Title: Contextualized Seventh-day Adventist Church growth strategies for postmodern culture in Japan

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Abstract:

The primary purpose of the study is to identify the best contextualized strategies for church growth in Japanese postmodern society. This project attempts a comparison between the current situation of the Japanese Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church and the characteristics of the postmodern context of Japan. A survey done in the Japanese SDA Church, current literature about church and postmodernism, and my personal experience during the 6 years spent in ministry in Japan are the basis for the conclusions.

Two hundred and one respondents from 2 conferences and a mission contributed to the survey used in the study. The results indicate that the SDA Church in Japan has both strong points and weak points. Spiritual ministry is strong, whereas the desire or will for church growth and nurture programs are weak areas. There is a desire for outreach evangelism and communication with society. Currently, Japan SDA Church has hopes for growth based on healthy relationships, Bible study, significant presence of children and youth, small groups, good pastoral leadership, and good church image. Most respondents indicated their awareness about postmodern behaviour and an understanding of the postmodern characteristics challenging the
SDA Church in Japan, such as globalization/internationalization, particularism/universalism, self-divination, democratization, consumerism, therapy, and spiritualism.

The conclusion of the study recommends that the SDA Church in Japan becomes a postmodern-sensitive church/community as one of the keys to church growth in a postmodern context. In order to establish an effective ministry in a culture of postmodernity, strategies were suggested as follows: religious (transforming into biblical worldview, storytelling, modelling of lifestyle, experiential principle, proper using the concept of God), cultural (media/internet, multi-worship, customizing evangelism, SDA calendar-evangelism, image-driven church), social (globalization cooperation, glocality principle, oikos, urban centered mission), anthropological (cell ministry, friendship, partnership, healthy ministry), and changing paradigm (cultivating professional lay ministry, youth evangelism).

Moreover, an all-encompassing model that includes both the personal and public dimensions of inreach and outreach are required in order to propagate a genuine Christian character to postmoderns via the models of incarnated truth, unaffected friendship, and individual experience of the Gospel.