

Undergirding Values of the Columbia Union Leadership

Report on the Values Clarification Survey of the Union Conference Executive Committee

By Monte Sahlin
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At the time of the Executive Committee Retreat in November, 2006, a values clarification survey was conducted as part of the ongoing strategic planning process for the Columbia Union Conference. An instrument was prepared in collaboration with the executive officers that included 34 items gleaned from Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, practices, history and current practice in church ministries. Another 12 items were included that focused specifically on funding priorities. These were taken from an earlier survey of the church membership in the Columbia Union, thus providing an interesting comparison of leadership values with the values of the people in the pews.

The instrument was presented on Sabbath morning during the retreat and participants were asked to fill it out on the spot. Results were calculated and presented again later in the day for discussion and eventually the group completed three rounds of scoring and prioritizing the 34 items to produce a final, short list of the most important values. This report displays the data from all three rounds.

Round One Data

A total of 63 completed questionnaires were returned from the first round. Each of the 34 items were scored on a five-point scale from “disagree strongly” (1) to “agree strongly” (5). The total number of points assigned by the 63 respondents and the average score for each item is displayed in Table 1 with the items in rank order of value to the executive committee. A total of 19 of the 34 items—more than half—averaged a 4 or higher, meaning that a clear majority of the executive committee members agree that these items are important values that guide their views of the Church and its work.

Older respondents—those over 60 years of age—were more likely to value items related to family, Christian education, evangelism, ethics, mission, vegetarianism, generosity, discipleship, prophecy and Adventist heritage. Younger respondents—those under 42 years of age—are more likely to value items related to innovation, community involvement, social justice, mission, religious liberty and health. Baby Boomers—the dominant, middle-aged majority—are more likely to value items related to mission and youth.

Round Two Data

In order to get some idea of priorities among the many items included in this survey, respondents were asked to select two items on each of the three pages of the questionnaire and mark them as top priority. The number of respondents who marked each item as a top priority is

displayed in Table 2 where the items are placed in rank order based on these responses. There is little change over the ranking in Table 1. Items related to discipleship and mission have moved up in the rankings, and the item on prophecy has moved up some, but otherwise the rank order of each item is about the same as shown in Table 1.

This confirms the essential accuracy of the overall survey results in reflecting the values of the executive committee members. Having been asked to make selections in two different ways, the results come out much the same. This also reveals little internal dissonance on these questions of values; this a group of people with settled, firmly held values in regards to most of the items covered in this study.

Round Three Data

In the final round of discussion and prioritizing of values, the group was shown the two slides on the page after Table 2. These display the top ten items strictly based on the percent of respondents in the first round who rated items as “strongly agree,” a five. They were asked to place these ten items in rank order in terms of the importance they attach to each value. The results of this ranking appear in Table 3. A total of 54 usable, hand-written responses were handed in and the total rankings applied to each item by the group are the basis for Table 3.

Commitment to Christ moves up to the top from sixth ranking in round two. Focus on mission moves up to second from fourth place. Strengthening the family moves up to sixth from 13th place. The other items retain much the same ranking that they did in both of the earlier rounds of data. Again, this is evidence of both the accuracy of these data and the solid, grounded sense of values that exist among the members of the Columbia Union executive committee.

Budget Priorities

In the basic questionnaire there was also an additional page of items on which the members of the executive committee were asked to indicate for each of twelve major areas of funding, where the denomination should provide more funding, less funding or keep the funding level unchanged. The results are presented in the graph at the top of the last page in this report.

About two thirds of the committee members believe that funding needs to be increased for global mission, local outreach ministries and Adventist secondary schools. A majority also want to see increased funding for humanitarian ministries (inner city, homeless, etc.), elementary education, increasing the number of pastors and planting new churches.

One in five executive committee members (21%) would budget less money for conference departmental ministries. Significantly smaller numbers are willing to cut back in other areas. In general, it appears that support for funding cuts does not balance out the much larger percentages who see a need for increases in funding in most areas.

The same question was asked in a survey of church members across the Columbia Union Conference in 2003. (See the lower graph on the same page.) This makes possible an interesting comparison of the views of the union committee members with the opinion in the pews. Church members give top priority to Christian education, while the committee members gave top priority to global missions. Both agree on the second-ranking item—local outreach. Church members rank Metro Ministries as more important than do executive committee members, but in both cases a solid majority believes that funding must be increased for humanitarian ministries such as Adventist Community Services, inner city projects, etc.

Surprisingly, local church members see less need for increasing the number of pastors in the field than do members of the union committee. Both agree that there is not much need to increase the funding of departmental ministries and both seem satisfied with the current level of funding for public evangelism.

Both the members at the grass roots and those serving on the union committee see much more need for increased funding than for reductions in funding. It is too easy to simply pass this off as unrealistic thinking on the part of either church members or the executive committee members. There is a very strong message between the lines. ***Church administrators need to be more involved in fund raising.*** The membership in the pews and those who serve on governing committees expect top leadership to set an example and lead in expanding the funds available for the growing needs of the Church and its ministries.

Summary

The governing body of the Columbia Union Conference has solid, settled values from which they make decisions about the goals and direction of the Church in this region. They want a church that is Christ-centered, focused on getting members involved in ministry, and mission-driven; a church that has a strong discipleship process, engages every member in friendship evangelism, has effective ministries that are strengthening families and impacting the community, and makes everyone who comes into its circle feel welcome. In all this they value innovation and a strong code of ethics.

There is also a strong consensus, supported in the field, that more funds must be found for missions, local outreach, Christian education, and humanitarian ministries. There is not strong support for increased funding for departmental ministries and public evangelism.

Table 1 - Ranking in Round One

The total number of points assigned to each item by all respondents; 1 = Disagree strongly; 2 = Disagree somewhat; 3 = Not sure / do not know; 4 = Agree somewhat; 5 = Agree strongly. Displayed in rank order.

	Total	Average
SERVICE —Each church member should get involved in some kind of ministry according to the gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit and as part of the ministries of a local, Adventist church. (Q5)	297	4.7
FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM —Every active member should be taught how to appropriately share Christ in the context of their every-day contacts at work, in the community and among their friends and relatives. (Q10)	288	4.6
FAMILY —Each local church should maintain a regular program of activities designed to strengthen families and give instruction in Christ-centered family life. (Q8)	285	4.5
OPENNESS —People should feel welcome in any local Adventist congregation regardless of their dress, ethnicity, lifestyle or lack of religious knowledge, so long as their behavior is not overly disruptive. (Q2)	281	4.5
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT —Each congregation should be expected to get involved in the local community where the church is located and do what is necessary to be seen by community leaders as making a definite contribution to that community. (Q28)	275	4.4
INNOVATION —Our local churches should welcome innovation and change designed to make them more effective in outreach, evangelism and church growth. (Q27)	272	4.3
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT —Each conference should provide instruction and accountability for young pastors on track to ordination/commissioning. (Q34)	272	4.3
ETHICS —The Adventist Church should actively teach all of its members to practice the highest ethical standards in their secular vocation, business practices and relationships with other people at church, in the community and in the home. (Q16)	271	4.3
DISCIPLESHIP —We need a definite discipleship curriculum for those who join the Adventist Church, to make sure that each member learns basic spiritual disciplines (such as daily Bible study and prayer) and develops Christ-centered behavior in all aspects of life. (Q26)	271	4.3
FAMILY —Friday night should be encouraged as family night among Adventists both to teach children to celebrate the Sabbath as a 24-hour retreat and to help to strengthen families with quality time together. (Q32)	268	4.3

MISSION —God’s primary purpose for His church is that it focus on the mission of Christ—reaching the lost in the world—more than the needs of the members or the interests of the organization. (Q1)	263	4.2
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION —Every young person growing up in an Adventist home should have as much as possible of their education in Adventist schools. (Q4)	260	4.1
EVANGELISM —Adventist pastors should be expected to conduct public evangelism of some kind in their district each year. (“some kind” = guest evangelist, Revelation Seminar, lay evangelism team, satellite evangelism as well as the pastor being the evangelist) [Q9]	260	4.1
INNOVATION —In order for the Adventist Church to be effective in its mission in this current era of tremendous social, technological and economic change, we must be willing to innovate, “think outside the box” and make deliberate changes in some areas. (Q20)	259	4.1
ADVENTIST HERITAGE —Church members should be expected not only to practice tithing, but also to turn in their tithe to the conference Tithe Fund through their local church. (Q7)	259	4.1
MISSION —The Adventist local churches in each metropolitan area should collaborate to have a Metro Ministries program with a coordinated strategy for church planting, public awareness, community service, evangelism and church growth. (Q15)	255	4.0
YOUTH —Each local church should have an active youth group for teens in grades 9 through 12 that meets weekly. (Q13)	253	4.0
FAMILY —Our young people should be discouraged from marrying spouses who do not share their spiritual values and commitment to the Adventist Church. (Q33)	250	4.0
YOUTH —Each local church should have an active young adult group for ages 18-29 that meets weekly. (Q14)	249	4.0
DISCIPLESHIP —A personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to follow Him in my whole life is more important than a knowledge of correct Bible doctrines. (Q18)	248	3.9
GENEROSITY —Church members should be taught to give a percentage of their income to their local church, the conference advance offering and the World Budget in addition to tithing. (Q6)	247	3.9
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT —God expects the Adventist Church to balance its direct evangelistic and soul-winning with ministries of “disinterested benevolence” or humanitarian work in the community, among non-members. (Q11)	246	3.9

MISSION —Local church budgets should give greater priority to the mission of Christ in reaching the lost in the local community than to internal church activities. (Q3)	240	3.8
FAMILY —Weddings should not be conducted in our churches or by our pastors unless the couple has participated in several sessions of pre-marriage instruction and counseling. (Q19)	232	3.7
VEGETARIANISM —A vegetarian diet is preferable both as good stewards of our health and of the world grain resources necessary to prevent hunger. (Q29)	228	3.6
PROPHECY —Our preachers—in both evangelism and regular church services—need to give more attention to proclaiming the Second Coming of Christ and teaching about end-time events. (Q24)	214	3.4
HEALTH —The Adventist Church needs to give more attention to the HIV-AIDS pandemic, including encouragement for each local church to organize an HIV-AIDS support group. (Q31)	212	3.4
ADVENTIST HERITAGE —The unique sanctuary doctrine of the Adventist Church needs to be given greater emphasis in our sermons and Bible studies. (Q25)	204	3.2
SOCIAL JUSTICE —The Adventist Church should maintain its commitment to affirmative action even if the political climate in our country has turned against this policy. (Q12)	201	3.2
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY —I agree with the historic position of the Adventist Church against prayer being conducted by government employees for students in the public schools, despite the pressure from many Christians to prescribe prayer in the public schools. (Q23)	200	3.2
SOCIAL ETHICS —I am distressed by the number of our young people who are currently bearing arms in military service. We need to re-affirm our heritage and teachings in this area. (Q22)	176	2.8
TRADITION/REVERENCE —Our local churches should not be permitted to use drums as part of worship music under any circumstances. (Q21)	160	2.5
HEALTH —We not need to give as much attention to temperance work as we did in the past because fewer Americans are smoking and consumption of alcoholic beverages is down. (Q30)	150 [297]	2.4
DOCTRINE —A knowledge of correct Bible doctrines is more important than the level of one's commitment to be a follower of Jesus. (Q17)	133	2.1

Table 2 - Ranking in Round Two

*The number of people selecting each item as a top priority.
Displayed in rank order.*

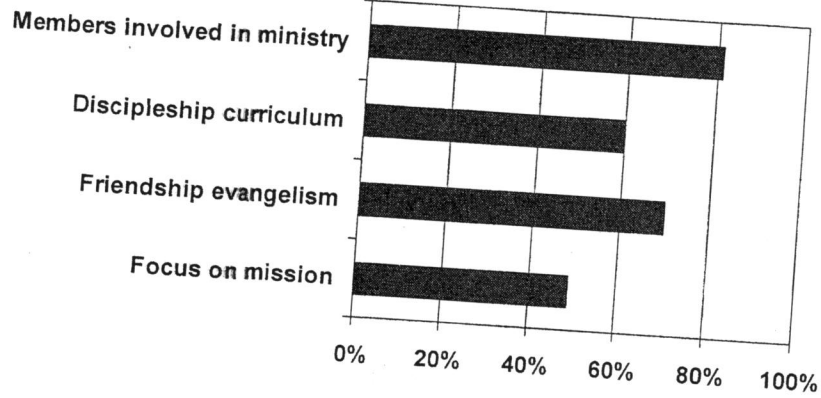
	Total
SERVICE —Each church member should get involved in some kind of ministry according to the gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit and as part of the ministries of a local, Adventist church. (Q5)	28
DISCIPLESHIP —We need a definite discipleship curriculum for those who join the Adventist Church, to make sure that each member learns basic spiritual disciplines (such as daily Bible study and prayer) and develops Christ-centered behavior in all aspects of life. (Q26)	26
FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM —Every active member should be taught how to appropriately share Christ in the context of their every-day contacts at work, in the community and among their friends and relatives. (Q10)	24
MISSION —God’s primary purpose for His church is that it focus on the mission of Christ—reaching the lost in the world—more than the needs of the members or the interests of the organization. (Q1)	23
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT —Each congregation should be expected to get involved in the local community where the church is located and do what is necessary to be seen by community leaders as making a definite contribution to that community. (Q28)	19
DISCIPLESHIP —A personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to follow Him in my whole life is more important than a knowledge of correct Bible doctrines. (Q18)	16
INNOVATION —In order for the Adventist Church to be effective in its mission in this current era of tremendous social, technological and economic change, we must be willing to innovate, “think outside the box” and make deliberate changes in some areas. (Q20)	15
OPENNESS —People should feel welcome in any local Adventist congregation regardless of their dress, ethnicity, lifestyle or lack of religious knowledge, so long as their behavior is not overly disruptive. (Q2)	14
ETHICS —The Adventist Church should actively teach all of its members to practice the highest ethical standards in their secular vocation, business practices and relationships with other people at church, in the community and in the home. (Q16)	14
INNOVATION —Our local churches should welcome innovation and change designed to make them more effective in outreach, evangelism and church growth. (Q27)	13
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION —Every young person growing up in an Adventist home should have as much as possible of their education in Adventist schools. (Q4)	11

PROPHECY —Our preachers—in both evangelism and regular church services—need to give more attention to proclaiming the Second Coming of Christ and teaching about end-time events. (Q24)	10
FAMILY —Each local church should maintain a regular program of activities designed to strengthen families and give instruction in Christ-centered family life. (Q8)	8
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT —Each conference should provide instruction and accountability for young pastors on track to ordination/commissioning. (Q34)	8
FAMILY —Friday night should be encouraged as family night among Adventists both to teach children to celebrate the Sabbath as a 24-hour retreat and to help to strengthen families with quality time together. (Q32)	8
YOUTH —Each local church should have an active youth group for teens in grades 9 through 12 that meets weekly. (Q13)	8
EVANGELISM —Adventist pastors should be expected to conduct public evangelism of some kind in their district each year. (“some kind” = guest evangelist, Revelation Seminar, lay evangelism team, satellite evangelism as well as the pastor being the evangelist) [Q9]	8
FAMILY —Our young people should be discouraged from marrying spouses who do not share their spiritual values and commitment to the Adventist Church. (Q33)	6
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT —God expects the Adventist Church to balance its direct evangelistic and soul-winning with ministries of “disinterested benevolence” or humanitarian work in the community, among non-members. (Q11)	4
YOUTH —Each local church should have an active young adult group for ages 18-29 that meets weekly. (Q14)	4
MISSION —The Adventist local churches in each metropolitan area should collaborate to have a Metro Ministries program with a coordinated strategy for church planting, public awareness, community service, evangelism and church growth. (Q15)	4
SOCIAL ETHICS —I am distressed by the number of our young people who are currently bearing arms in military service. We need to re-affirm our heritage and teachings in this area. (Q22)	4
MISSION —Local church budgets should give greater priority to the mission of Christ in reaching the lost in the local community than to internal church activities. (Q3)	3
HEALTH —We not need to give as much attention to temperance work as we did in the past because fewer Americans are smoking and consumption of alcoholic beverages is down. (Q30)	3
FAMILY —Weddings should not be conducted in our churches or by our pastors unless the couple has participated in several sessions of pre-marriage instruction and counseling. (Q19)	2

TRADITION/REVERENCE —Our local churches should not be permitted to use drums as part of worship music under any circumstances. (Q21)	2
GENEROSITY —Church members should be taught to give a percentage of their income to their local church, the conference advance offering and the World Budget in addition to tithing. (Q6)	2
ADVENTIST HERITAGE —The unique sanctuary doctrine of the Adventist Church needs to be given greater emphasis in our sermons and Bible studies. (Q25)	2
ADVENTIST HERITAGE —Church members should be expected not only to practice tithing, but also to turn in their tithe to the conference Tithe Fund through their local church. (Q7)	1
VEGETARIANISM —A vegetarian diet is preferable both as good stewards of our health and of the world grain resources necessary to prevent hunger. (Q29)	1
HEALTH —The Adventist Church needs to give more attention to the HIV-AIDS pandemic, including encouragement for each local church to organize an HIV-AIDS support group. (Q31)	1
SOCIAL JUSTICE ---The Adventist Church should maintain its commitment to affirmative action even if the political climate in our country has turned against this policy. (Q12)	1
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY —I agree with the historic position of the Adventist Church against prayer being conducted by government employees for students in the public schools, despite the pressure from many Christians to prescribe prayer in the public schools. (Q23)	1
DOCTRINE —A knowledge of correct Bible doctrines is more important than the level of one's commitment to be a follower of Jesus. (Q17)	1

Top-ranked Values

Percent who Agree Strongly



Second-rank Values

Percent who Agree Strongly

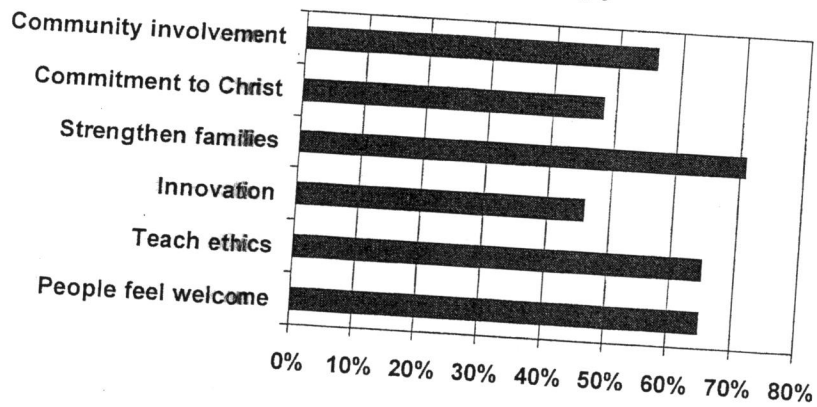


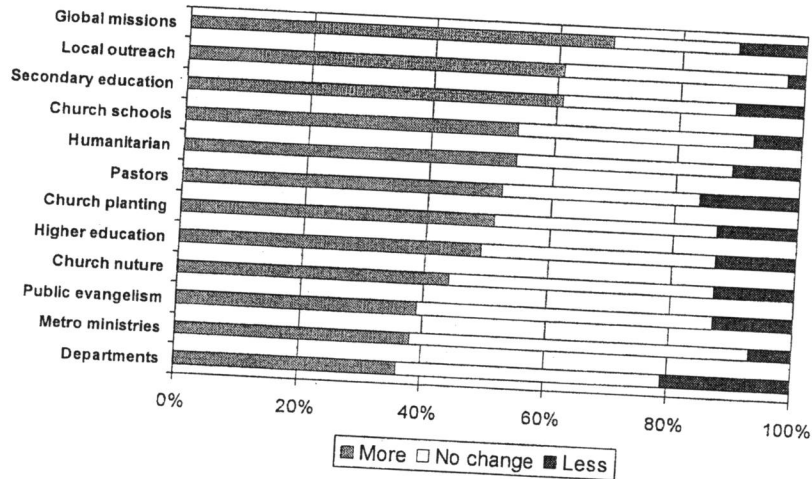
Table 3 - Ranking in Round Three

Displayed in rank order based on the rankings by committee members in the last round.

	Ranking
COMMITMENT TO CHRIST —A personal commitment to Jesus Christ and to follow Him in my whole life is more important than anything else and foundational to all of church life.	1
MEMBERS INVOLVED IN MINISTRY —Each church member should get involved in some kind of ministry according to the gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit and as part of a local, Adventist group.	2
FOCUS ON MISSION —God’s primary purpose for His church is that it focus on the mission of Christ—reaching the lost in the world—more than the needs of the members or the interests of the organization.	3
DISCIPLESHIP —We need a definite discipleship curriculum for those who join the Adventist Church, to make sure that each member learns basic spiritual disciplines (such as daily Bible study and prayer) and develops Christ-centered behavior in all aspects of life.	4
FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM —Every active member should be taught how to appropriately share Christ in the context of their every-day contacts at work, in the community and among their friends and relatives.	5
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES —Each local church should maintain a regular program of activities designed to strengthen families in the church and the community.	6
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT —Each congregation is expected to get involved in the local community where the church is located and do what is necessary to be seen by community leaders as making a definite contribution to that community.	7
MAKING PEOPLE FEEL WELCOME —People should feel welcome in any local Adventist congregation regardless of their dress, ethnicity, lifestyle or lack of religious knowledge, so long as their behavior is not overly disruptive.	8
INNOVATION —In order for the Adventist Church to be effective in its mission in this current era of tremendous social, technological and economic change, we must be willing to innovate, “think outside the box” and make deliberate changes in some areas.	9
TEACHING ETHICS —The Adventist Church should actively teach all of its members to practice the highest ethical standards in their secular vocation, business practices and relationships with other people at church, in the community and in the home.	10

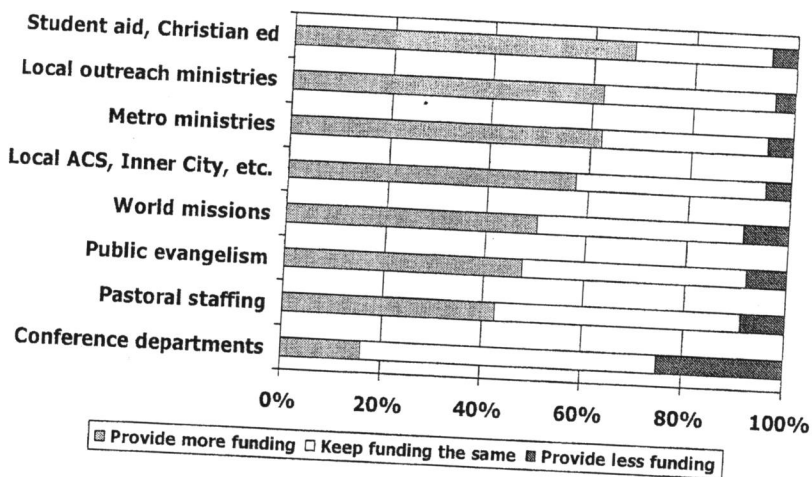
Funding Priorities

As seen by union conference committee



Funding priorities

As seen by church members



2003 Survey of Church Members

Questions Used to Gather Data on Funding Priorities

Spending priorities are another indicator of values. Check the number which best indicates the financial priority that you believe the Adventist Church should have for each item below.

1 = Provide *more* funding for this (which means reducing funding in other areas)

2 = Keep funding the same as it is now

3 = Provide *less* funding for this (which frees up funding for other areas)

	1	2	3
34. Local church outreach ministries (evangelism, community service, etc.)			
35. Local church nurture ministries (children, youth, family ministries, etc.)			
36. Christian education, especially financial aid for students (K-8)			
37. Christian education, especially financial aid for students (secondary)			
38. Christian education, especially financial aid for students (higher education)			
39. Public evangelism, including experiments with new approaches			
40. Conference departmental ministries (training, resource centers, etc.)			
41. World missions, especially in the unentered areas			
42. Ministries to the unreached communities in the large cities of America			
43. The number of pastors in your conference			
44. Humanitarian ministries for the inner city, the homeless, etc.			
45. Planting new churches in communities where there is no Adventist church			