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Andrews University
The Institute of Church Ministry

A STUDY OF FACTORS RELATING TO
TITHE AND MISSION GIVING IN
THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

A Research Study
Commissioned by
The Washington Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists

by

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In 1980, the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists commissioned the Institute of Church Ministry (ICM) at Andrews University to conduct research on factors relating to church growth and/or decline among the churches of its territory. That study collected survey data from a representative sample of pastors, pastors' wives, and church members. Descriptive profiles were prepared of the three constituent groups. Then the responses of each group were correlated with the actual rate of church growth, the kingdom rate of growth, the number of baptisms, and the number of apostasies in a series of multiple regression programs. From this analysis a set of items which best predict church growth was formulated. The results of the complete study were released in June of 1981.¹

The purpose of this present report is to correlate the existing information on church members with the tithe and mission giving per capita of their churches during 1980--the year the surveys were taken. This will reveal what attitudes and behaviors

¹Roger L. Dudley, Des Cummings, Jr., Mary Lou Cummings, Greg Clark, "A Study of Factors Relating to Church Growth and Apostasy in the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (Berrien Springs, MI: The Institute of Church Ministry, 1981).

of church members are likely to be related to giving patterns as measured by tithe and mission offerings. It will also reveal how strong those relationships are.

Methodology

Dependent Variables

The two dependent variables in this study are tithe and combined mission offerings. The Conference furnished ICM a list of churches with the total tithe received from them in 1980. For each church, its yearly tithe was divided by its membership on January 1, 1980 to obtain a tithe per capita. These figures were used in the correlations.

For combined mission offerings, the Conference supplied a list giving the weekly per capita for each church. These figures were used in the second group of correlations.

Churches

As reported in the original study (pp. 8-9), there were fifty-eight churches in the Conference at the time the research was initiated. Using stratified random methods, thirty-two of the churches were selected in such a way that size, type of community, and ethnic composition were proportionately represented. Later thirteen additional churches asked to be included. This created a sample of forty-five churches. In each of these churches, the members present at a given Sabbath worship service were asked to fill out the "Church Growth Survey: the Adventist Member" during

the lay activities period.

"Forty-one of the churches completed and returned 2500 usable surveys. This constitutes a high return rate of 91 percent and ensures that the results are typical of the viewpoints, attitudes, and behaviors of members in the Washington Conference" (p. 31). A profile of the responses which was submitted with the original report is also included in the appendix.

Procedures

The forty-one churches were listed with the tithe per capita and weekly mission per capita for each one. This information is shown in table 1.

It is obvious that Bonney Lake, a small company with apparently some generous givers, is not in the same classification as the other churches. Its tithe per capita of \$6,221.67 is about ten times the average of the other churches with the second highest being only \$880.67. The \$9.566 weekly mission per capita is also far in advance of all others. Such extreme figures with so small a proportion of the Conference membership would badly distort the results. Therefore Bonney Lake was eliminated and the analyses based on the other forty churches.

A church file had previously been created for each of these churches by calculating the mean (average) response of all members of a sample church on each survey item. Each church file now contained the mean responses to the forty-three items gathered by the survey (in twenty-six questions), the actual growth rate for

TABLE 1

TITHE PER CAPITA AND WEEKLY MISSION
PER CAPITA FOR 1980 OF CHURCHES IN
THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Church	Tithe Per Capita	Weekly Mission Per Capita
Arlington	320.86	.939
Auburn City	469.30	.515
Ballard	580.82	1.640
Bellevue	675.70	1.152
Bellingham	562.63	1.162
Bremerton	465.33	.786
Burien	395.02	.411
Cedar Home	368.57	1.272
Centralia	441.33	1.196
Chehalis	783.59	1.296
Enumclaw	515.04	.870
Everett Forest	542.44	1.396
Federal Way	630.63	.804
Forks	572.20	1.051
Freeland	341.94	2.766
Friday Harbor	396.06	1.020
Gray's Harbor	423.59	.732
Issaquah	644.66	1.865
Kent	456.17	.668
Kirkland	714.91	1.365
Monroe	483.18	1.097
Morton	420.18	.829
Mt. Tahoma	337.29	.235
Mount Vernon	544.93	.690
Norland Pt. Townsend	745.43	2.081
Oak Harbor	363.33	.840
Oakville	478.56	2.241

Church	Tithe Per Capita	Weekly Mission Per Capita
Olympia	444.44	.570
Orting	254.09	1.044
Port Angeles	412.16	.753
Poulsbo	422.72	1.173
Renton	578.64	.669
Sedro Woolley	824.37	1.494
Sequim	605.71	1.333
Seward Park	450.84	1.048
Shelton	452.64	1.080
Snoqualmie Valley	880.67	1.626
Tacoma Central	442.62	.743
Volunteer Park	497.10	1.204
Lacey	607.48	.925
Bonney Lake	6,221.67	9.566

January 1, 1979 to June 30, 1980, the kingdom growth rate for the same period, the membership size on January 1, 1979, the number of baptisms for the period, and the number of apostasies.

These forty-eight pieces of information for each church were now correlated with the tithe per capita in a multiple regression program prepared by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The same procedure was followed with the weekly mission per capita. The findings are presented in the following section.

Findings

The correlation of any one independent variable with the dependent variable (tithe per capita or missions per capita) is

called the zero-order correlation. It is symbolized by r . It will be possible to note the strongest zero-order correlations. But the multiple regression program provides a way to allow a group of independent variables to be correlated with the dependent variable thus raising the correlation. This measures the combined effect of the independent variables, sometimes called "predictors." The extent of this relationship is measured by the coefficient of multiple correlation, symbolized by R .

The multiple regression program does not find R by simply adding all the r 's. After all, there is much overlapping in the effect of the predictors upon the dependent variable. Rather the program attempts to isolate the unique effect of each variable on the dependent variable after the effect of the other variables has been removed. In the stepwise program, variables are added to the equation one at a time. The first variable to be included is the one with the highest r . Then the program calculates which of the remaining variables would contribute the most unique effect to explaining the changes in the dependent variable. This is added and the re-calculation continues until a point is reached where adding any more variables makes no significant difference.

Thus a logical order of steps is created which reveals the best predictors, taken together, in the order of their strength to explain changes in the dependent variable--in this case tithes per capita or missions per capita.

Tithe Per Capita

When the independent variables were correlated with tithe per capita, the program selected fifteen steps to move the multiple R from .461 to a very high .882. This combination of variables is explaining 78 percent of the variance in the tithe per capita rates. Each increment contributed at the .01 level. Table 2 displays the selections.

The first selection on the multiple regression program and highest zero-order correlation (.461) was years of attendance at Adventist schools. Greater length of attendance at Adventist schools seems to be strongly related to tithe giving. This is certainly a positive element for the Adventist school system.

The members' certainty of their spiritual gifts was selected in the second position with a high correlation of .316, but in a negative direction. The negative implies that tithe giving was inversely related to the members' certainty of their spiritual gifts. That is to say, as the members' certainty of their spiritual gifts increased, the tithe giving per capita decreased. This is somewhat difficult to understand but may have something to do with the nature of spiritual gifts.

Steps three and four of the multiple regression selected a favorable evaluation of the pastor's wife and having at least one parent a Seventh-day Adventist during the first twelve years of their lives with zero-order correlations of .220 and .207 respectively.

Amount of yearly family income was selected fifth with a high correlation of .386. It is to be expected as the family income

TABLE 2

BEST PREDICTORS OF TITHE PER CAPITA
WASHINGTON CONFERENCE MEMBER SURVEY

N=40

Stepwise Selection Number	Name of Variable	Cumulative Multiple <u>R</u>	Zero-order Correlation
1	Years attendance at SDA schools	.461	.461**
2	Certain of spiritual gifts	.606	-.316*
3	Favorable evaluation of pastor's wife	.692	.220
4	Grew up Adventist	.715	.207
5	Amount of family income	.732	.386*
6	Financial support for local soul-winning	.767	.288
7	Actual growth	.785	.249
8	Has daily family worship	.800	.264
9	Church involves new members	.811	-.017
10	Church is warm & friendly	.837	-.044
11	Members involved in community services	.848	-.186
12	Members involved in witnessing program	.862	.003
13	Church holds high Adventist standards	.868	.105
14	Church has my kind of people	.876	.174
15	Soul-winning church	.882	.221

*Probability equal to or less than .05.

**Probability equal to or less than .01.

increased, the tithe per capita would also increase. In addition, financial support of local soul-winning was selected sixth with a

correlation of .288. This would imply that members paying tithe are also financially supporting local soul-winning activities.

It is also interesting that actual growth would correlate highly with tithe per capita and be selected seventh on the multiple regression program. This indicates a relationship between overall growth of the church and tithe per capita.

Family worship was also correlated somewhat highly (.264) with tithe per capita and was selected eighth. This indicates as more of the members are involved in a daily family worship, the tithe per capita increases.

The remaining selections from the multiple regression program received somewhat lower correlations as shown in table two. It is interesting to note however that the fifteenth selection had a zero-order correlation of .221. Higher tithe-per-capita is related to the members' perception of their congregation as a soul-winning church.

Mission Offering Per Capita

The independent variables were also correlated with mission offering per capita. The multiple regression program selected thirteen steps moving the multiple R from .519 to an extremely high .934. This combination of variables is able to explain 87 percent of the variance in the mission offering per capita. Each of the increments was significant at the .01 level. Table 3 displays the selections from the multiple regression.

The first selection on the multiple regression and highest

TABLE 3

BEST PREDICTORS OF MISSION OFFERING PER CAPITA

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE MEMBER SURVEY

N=40

Stepwise Selection Number	Name of Variable	Cummulative Multiple <u>R</u>	Zero-order Correlation
1	Regular study of E.G.W. books	.519	.519**
2	Meet regularly in small group	.637	-.290
3	Church membership size	.778	-.348*
4	Distance members live from church	.821	.229
5	Working to win non-Adventist relatives	.851	.163
6	Financial support of local soul-winning	.869	.505**
7	Has many non-Adventist friends	.882	-.184
8	Years as a baptized Adventist	.889	.413**
9	Soul-winning church	.900	-.339*
10	Church holds high Adventist standards	.917	-.067
11	Church has my kind of people	.923	-.102
12	Church involves new members	.928	.412**
13	Assurance of being right with God	.934	.086

*Probability equal to or less than .05.

**Probability equal to or less than .01.

zero-order correlation (.519) was regular study of Ellen White books. This is a very substantial correlation and indicates a strong

relationship between regular study of Ellen White and giving to mission offerings in the church.

Selected in the second and third positions were regular meetings with a small study or fellowship group and size of the church with correlations of .290 and .348 respectively. Both of these, however, were in a negative direction. That is to say as the number of members regularly meeting in small groups or the size of the church decreases, the mission offering increases. Apparently small group meetings are not encouraging support of mission offerings. However, the smaller churches seem to have a higher mission offering per capita than larger churches.

Financial support of local soul-winning was selected in the sixth position with a strong correlation of .505. This indicates an important relationship between financial support of local soul-winning and mission offering per capita. Those supporting mission offerings are also supporting local soul-winning efforts. It will be remembered that financial support of local soul-winning was also selected sixth on the regression with tithe per capita. Thus churches with higher financial support of local soul-winning are also supporting tithe and mission offerings.

Length of time as a baptized Adventist was selected in eighth position with a correlation of .413. This indicates those members who have been in the church longer are more liberal in supporting the mission offering. Thus churches with a higher percentage of members baptized a longer length of time also have a higher mission offering per capita.

Two other questions with notable correlations are members' attitude toward their church as soul-winning and involvement of new members selected in ninth and twelfth positions with correlations of .339 and .412 respectively. Members' perception of their church as a soul-winning church correlates negatively with mission offering per capita and is somewhat difficult to understand, especially since the opposite was true with tithe per capita. However, churches whose members consider their church as involving new members in fellowship and activities also had a higher mission offering per capita.

The remaining selections on the multiple regression program had lower correlations as shown in table 3. Some other variables which were not selected on the multiple regression but still had correlations of .250 or higher with mission offering per capita include the members' relationship with Christ (.313), percentage of membership holding a church office or service position (.391), a higher degree of unity in the church (.274), regular personal Bible study (.327), and regular prayer for the conversion of specific people (.414). As a higher percentage of the membership is involved in these types of activities, the mission offering per capita increases.

A final correlation of interest is the correlation between tithe per capita and mission offering per capita of .329. The higher correlations between financial support of local soul-winning with tithe and mission offering per capita along with this correlation between tithe and mission per capita seems to suggest that churches with higher financial support of any of these are also

supporting the others.

Conclusions

In the attempt to discover relationships between giving and other aspects of Christian attitudes and practices, a mixed picture emerges. One could wish that the pattern were more clear-cut. Yet several conclusions do seem warranted:

1. Tithe income is positively related to yearly family income in one of the stronger correlations (.386). This is to be expected. However, the same logic would lead to the expectation that mission offering per capita would be related to yearly family income. This is not supported by the data. In fact the relationship is negative (-.341). Apparently, those who make less are more likely to be more liberal with mission offerings on a per capita basis.

2. The longer members have attended Adventist schools, the more tithe per capita they are likely to give. This may be partly explained by noting that length of time in Adventist schools is highly related to family income (.710). No doubt, however, Adventist schools must be given some credit for instilling tithe-paying principles in their students. They have not done nearly as well in mission offerings, however, where little relationship exists between Adventist schooling and mission giving.

3. People who give for one purpose are more likely to give for another. Tithe per capita, mission offering per capita, and financial support for local soul-winning are all interrelated. Thus pastors need not fear that a strong appeal for missions will siphon

off funds needed for local projects. Members who experience the joy of giving are likely to be the best supporters in all areas of the church's task.

4. Growing churches are more likely to have higher tithe per capita, but the same cannot be said for mission giving.

5. Both tithe-paying and mission-giving are related to other Christian virtues but, strangely enough, there is not a great overlap. Tithe payers are more likely to have daily family worship and to perceive their church as a soul-winning church. High mission-offering givers are more likely to give regular study to Ellen White books (an especially strong relationship), to involve new members in the fellowship and activities of the church, to perceive their relationship with Christ as intimate, to hold church office or other service positions, to have regular personal Bible study, and to pray daily for the conversion of specific people.

Of course it is difficult to determine whether giving brings about the other virtues or if they influence giving or if all are influenced by some other causes. It seems likely that as the Christian life is strengthened by study of the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, by personal prayer and family worship, and by witnessing activities, that the result is a Christian who pays a faithful tithe and who is generous in support of the mission program of the church. It also seems evident that within the Adventist school system more stress should be placed on understanding missions and their crucial position in the purpose of the church.

APPENDIX

Profile of 2500 Members
in the Washington Conference

CHURCH GROWTH SURVEY - THE ADVENTIST MEMBER
 INSTITUTE OF CHURCH MINISTRY
 THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
 CHURCH # 24000

NUMBER OF SURVEYS FOR THIS REPORT = 2500

1. CIRCLE THE NUMBER SHOWING HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN A BAPTIZED ADVENTIST.

LESS THAN 1 YEAR	6-10 YEARS	11-20 YEARS	OVER 20 YEARS
6%	13%	20%	47%
2. WAS AT LEAST ONE OF YOUR PARENTS AN ADVENTIST SOMETIME DURING THE FIRST 12 YEARS OF YOUR LIFE?

YES	NO
60%	40%
3. CIRCLE THE NUMBER INDICATING THE RELATIONSHIP THAT YOU HAVE WITH JESUS CHRIST.

NONE	1	2	3	4	5
1%	4%	28%	34%	33%	INTIMATE
4. WHAT NUMBER SHOWS YOUR ASSURANCE THAT YOU ARE RIGHT WITH GOD?

NOT SURE	1	2	3	4	5
3%	6%	24%	31%	36%	VERY CERTAIN
5. HOW CERTAIN ARE YOU ABOUT WHAT YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE? CIRCLE A NUMBER.

NO IDEA	1	2	3	4	5
8%	12%	30%	25%	24%	QUITE CERTAIN
6. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU ATTENDED ADVENTIST SCHOOLS? CIRCLE A NUMBER.

0-2	2-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17 & UP
7%	9%	14%	14%	12%	3%
7. DO YOU HAVE MANY NON-ADVENTIST FRIENDS?

NONE	1	2	3	4	5
1%	13%	24%	14%	48%	MANY
8. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE MONEY THE CONFERENCE SPENDS ON PUBLIC EVANGELISM? CIRCLE A NUMBER.

TOO MUCH SPENT	1	2	3	4	5
2%	4%	32%	27%	35%	SHOULD SPEND MORE
9. HOW WELL PREPARED ARE YOU FOR THE WORK OF WITNESSING? CIRCLE A NUMBER.

NOT AT ALL	1	2	3	4	5
9%	28%	38%	17%	8%	VERY WELL
10. WOULD IT BE BETTER FOR YOUR CHURCH TO DOUBLE OR TRIPLE ITS SIZE IN ONE YEAR OR GROW MORE GRADUALLY?

GRADUAL GROWTH	1	2	3	4	5
15%	14%	31%	16%	25%	GROWTH EXPLOSION
11. HAVE YOU BEEN ENGAGED IN SOME TYPE OF WITNESSING PROGRAM OVER THE PAST YEAR?

YES	NO
57%	43%
12. DO YOU HOLD A CHURCH OFFICE OR OTHER SERVICE POSITION?

58%	42%
-----	-----
13. DID YOU SET A PERSONAL SOUL-WINNING GOAL THIS YEAR?

20%	80%
-----	-----
14. HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING TO WIN NON-ADVENTIST RELATIVES?

65%	35%
-----	-----
15. HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH SERVICES (DORCAS, STCP SMOKING, ETC.)?

35%	65%
-----	-----
16. HAVE YOU HELD BIBLE STUDIES WITH A NON-ADVENTIST THIS YEAR?

27%	73%
-----	-----
17. WITHIN THE LAST YEAR HAVE YOU ATTENDED A WITNESSING TRAINING PROGRAM?

22%	78%
-----	-----
18. CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CHURCH GROUP:

NO	1	2	3	4	5
5%	17%	39%	21%	18%	YES

A) SOUL WINNING CHURCH

B) ADVENTIST STANDARDS
 1% 2% 3% 4% 5%
 1% 5% 29% 36% 28%
 HIGH

C) FRIENDLINESS
 1% 2% 3% 4% 5%
 2% 7% 22% 29% 41%
 WARM AND FRIENDLY

D) UNITY
 1% 2% 3% 4% 5%
 2% 6% 25% 38% 28%
 COOPERATIVE UNITED

E) NEW MEMBERS
 1% 2% 3% 4% 5%
 3% 9% 22% 33% 34%
 INVOLVED

F) FEELINGS TOWARDS CHURCH PEOPLE
 1% 2% 3% 4% 5%
 3% 5% 19% 30% 42%
 I DON'T FIT IN MY KIND OF PEOPLE

19. CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH SHOWS THE DEGREE THAT YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN:

DA - DOESN'T APPLY
 N - NEVER
 S - SOMETIMES
 U - USUALLY
 A - ALWAYS

- A) DAILY PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY
- B) DAILY PRAYER FOR THE CONVERSION OF SPECIFIC PEOPLE
- C) REGULAR STUDY OF ELLEN WHITE BOOKS
- D) REGULAR FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LOCAL SOUL-WINNING
- E) MEET REGULARLY WITH A SMALL STUDY OR FELLOWSHIP GROUP
- F) HELP NEIGHBORS WITH THEIR PERSONAL PROBLEMS
- G) CONCERN FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT ACCEPTED CHRIST
- H) DAILY FAMILY WORSHIP
- I) WITNESSING IN EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

DA	N	S	U	A
1%	4%	31%	37%	26%
2%	6%	33%	24%	35%
2%	12%	48%	21%	18%
4%	9%	29%	26%	31%
8%	33%	34%	14%	11%
5%	15%	42%	22%	16%
1%	2%	17%	32%	48%
4%	12%	31%	23%	30%
1%	5%	34%	35%	24%

20. CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH SHOWS THE EMPHASIS YOUR PASTOR PLACES ON:

LITTLE IMPORTANCE	1	2	3	4	5	TOP PRIORITY
	3%	5%	19%	33%	40%	
LITTLE IMPORTANCE	1	2	3	4	5	TOP PRIORITY
	1%	3%	16%	30%	51%	

21. HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE YOU BEEN WHOLLY OR PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING INTO THE CHURCH IN THE LAST THREE YEARS?

ONE	TWO TO FIVE	SIX TO TEN	MORE THAN TEN
13%	14%	2%	1%
	DISCOURAGES	BUILDS FAITH	
	1%	2%	3%
	3%	16%	27%
	53%		

22. CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR PASTOR'S SERMONS:

NON-CHRIST CENTERED	1	2	3	4	5	CHRIST CENTERED
	0%	2%	9%	18%	71%	

NOT HELPFUL

1 2 3 4 5
1% 3% 12% 23% 61%

NOT HELPFUL

1 2 3 4 5
1% 4% 14% 32% 49%

NOT VERY EFFECTIVE

1 2 3 4 5
3% 5% 17% 27% 47%

NOT VERY EFFECTIVE

1 2 3 4 5
36-50 YEARS 24%
51-65 YEARS 20%
OVER 65 YEARS 17%

NOT VERY EFFECTIVE

1 2 3 4 5
\$16,001 TO \$25,000 28%
\$25,001 TO \$50,000 19%
ABOVE \$50,000 4%

NOT VERY EFFECTIVE

1 2 3 4 5
11-15 MILES 14%
16-25 MILES 7%
OVER 25 MILES 2%

23. CIRCLE THE NUMBER OF YOUR OVERALL EVALUATION OF:

A) YOUR PASTOR

B) YOUR PASTOR'S WIFE

24. CIRCLE THE NUMBER OF THE AGE GROUP YOU ARE IN.
19 YEARS OR UNDER 11%

25. CIRCLE THE NUMBER WHICH SHOWS YOUR YEARLY FAMILY INCOME.
UNDER \$8,000 19%
\$8,001 TO \$16,000 30%

26. CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT SHOWS THE DISTANCE THAT YOU LIVE FROM THE CHURCH.
UNDER 3 MILES 30%
4-10 MILES 47%