Title: A missiological approach to Russian Koreans in Sakhalin: a Korean Seventh-day Adventist perspective

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Abstract:

Following the collapse of Communism in the former Soviet Union and the new amendment to Russia’s Religious Freedom Act in 1990, political barriers to the Christian mission vanished. With the crumbling of those barriers, the Christian gospel was carried into the former Soviet countries via various denominations, among them, Seventh-day Adventists. The island of Sakhalin was one target area for those mission efforts in which the people of South Korea were especially active.

From 1990 to 1993, the advance of the gospel in terms of membership growth was progressive in Korean Seventh-day Adventist churches in Sakhalin. But since 1993, the growth rate has declined and there has been no remarkable increase in membership. At the same time, local church members in Korea are losing interest in and support for Sakhalin. This study addresses the problem of declining church growth in Korean Adventist churches in Sakhalin. Based on the foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist mission, the socioanthropological background of Russian Koreans in Sakhalin, and the historical development of the Korean Adventist mission in Sakhalin, this research offers a missiological approach as a solution to the problem.
The study affirms that the Korean mission should develop greater relevance to Russian Korean culture and the needs of the people in Sakhalin. This goal is inherent in the expanded mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—to offer a gospel message that is relevant to all humankind. Such a worldwide mission relates to the unique social background of Russian Korean in Sakhalin. Such a goal may also provide an answer for the Korean SDA mission in its concern for Russian Koreans in Sakhalin, and for the limited growth of the church there.

The findings of this study suggest that the Korean Adventist mission needs a new missiological approach to Russian Koreans in Sakhalin, based on a field-centered mission with cooperative mission support from local churches in Korea. This approach may improve missionary strategies, strengthen the financial base, accelerate church growth, and foster a sense of unity and Christian fellowship among Russian Koreans in Sakhalin.