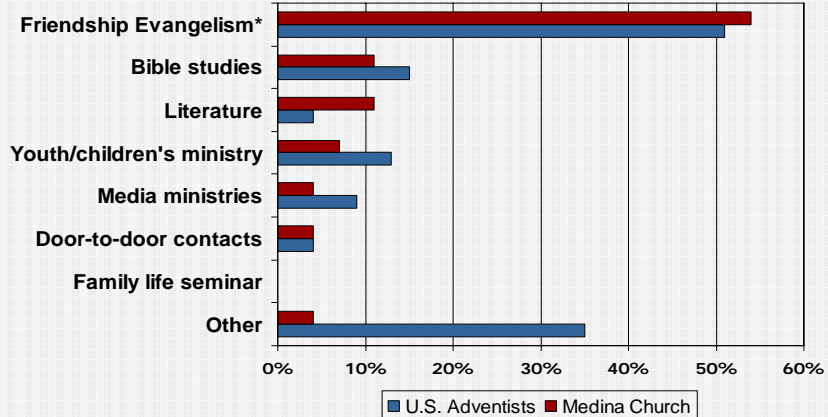
Overall Evaluation



Observed to be Most Effective Methods to Bring in New Members

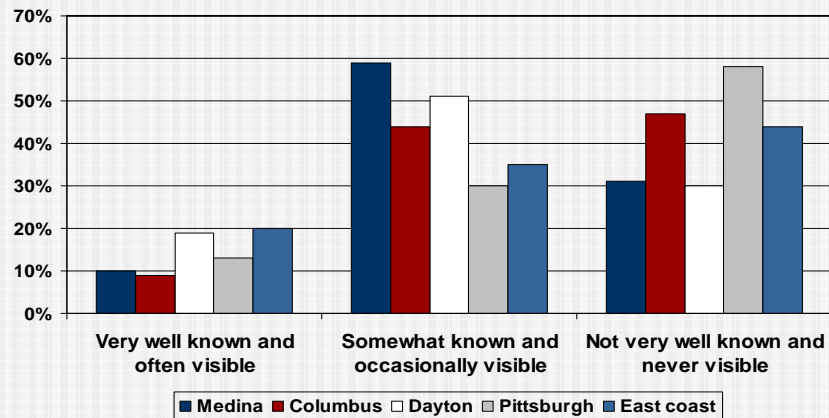


*Personal contact by
relatives, work associates,
acquaintances

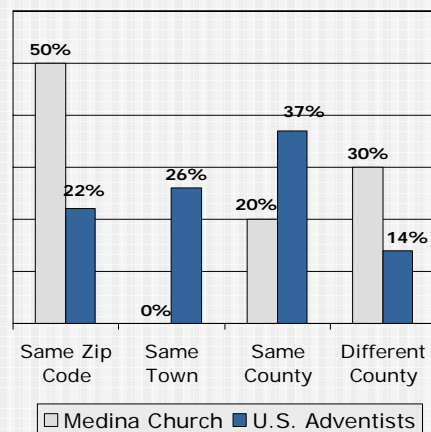


*Personal contact by
relatives, work associates and
acquaintances

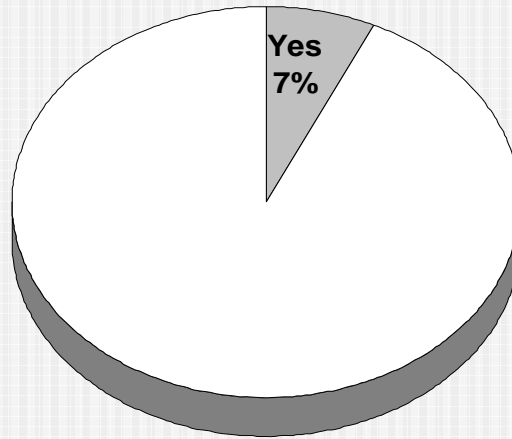
Visibility of the Adventist Church in this Metropolitan Area



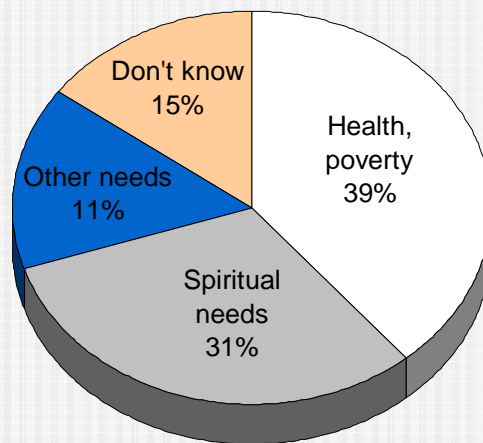
How Far is Your Home from the Congregation You Attend?



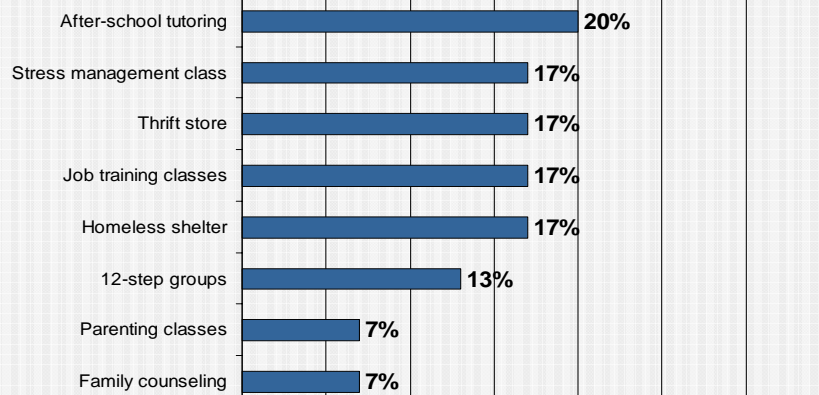
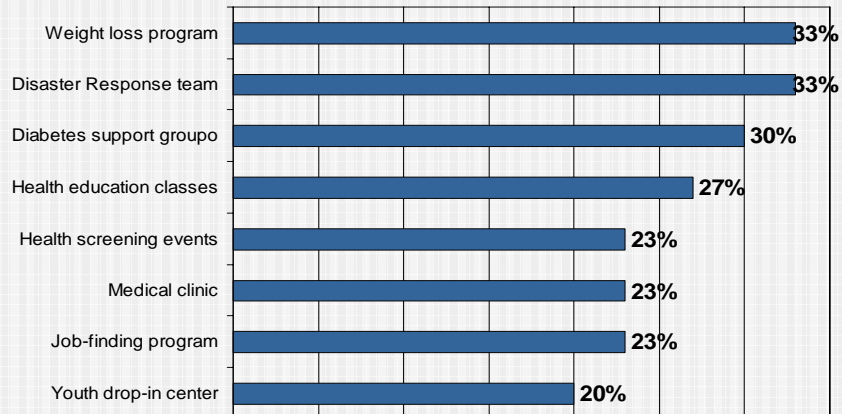
Do you belong to a service club or civic group of some kind?



What major need in the community should the church address?



Community Ministries: Willing to get Personally Involved



Recommendations

Based on the goals of this study (see page 2) and the information that was gathered from many sources, the following recommendations are presented to the Medina Seventh-day Adventist Church. Following are some recommendations specifically for the board of the Community Services Center.

1. The Medina Church has declined in active membership and needs to give attention to church growth. I commend the evangelistic strategy developed by Pastor Hitchcock (see Appendix A) and urge the church leaders to implement this strategy.

2. A Reconnecting Ministry needs to be started to make contact with the inactive members identified in the analysis of the membership (see page 2). Resources and training are available from the Center for Creative Ministry, the official resource center of the Adventist denomination for Reconnecting Ministry, at www.creativeministry.org or (800) 272-4664.

3. Research shows that growth in Adventist churches today is related to five key items: (A) community involvement, (B) rich spirituality, (C) intentionality, (D) a positive atmosphere, and (E) activities designed for the non-churched on Sabbath. (See *Adventist Congregations Today*, chapter 2, republished in the November 2004 issue of *Ministry*.) Certainly, the Medina Church rates high on the first factor and the survey indicators related to spirituality are also positive. (See pages 19, 34-35.) It appears that the lack of growth may be related to the last three items. Recommendation 1, above, relates to intentionality. Recommendations 4 and 5 relate to the last two items.

4. The vast majority of those who attend Medina Church say that it is warm and friendly, a grace-oriented congregation with a clear sense of mission; that church activities strengthen personal relationships among the participants and programs are well-organized. (See pages 22, 38.) But almost half of the congregation are concerned that it is not easy for newcomers to be welcomed into the fabric of fellowship and less than 40 percent say that the members are excited about the future of the church. Combined with the demographics of the congregation (See pages 17, 30.), it is likely that this situation is a result of “the graying of Adventism.” Medina Church needs to engage new generations if it is to grow and continue to sustain its mission in the community. There are regular attenders in their 20s and 30s, but they are less likely to be church members, less likely to be involved in church activities, less likely to volunteer at the Community Services Center and less likely to be enthusiastic about the current activities of the church and the center. I recommend that a “New Generations Task Force” be appointed with most of the members under 45 years of age, and that it be asked to come up with some specific plans to connect with and relate to younger adults.

5. Study should be given to the possibility of adopting either one of the two following possibilities for Sabbath evangelism. (A) A “Friend Day” or similar special

event could be organized once a quarter or even once a month when church members are all challenged to invite their unchurched friends. There is an advertizing package available from the Center for Creative Ministry for a variety of themes as well as other resources for this concept. (B) A “seeker service” designed specifically for the unchurched, secular people in the community could be offered on Sabbath afternoons, either at the church or at the Community Services Center.

6. According to the observations of church members, personal contact is the major source of new members at Medina Church. (See pages 19-20, 25, 35-36, 40.) This is true at almost all Adventist churches and in other denominations. Because of the age of many in the congregation and the activity patterns they have established over several years, they have less and less opportunity to establish personal relationships with new people who might become potential church members. The working poor who are served at the Community Services Center are not likely to join the Medina congregation. It is too middle class and reserved in its style of worship. These people are much more likely to feel at home in the Assembly of God or a service that makes considerable use of praise songs and contemporary Christian music. The non-member volunteers at the Community Services Center are mostly strong members at other Christian churches in Medina, simply because that has been the source for recruiting volunteers for some time. Of course, the primary reason for the Community Services Center is not to recruit new members for the church, but to serve the community. Nonetheless, for this ministry to contribute to church growth, some changes must be made at the Center and in its activities in order to bring the Medina Church in contact with a larger number of potential new members.

7. It is recommended that “Friendship Evangelism” training be presented to the entire congregation to increase the effectiveness of the members in this important activity. A curriculum entitled *Friend 2 Friend* is available from the Center for Creative Ministry or AdventSource.

8. The Medina Church needs to “open a new front” to the community, following up on the successful experiments to date with memory courses and other seminars designed to meet felt needs in the community. The Community Services Center, the church facilities and other locations all need to be used to bring these events closer to the people. A regular schedule of events needs to be developed well in advance and a significant investment must be made in advertising and promoting these events. Through the Community Services Center, the Medina Church has developed a reputation for serving the emergency needs of the working poor in Medina County, but the population is overwhelmingly middle class and many people will never be touched by these activities or even hear of them. (See page 12.) New services aimed at the middle class must be added to what the Center is already doing.

9. There are additional things that the Medina Church ought to do to increase its visibility by taking advantage of its positive reputation and history in the community, as well as the services it provides to the community:

9-A. It is recommended that the church consider installing a new sign on the east side of the church property, facing toward the traffic that comes in the access road there to the new office buildings, the credit union, etc. It should be a sign with the new electronic panels that make it easy to post several messages that change every few seconds and change those messages even on a daily basis. Unlike the traffic along the main highway in front of the church, the traffic on the side road travels at a slower speed which makes it easier for them to read the messages posted.

9-B. It is recommended that a Communication Task Force be appointed, involving any members with education or professional experience in media or marketing, as well as others. This group should develop a positioning statement for the church and design themes and frameworks to be used in all advertising and promotion of the various activities of the church. Consistent themes based on a carefully-thought-out “marketing position” for the church are essential to communication efforts that cut through the clutter and get to a significant number of the residents of Medina.

Appendix A

Ohio Evangelism Paradigm

The Medina Church is using this Evangelism Paradigm in these ways:

First, Know Yourself—*Grow deeper in devotion to Christ . . .* There is no better way to grow deeper in our devotion to Christ than to know His word. We therefore have been holding Gospel Memory Classes for those who want this spiritual strength and have a number of members who have become quite good at locating things in the Gospels.

Second, Know Your World—*Read, research, listen . . .* As the pastor, I have preached sermon series on post-modern issues, as well as a series on reaching the Muslims in our community. We are also in the process of a community study program with Monte Sahlin, to discover the uniqueness of Medina. Monte plans to schedule a Sabbath with us when he can share our findings with the congregation and give us some suggestions.

Enter Your World—*Volunteer, join, become involved . . .* Medina has had an awesome Community Services Center for years. Now we are expanding our service ministry at the Center to include seminars that meet the needs of a wider group of people in our community. These seminars include “How to Save Your Mortgage,” taught by a local realtor; “How to Improve Your Health,” taught by a local chiropractor; “How to Get Back Into the Workforce after Having a Felony Charge,” taught by a local attorney; “How to Save Money in a Tight Economy,” taught by a local financial advisor. Pastor Hitchcock will be teaching memory and speed-reading, two seminars that seem to attract those who are interested in self-improvement.

Serve Your World—*Meet needs, engage in social causes, compassion ministries, justice and humanitarian issues . . .* We have adopted a family through a new ministry that is in the area. Ours is a single mother with a 14-year-old-son. We remember holidays, birthdays and special occasions as well as helping them with special needs. This week they got a new house through Habitat for Humanity. We will be providing them with a lawnmower.

Tell Your World—*Personal witness, Bible study, public proclamation . . .* Here the major focus is our Sabbath programs. We are focusing on variety and quality in our worship service. Jesus said, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me.” We are trimming our service to exclude in-house items such as announcements and engage the congregation with Christ-centered, Christ-focused experiences from the introduction to the benediction.

Disciple Your World—*Teach, nurture, and mentor . . .* This again, involves the Gospel Memory Course. We are trying to promote a new paradigm for our church as, “The Home of the Gospel Memory Course.” It is the hope that eventually Christians of other denominations will come to us for Bible Memory training, like they go to John Maxwell Seminars, etc.

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