



Personal Ministries

in Seventh-day Adventist Congregations Today

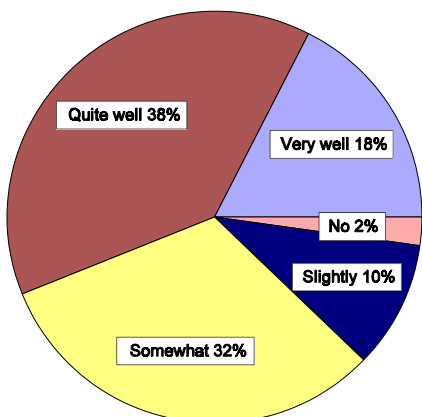
The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is one of 41 faiths participating in the largest single study of local, religious groups ever conducted. Data collection was timed to coincide with the U.S. Census during the year 2000 and the results are now being released in a series of reports under the general title Faith Communities Today (FACT). The reports on the Adventist Church are prepared by the Center for Creative Ministry in coordination with the interfaith reports published by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

Adventist congregations have traditionally seen themselves as missionary units with the purpose of outreach to the local community. Each member is expected to take part in missionary work. This has come to be called "Personal Ministries." Data reported here provide an overview of these ministries at the beginning of the 21st century.

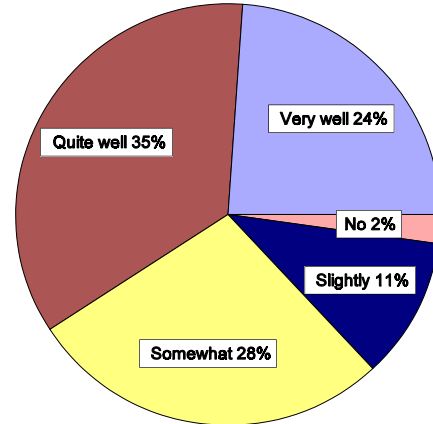
All percentages displayed in this fact sheet are the percentages of local churches reporting a specific response. These data are based on a 12-page questionnaire completed by the pastor or an elder in a random sample of 412 local churches.

The majority (56%) of Adventist congregations can be "very well" or "quite well" described as having a clear sense of mission and purpose report local leaders. Another third (32%) are "somewhat" mission-driven, while one in eight (12%) report little or no sense of mission.

Our congregation has a clear sense of mission

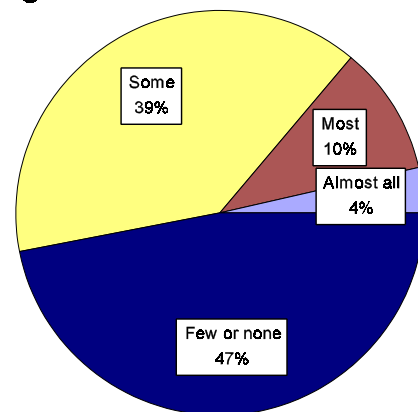


Members are excited about the future of the congregation



A majority of local churches report that their members are excited about the future of their congregation. A total of 59% of respondents say that this describes their local church "very well" or "quite well." Another 28% say that it only "somewhat" describes the attitudes of their members, while one in eight (13%) indicate that there is little or no excitement about the future of their congregation.

Adult members involved in recruiting new members

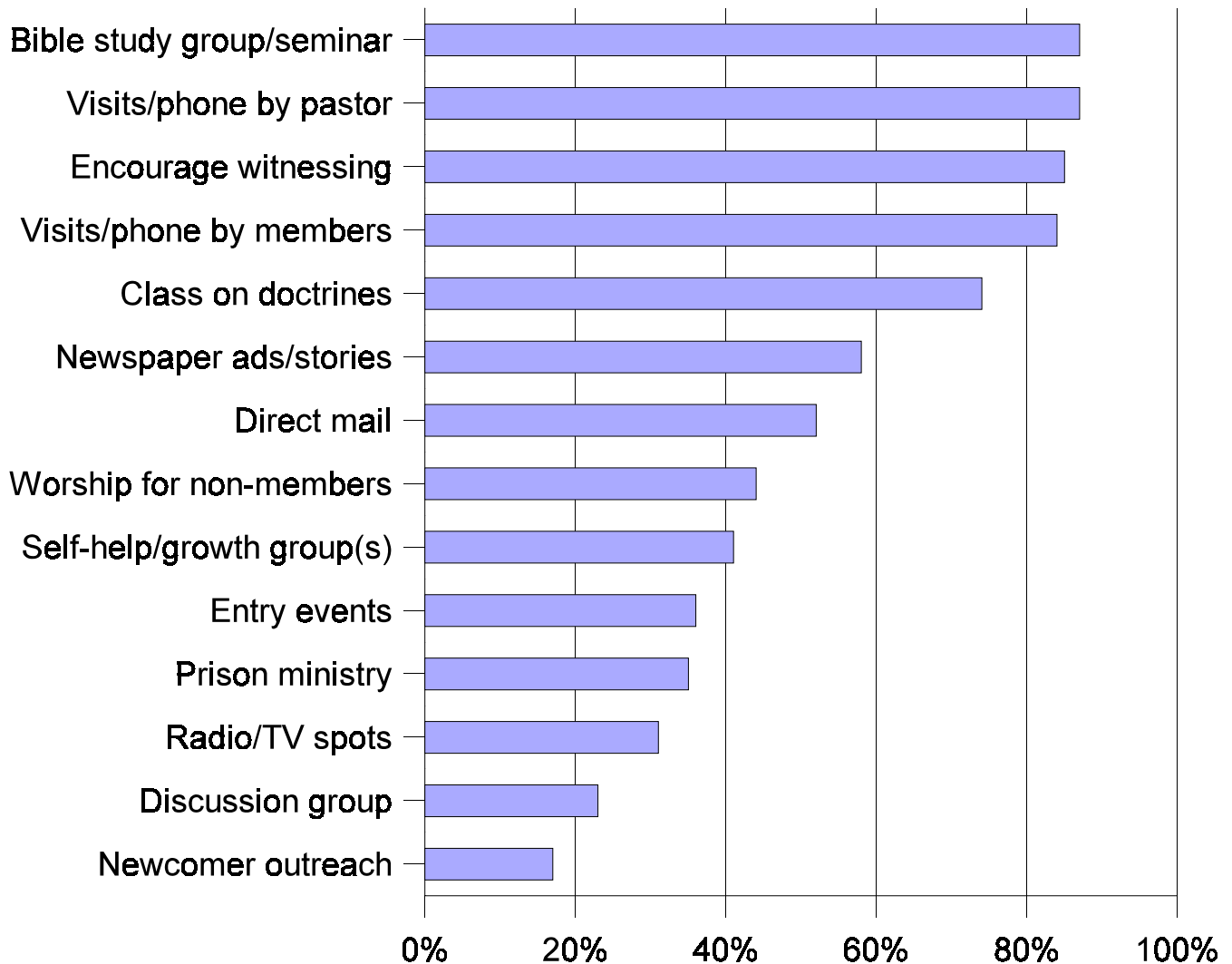


In most local churches only a small number in the congregation are involved in recruiting new members. (See graph above.) Nearly half (46%) report that “few” of their members are involved in outreach and evangelism, while another 39% say that “some” of their members are involved, but most are not. Just one in six local churches (14%) report that all or most of their members get involved in outreach and evangelism.

The most common outreach or evangelism activity in Adventist congregations is a Bible study group or seminar. (See graph below.) The majority of local churches also use visits and phone calls by a pastor, stress in preaching and teaching the importance of personal witnessing by church members, have one or more church members who

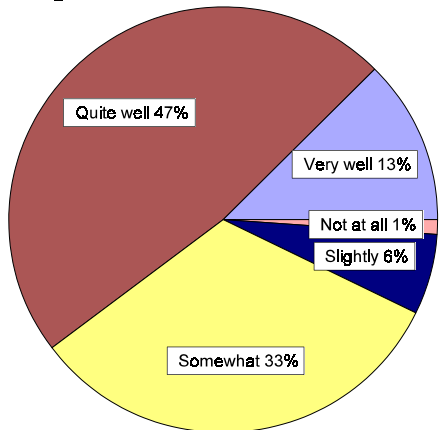
make visits and phone calls, conduct a class on church doctrines or theology, and use both newspaper ads or news releases and direct mail advertising in their outreach and evangelism. Smaller numbers of local churches conduct special worship services intended to attract the unchurched or non-members (such as “Bring a friend” Sabbath, seeker services, revivals, etc.), sponsor self-help or personal growth groups, use entry events (such as parenting classes, young singles night, concerts, etc.), have or participate in a prison ministry, place spots on local radio or TV, provide a discussion group on contemporary issues, and make focused efforts to identify and contact people who have recently moved into the area.

Outreach activities in the last year



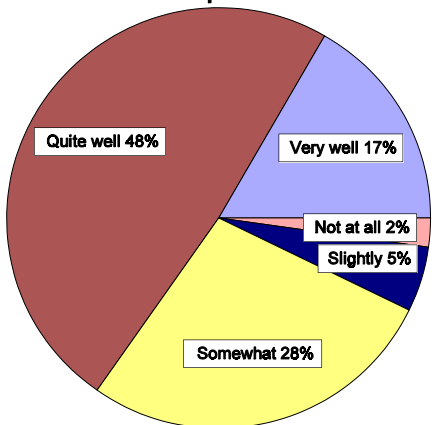
Most local church leaders report that their congregation's programs and activities are well organized. Three in five say that this "very well" or "quite well" describes their local church. A third say it is only "somewhat" true in their local church and 7% indicate that conditions are very different in their congregation.

Our programs and activities are well organized



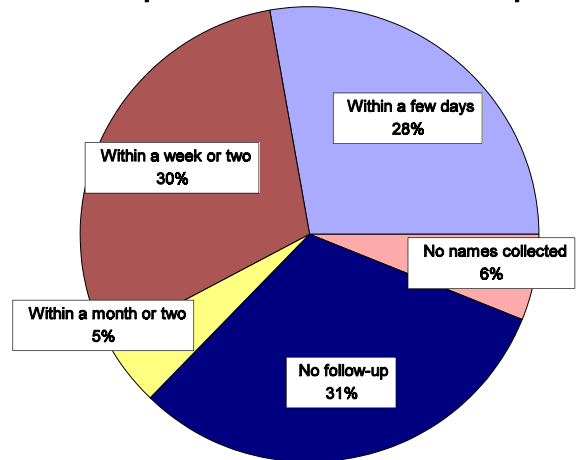
The relational focus of church ministries has become increasingly important to local church leaders. Two thirds say that the programs and activities in their congregation strengthen relationships among the members. Another 28% report that this is only "somewhat" true in their local church, while 7% indicate that it is not true.

Our programs and activities strengthen relationships



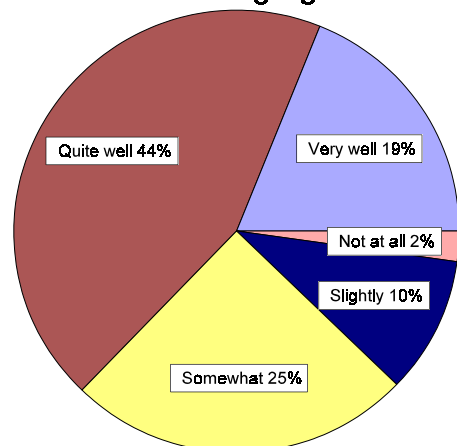
Nearly two thirds of local churches get the names and addresses of newcomers at worship each week and then make follow-up contacts with these potential members. But, only 28% follow up with a few days. A larger number (35%) do not make contact until a week or more has passed. A total of 37% of churches either make no effort to get the names and addresses of newcomers in worship or make no follow-up contacts.

Follow-up of newcomers in worship

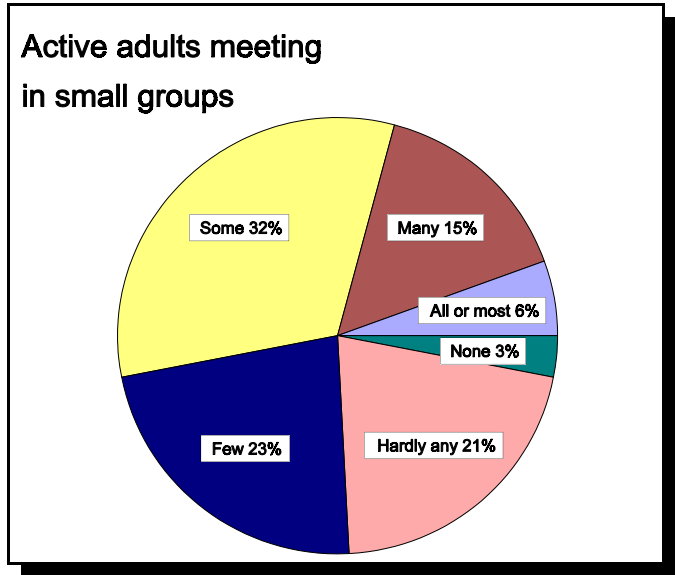


Nearly two thirds of local church leaders say that the new people who come to their church are easily assimilated into the life of their congregation. A total of 63% say that this "very well" or "quite well" describes the situation in their congregation. Another 25% report that it is "somewhat" true that their congregation easily incorporates new people into its membership. One in eight (12%) say this is only "slightly" or "not at all" like their congregation.

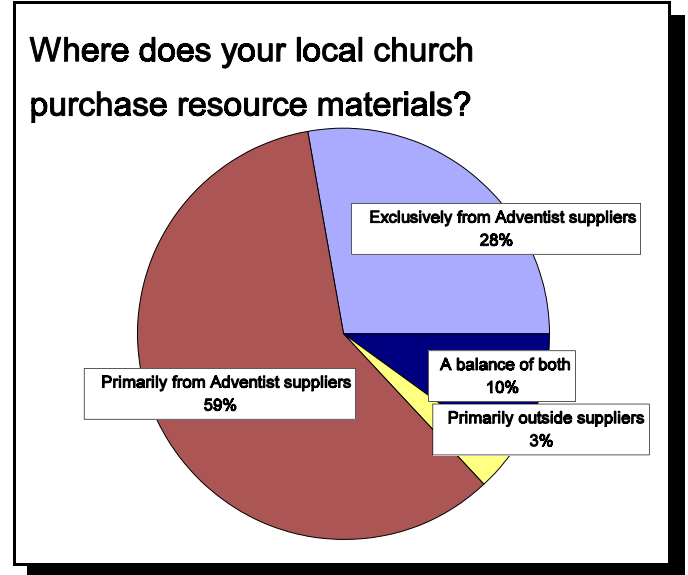
New people are easily assimilated into the congregation



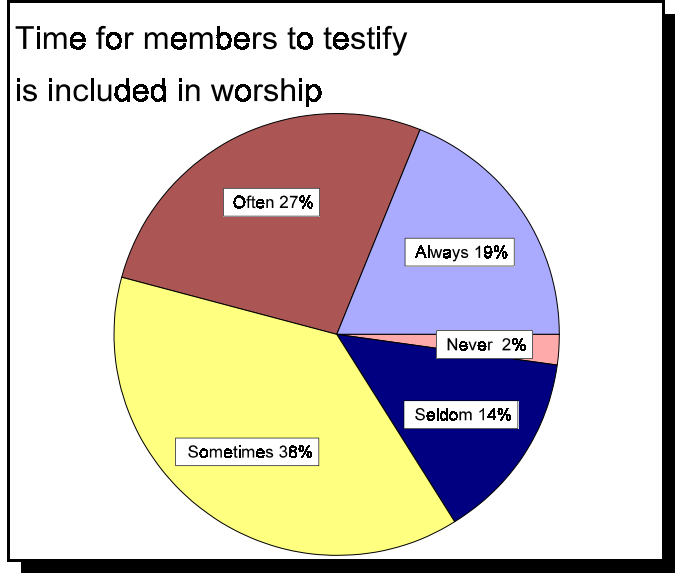
Small group ministries have become widespread in Adventist congregations, but the majority of Church members are still not personally involved. Most local churches (55%) report that only “some” or “few” of their active, adult members are currently meeting in small fellowship or study groups. Nearly a quarter (24%) indicate that “hardly any” or “none” of their members are participating in small groups, while only one in five (21%) say that many or most of their members are involved.



The Adult Ministries Department provides oversight for several of the resource centers affiliated with the North American Division Church Resources Consortium to develop resources for local personal ministries leaders. A wide range of resource materials are also available from many other Christian and secular publishers. To what extent do local leaders make use of these resources?



Church members publicly sharing their faith is an important part of worship in many Adventist local churches. A total of 46% of congregations “always” or “often” include time for members to testify about their faith during the worship service. Another 38% do so “sometimes” say local church leaders. Only one in six (16%) “seldom” or “never” do so.



This is one of a series of fact sheets providing an early release of data from the sample of Seventh-day Adventist Church congregations in the Faith Communities Today (FACT) research project. Monte Sahlin is the general editor of the series with Carmen Rusu, research assistant. Paul Richardson is publisher for the series with Alane Russell, web assistant. Roger Dudley, director of the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, is the research director for the Adventist segment of FACT. The interfaith FACT project is coordinated by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research and funding was provided by the Lilly Endowment. This fact sheet is published by the Center for Creative Ministry for the Office of Information, Research and Strategic Planning at the North American headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (c)2001, CCM and NAD. For more information, dial (800) 272-4664.