Title: Equipping local church elders: a strategy for assimilating new converts
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Abstract:

Assimilating new converts is one of the major challenges of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. The situation in South Philippines is even more challenging because Pastors take care of church districts rather than just a few churches. Each pastor has an average of more than ten churches to shepherd. Hence, assimilating new converts rests largely on the shoulders of local church elders. Unfortunately, the local church elders and leaders are handicapped by lack of formal ministerial training. Thus, the Seventh-day Adventist church leadership is challenged to equip and instruct church elders on how to assimilate new converts more effectively, in order to meet the demands of a rapidly growing membership.

This research/project attempts to help solve the problem. The project aims to provide approaches and programs for local church elders in an attempt to equip them for the assimilation task.

The process involves two major activities. First is the gathering of materials that deal with the biblical principles of assimilation and the contemporary approaches of assimilation. Second, is the formulation of the manual. The manual is the product of research. It suggests practical guidelines for the assimilation of new converts, and is written with the hope that it will be used by church elders and leaders of the local churches.
This research/project identifies several principles and approaches necessary for an effective assimilation strategy. The principles include the principles of establishing close relationships, the principle of calling, the principle of motivation, the principle of immediate nurture, concern, hospitality, instruction, communication and delegation. The approaches include practical strategies such as the friendship approach, the inclusion approach, the identification approach, the baptism initiation approach, the small group approach, the involvement approach, the task and roles approach, the evangelism approach, the spiritual growth approach, and the social activity approach.

The manual discusses details such as the ideal program during the baptism of the new converts. Perhaps the most practical part of the manual is the appendices which include sample letters, programs, and even liturgies involved in the assimilation process of the new converts.