

**NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION**  
**A REPORT TO THE GC RETENTION SUMMIT**  
**APRIL 5-7, 2019**  
***SEEK: Search, Encourage, Empower and Keep***

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## **A. Introduction**

In the spirit of the good shepherd who would go to find even one lost sheep (Luke 15), and the mission of Jesus who “came to seek and to save those which are lost” (Luke 19:10), the Northern Asia-Pacific Division pays careful attention to the retention and reclamation of its church members.

There have been some ways of calculating retention rate (RR):

**RR = 100% - LR%**

Retention rate is the 100% membership minus the loss rate (LR) which is the dropped and missing members. In NSD setting, the percentage is always high every year, in the range of 95 – 99%. This approach does not give accurate detection of the retained members from the total membership increase every year.

**RR = CA : TM**

Retention rate is the average church attendance (CA) divided by the total membership (TM). For NSD, the rate every year would be in the range of 70 – 75%. In fact, excluding the UT, the retention rate of NSD in 2016 based on this formula is only 23,2%. With this approach, those who are not recorded as members in the local churches of NSD are also counted when they attend church services. Also, members who are abroad, or sick, or in military services, or in any other situation may not be in the church services when the counting is done. Thus, this does not really represent the accurate retention rate of NSD church membership.

## **B. Retention Rate *versus* Attendance Rate**

In the retention report during the NSD Midyear meeting in May 2017 in Taiwan, church attendance divided by total membership in a given year was considered as the retention rate of that year. It resulted in the retention rate of 23 – 33% for the last 6 years, excluding the data of the UT. Instead of labeling this as retention rate, this may be more fitting to be called as Attendance Rate.

While attendance rate is a good indicator of the performance of a church, it does not exclusively deal with individuals whose names are recorded in book of that church. One may be curious why despite the relatively high retention rate, the attendance rate remains low. Some possible factors need to be considered for the absence of the recorded church members:

- Some members may be living abroad without transferring their membership
- Some may be sick and cannot come to church, thus never counted
- Some may be in military service
- Some may be inactive but are committed to be members of the church
- Some may be working on Sabbath days
- Some may be coming to church just occasionally and seldom
- Some may be studying or working in other cities
- Etc.

Efforts to increase church attendance are crucial. There is no question, the church needs to pay attention on this matter. However, disregarding the various factors of the church non-attendance of many members would not do justice to the retention rate. One soul is valuable for Heaven. Our task is now double: to increase and maintain the retention rate, and to increase to increase the attendance rate. Everyone should participate—Total Member Involvement!

### **C. Another Way of Calculating Retention Rate**

Basing on the current membership data of the NSD secretariat, it is possible to track the retention rate by focusing only on the increase of membership every year. A formula is suggested:

$$RR = NI : TI$$

Retention rate is the Net Increase (NI) divided by the Total Increase (TI) of the membership by the end of the year. This formula gives a picture of how many of the total increase of the membership remain faithful by the end of the year. The TI is the sum of the number of baptism and the professions of faith. The NI is the TI minus the dropped and the missing members. In the calculation, the number of death is excluded.

### **D. Retention Rate = NI : TI (2005 – 2016) Excluding UT**

Including UT, the graphic of the retention report based on  $RR = TI : NI$  is not stable. One reason is that there have been significant number of dropped and missing members in UT in the following years:

- 2005 = 4,108 members
- 2007 = 4,851 members
- 2009 = 7,070 members
- 2016 = 3,950 members

Without these losses, the graphic would have been more stable. The reason for these tremendous losses are relatively unknown. One explanation might be related to the counting system of our church in the UT; the numbers that are supposed to be put under adjustment might have been put under the missing or the dropped. In any case, the numbers are huge. This is not the case with all other territories.

To portray a more representative picture of the retention rate in NSD, it is proper to do the calculation by excluding the figures under UT, and considering all other territories as the sample, as indicated in table 2, below.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Total Increase</b> | <b>Net Increase</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 2007        | 7,366                 | 7,161               | 97,2%             |
| 2008        | 7,328                 | 7,186               | 98,1%             |
| 2009        | 6,992                 | 6,600               | 94,4%             |
| 2010        | 6,483                 | 6,213               | 95.8%             |
| 2011        | 6,342                 | 6,274               | 98.9%             |
| 2012        | 5,620                 | 5,485               | 97.6%             |
| 2013        | 5,306                 | 4,994               | 94.1%             |
| 2014        | 5,499                 | 4,171               | 75,9%             |
| 2015        | 4,716                 | 4,015               | 85.1%             |
| 2016        | 4,720                 | 4,245               | 89,9%             |
| 2017        | 4,623                 | 4,498               | 97.3%             |

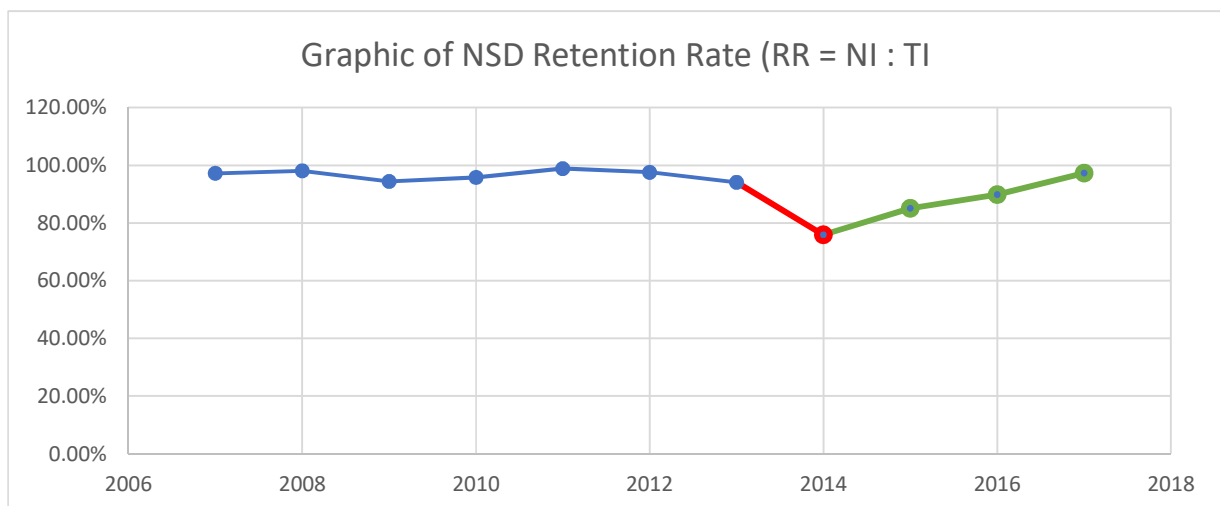
The table shows that without the figures under UT, the retention rates at NSD from 2005 to 2013 have been always above 90%. This is encouraging. In the following two years, by the end of 2014 and 2015, the retention rates are 85% and below.

However, by God's power, at the end of 2016, the retention rate of NSD has recovered and reached 89.9%. With the same way of calculation, based on the NSD statistical data, the retention rate of NSD by the end of the of 2017, without the figures of UT, is 97.3%. This shows a positive trend, praise the Lord! With the figures presented at the table 2, the graphics of the retention rate of NSD look differently.

## **E. Strategies for Increasing Retention Rate**

### **1. NSD Retention Summits and Retention Rate**

NSD held its first Retention Summit in 2014, the year when the Retention Rate hit the lowest point since 2007, namely, 75.9%. It was a significant decline of 18.2% from 94.1% in 2013. In the following year, the rate increased about 9%, during which the 2<sup>nd</sup> Retention Summit was done. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit in 2016, the retention rate recovered and reached 89.9%, and 97.3% at the end of 2017.



Last December 14 – 17, 2017, a Retention Re-Emphasis Meeting was conducted in Taiwan. All SSPM directors of Unions, Conferences, and Missions, in NSD attended the meeting. Coming as the main speakers were GC SSPM associate director Pastor Jim Howard and the senior pastor of Baltimore First SDA Church Pastor William McClendon.

All participants went home after stating a consensus for the work of retention in NSD:

*We, the participants of the NSD Retention Re-Emphasis meeting, affirm that the sole purpose of the church is to carry out the great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ as outlined in Matthew 28:19, 20. Therefore, we are committed to follow Christ's strategy in proclaiming the three angels' messages, including good preparation of the soil, planting of the seed of the truth, cultivation of the seed to grow in the hearts of people, harvesting the fruit of souls for Christ, and preserving them in the faith.*

*We affirm that soul-winning, retention and reclamation will be a natural result of making evangelism not simply as programs and events, but the lifestyle and culture of the church. Therefore, we are committed to promote total member involvement in every stage of the evangelism cycle, that each member of the church is Christ's disciple, using their spiritual gifts for evangelism.*

*We affirm that one soul is precious in the sight of God (8T, 73). Therefore, we are committed to focus not only on the number of person but also on every person of the number. This is supported by keeping the record of the baptized members of the church, using a record and report system that ensures that we love, and we care of them.*

*We acknowledge our limitation in keeping our commitment. Therefore, we affirm that only with the promised power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:18), we can do it. So God help us.*



NSD Retention Re-Emphasis Meeting, 2017, with Pastors McClendon and Jim Howard

It will take a survey to identify the determining factors of the increase. Nevertheless, it cannot be disassociated from the result of three Summits and the prayers and efforts of church leaders and members. We are hopeful.

## **2. Retention Rate that Focuses on People of the Number**

One question remains: Is  $RR = NI : TI$  the most accurate way of tracking the retention rate? Here is the answer:

- In  $RR = NI : TI$  the figure of Total Increase surely represents only the new members who join the church either through baptism or confession of faith. However, no one can tell if the loss rate (dropped and missing) represents only the new members of the year who drop or are missing.
- Any dropped or missing member including one who has been in the church for many years could be part of the loss rate. This is because the data for the total increase, the net increase, and the loss rate, are purely numbers or figures.
- Therefore, retention rate based on  $RR = NI : TI$  may not be the most accurate way of tracking the persons who have been baptized, whether those particular persons remain faithful or not.

**A Biblical Principle.** It is true that the three parables of the lost in Luke 15 talk about number. The shepherd has 100 sheep, 1 is lost, and he leaves the 99 to go and find the lost one. These three figures are mentioned in the parable (v. 4). The woman has 10 silver coin, and loses 1 of them, and she searches the room until she finds it. These two figures are also found in the story. In these two parables, there is no hint which of the 100 sheep or which of the 10 coins that is lost. The case is different in the parable of the lost son. The parable does not mention *how many* are lost. Instead, it indicates *who* is lost, namely the younger one (v. 12). Therefore, the three parables of the lost emphasize the importance of both number and people. These parables tell us that *we are to be concerned not only with the number of persons, but also the persons of the number*. The way we are dealing with retention report has been concerned solely on the number of persons. This concept needs to be changed.

### **RR = FPN : TPN**

Retention Rate (RR) equals Faithful Persons of the Number (FPN) divided by Total Persons of the Number (TPN). This focuses on tracking how many and which persons who remain faithful among those who join the church either through baptism or confession of faith in a certain period. This is not only an accurate method of calculating the retention rate, but this is also a biblical method.

Here is a sample scenario of  $RR = FPN : TPN$ . **The Shepherd SDA Church** in 2016 has a total of 10 new members through baptism and confession of faith. After one year, one of them, Rain, got married with a non-believer and left the church. Three moved to other countries: Fog, Sun, Wind, but did not want to transfer their membership. The local church always contacted them and was sure that they have been faithful. Two members, Sky and Moon, were joining the military service for 2 years. One member, Star, got sick and could not come to church, but has been faithful

sending his tithe and offering. Another three members, Cloud, Storm, and Breeze, have been remaining in the local church and actively participated in most of the church activities. At the end of 2017, the church has a record of these new 10 members:

### Status of New Members 2016

Update Date: Dec 2017

| No. | Name   | Date join | Lost    |         | Faithful |      |      |       | Deduction |          |
|-----|--------|-----------|---------|---------|----------|------|------|-------|-----------|----------|
|     |        |           | Dropped | Missing | Relocate | Sick | Stay | Other | Death     | Transfer |
| 1   | Breeze | 4/12      |         |         |          |      | √    |       |           |          |
| 2   | Cloud  | 5/1       |         |         |          |      | √    |       |           |          |
| 3   | Fog    | 5/1       |         |         | √        |      |      |       |           |          |
| 4   | Moon   | 5/1       |         |         |          |      |      | √     |           |          |
| 5   | Rain   | 5/1       | √       |         |          |      |      |       |           |          |
| 6   | Sky    | 8/17      |         |         |          |      |      | √     |           |          |
| 7   | Star   | 8/17      |         |         |          | √    |      |       |           |          |
| 8   | Storm  | 8/17      |         |         |          |      | √    |       |           |          |
| 9   | Sun    | 10/5      |         |         | √        |      |      |       |           |          |
| 10  | Wind   | 10/5      |         |         | √        |      |      |       |           |          |
|     |        |           | 1       |         | 9        |      |      |       |           |          |

**Attendance Rate.** Based on this record, there is one dropped member, 3 relocate, 1 sick, and 2 for other reason (military service). If we just count the number of attendance to get the retention rate, then  $RR = 30\%$ , because only 3 members (Breeze, Cloud, and Storm) that stay in the local church and always attend the services.

**Retention Rate.** However, we need to be aware, that Fog, Sun, and Wind were also faithful. Although they did not attend the local church, they faithfully attended church in other countries. The church knew about this because the church always kept in touch with them. Star was been sick, but she had been faithful. She returned tithe and offering, and her small group regularly conducted small group meeting in her house. Moon and Sky have join the military service until end of 2018, and have been able to have rest on Sabbath days. So based on this considerations, the retention rate of the Shepherd SDA Church by the end of 2017 is  $RR = 90\%$ .

**A Suggested Report Form.** The table report above may serve as a suggested report form for retention. Names and numbers are equally important in this report form. Each local church may add more columns for specific rubrics.

### **3. Good Reporting Process and Retention Rate**

Retention rate report shall start with the local church, and go all the way through the conference/mission, the union, and the division:

1. Each local church should have a record of new members through baptism and confession of faith. This record shall be in a form of a retention report (see example above). Every time there is baptism or confession of faith in that church, the names of the new members must be entered to the record.
2. The record of the new members is to be sent by the local church to the local conference/mission. At the conference/mission, there will be a database of all new members sent by all the local churches in that conference/mission. This combined record (database) from the conference will be sent to the union.
3. The local church should have a good post-baptism nurturing initiatives through any components of the church, including the small groups, the Sabbath School, AY programs, etc. The church shall track the involvement and faithfulness of each of the new members periodically (quarterly, by semester, or annually).
4. Once a year, whenever there is workers/pastors meeting at the local conference, the church pastor will come, bringing with him the updated retention report. The local church could send the report electronically to the conference so that the database at the conference could be updated as well.
5. As a byproduct of the retention reports, there are names of those who are dropped and missing. This is the work of the local church under the direction of the local conference. The process of SEEK (Search, Encourage, Empower, Keep) should take place in reclaim the missing members.
6. The Union may require each local conference to also submit the report to the Union, ideally with the names of the new members. When the report goes to the Division, it may contain only figures. The record of the members' names is kept at the local church, the local conference, and, if necessary, at the Union.
7. This process may require the keeping of the names for 3 to 5 years only. This means that every new member through baptism or confession of faith will have his/her name in the retention report for 3 to 5 years only.

### **4. Commitment and Action**

Without sincere commitment of church leaders in all levels of the structure (local church up to the division), this plan will not be realized. Everyone should consider the value of one soul: "For one soul is precious, very precious, in the sight of God. Christ would have died for one soul in order that that one might live through the eternal ages" (8T, 73).

The NSD Retention and Reclamation Committee has voted the following:



- Whereas, the mission of Jesus Christ is to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10), and “Christ would have died for one soul in order that that one might live through the eternal ages (8T, 73);
- Whereas, in line with the mission of Jesus Christ, the Northern Asia-Pacific Division is aiming to retain and nurture all new members in the church as many as possible, and to SEEK the lost ones;
- Whereas, the traditional ways of calculating retention rates have been sometimes confused with church attendance rate, disregarding the fact that many faithful members are not attending their local churches for various reasons;
- Whereas, it is important to have an accurate and reliable retention report that includes both numbers and names of new church members, in contrary to simply focus on numbers;

It is recommended:

- That the Northern Asia-Pacific Division in all its church levels, adopt a retention report system that considers both the number and the name (person) of the new members, to be tracked and kept for a certain period (e.g., 3 to 5 years), and thus implement the formula that Retention Rate (RR) equals Faithful Persons of the Number (FPN) divided by Total Persons of the Number (TPN), or  $RR = FPN : TPN$ , considering the detailed descriptions explained in this document.

### ***5. Publication of Electronic Leaflets***

Since June 2016, the NSD SSPM Department and Retention Committee have been publishing monthly electronic leaflets **SEEK 2020**, sent to as many church leaders as possible in NSD. The leaflets contain news about various Sabbath School and Personal Ministries activities within the division, as well as shorts practical articles for the enhancement of Sabbath School, Personal Ministries, and Retention initiatives.

### ***6. Collaborative Efforts between Education, Children Ministries, and Youth Ministries Departments***

A Combined Summit of Youth-Children-Education was conducted to emphasize inter-departmental collaborative works for the retention of young people in the church. About 100 delegates attended the YCE Summit organized by the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, in Sky Bay Hotel, Gangneung, Korea, January 13-16, 2019. The delegates were comprised of departmental

directors of the Children Ministries, Youth Ministries, and Education departments. In addition, all school principals and college/university presidents.



With the theme of Making the Church Young, all speakers presented topics on how to attract young people and to disciple them to be active and faithful in the church. These speakers are departmental leaders of the General Conference: Dr. Linda Koh, Children Ministries Director; Dr. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, Education Director; and Pako Pastor Pako Edson Mokgwane, Youth Ministries associate director, and Dr. Jiwan Moon, PCM Director.

Delegates from all over NSD participated in group discussions. A collaborative works between the three departments were talked about. Schools and local churches are to work together, to make sure that all efforts are systematically done to retain our young people in the church.

The result of the discussions is to be combined to serve as a basis for establishing effective strategic plan, not only for this quinquennium but also beyond. Some agreed efforts include: connecting the local and the school by involving church pastors and parents in spiritual activities of the school; empowering young people to be part of the church leadership; making sure all school spiritual activities to be evangelistic in nature; encouraging young people to be missionaries wherever they are; and recruiting as many Adventist children as possible to enroll in Adventist schools.

## **7. SEEK 2020 Initiatives through Small Groups (Disciples in Action)**

One of the objectives of the NSD SSPM Department is to provide intentional reclamation and retention projects/initiatives in all church structural levels: local churches, local conferences/missions, and union conferences/missions, and institutions. This objective is described as SEEK 2020, which is an emphasis in adding, retaining, and reclaiming souls/members for this quinquennium until 2020.

Since May 2016, after the NSD 3<sup>rd</sup> Retention Summit, SEEK 2020 has been promoted to all unions/conferences/missions.

The slogan SEEK is derived from a key word from the statement of Jesus in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” The three parallel parables of *the lost* (sheep, coin, son), inspires this theme. SEEK is an acronym representing:

**S**earch until they are found  
**E**ncourage until they return  
**E**mpower them to serve  
**K**eept them until Jesus comes

**Biblical Foundation.** These four components represent key concepts indicated in the three parables of Luke 15. SEEK concerns mainly on two important task of the church besides adding members to the church. These are **Retention** and **Reclamation** of our church members. Based on the context, Luke 15 is actually all about retention and reclamation. There is no addition of numbers in these parables. Each parable begins with a number and ends with the same figure. Of the parable of the lost sheep, it is  $100 - 1 + 1 = 100$ . Of the lost coin, it is  $10 - 1 + 1 = 10$ , and about the lost son, it is  $2 - 1 + 1 = 2$ .

**Implementation of the SEEK 2020 Initiative.** Some materials on retention and reclamation are available. One of them is prepared by the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference, available in its website, entitled *Keys to Reclaiming the Missing*: <http://www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/assets/sspm/pmleaflets/Reclaiming%20the%20Missing.pdf>. Therefore, provision of materials is not necessarily the issue. The question is how to implement the initiatives in intentional and organized ways. SEEK 2020 is a suggestion for implementing retention and reclamation in an annual basis. This is in line with the SSPM Strategic Planning of the NSD # 9: *A yearly-cycle plan for Reclamation with a climax on a celebration on Sabbath when lost/inactive church members are re-accepted, either through baptism or profession of faith: Luke 15 concept of SEEK.*

### **1. Preparation**

- a. Training and promotion: The church and its small groups and members need to be convinced that retention and reclamation is a biblical imperative, exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer is top priority even during trainging and promotion.

- b. Heart Preparation: Church members must prepare their hearts to welcome the lost-but-found members. They need to ask God to give them a heart of love and compassion; a heart of joy to see salvation of others. The spirit of the “faithful” brother in the parable of the lost son should be shunned. Without heart preparation of the church members, the reclaimed souls will find out that the church is even worse than it was when they left it. And once they get disappointed and leave the church for the second time, it will be much more difficult to reclaim them.
- c. Administrative support: The SSPM Committee (you may call this SEEK Committee) of the church recommend to the church board and the church board makes an action for support. This committee may be chaired by one of the church elders who is at the same time appointed as the Retention and Reclamation Coordinator of the church. Prayer is top priority during meetings.
- d. Commitment Sabbath: This is a Sabbath when the church pledges a commitment to SEEK for the souls. The commitment begins with special Sabbath School program emphasizing SEEK-ing for souls. Small groups make special prayer before lesson study. A sermon on SEEK (Luke 15) could be fitting to this occasion. An appeal is given to the church members to commit themselves to Christ and to join Him SEEK-ing the lost.

## 2. Action!

### S = Search until they are found

- a. Searching in the books.
  - (1) Church clerk assisted by the Care Coordinators of Disciples In Action look through the church membership book record the names of those who have not come to the church for at least the last 3 months.
  - (2) The names are distributed to each DNA as the assignment for SEEK of that DNA.
- b. Searching through prayers
  - (1) Each DNA creates a prayer initiative to pray for names of the missing members
  - (2) Each Sabbath the church prays for the missing members
  - (3) Each member of the church, each family in the church pray for the missing members
- c. Searching carefully and thoroughly
  - (1) Find the address of the missing members through different ways: electronic media and social network; telephone directory (Yellow Pages); any possible ways
  - (2) Do not wait! Finding them is urgent. Once the DNA discovers the address, start the efforts of contacting them
  - (3) Searching takes time, but one soul discovered is an SOS call
- d. Searching with alertness of opportunities

- (1) While searching for the missing members, there must be opportunities for having new contacts with non-believers. Include them in the effort of winning them for Christ
- (2) When possible, involving them in searching for the missing members would be a point of contact for them to the mission



Retention Seminar in Korea Union Conference: Orientation of SEEK 2020

**E = Encourage** them to return

- a. Encouraging through visitations
  - (1) Do not wait! Once you know the address, visit! There are strategies of doing visitation. Visit with love and compassion. Visit with patience and willingness to listen.
  - (2) Without telling them the purpose of your visit, they most probably know already: to bring them back to the church. So, instead of talking so much, this is the time to listen to them. Simple greetings such as “we miss you” or “how are you?” will be adequate to make them telling you what they feel
  - (3) Be aware of different reasons they left the church or stopped coming to the church. Listen!
  - (4) When first visit does not work, do not give up! The Holy Spirit is working. Make a second visit. Identify who may be the best persons/members of the church that may visit them. It may require a visit of someone who has hurt them or someone whom they have hurt!
- b. Encouraging through prayers and Bible reading
  - (1) When visiting missing church members, praying for them works more effective than asking them so many questions or explaining them theological ideas. They know already most of the fundamental beliefs of our church



- (2) Read for them encouraging and comforting Bible texts relevant to the reason why they left the church. Choose Bible texts that presents in a direct and simple way the love of God, the hope for sinners, etc.
- (3) Tell the missing members that the church and all the members are praying for them and longing for them to return

c. Encouraging through special and honest attention

- (1) Make something special for their special occasion, including their day of baptism
- (2) Offer them an opportunity to host a small group meeting
- (3) At this point, you may even invite them to visit other missing members



**Small Group Ministry:  
An Option?**

"We decided to utilize small groups for TMI 2019," said Pastor Noah Lai, the president of Taiwan Conference (TWC). For that purpose, the TWC conducted the training on small group ministries to all church pastors and elders in the conference, January 20 - 23, 2019. Topics presented at the training program include:

- Biblical foundation for unity in action
- Small group is not an option, it is the way
- Small group cycle
- 90-minute small group program

The Bible provides examples that emphasize the importance of doing things together the same way for better result in a mission. The story of Gideon and his 300 men that conquered the Midianites and Amalekites is just one example. They had to blow the trumpet together, broke the clay jars together, shouted together, although they were split into smaller groups of 100 people each. This point was emphasized by Pastor Richard Sabuin, NSD SSPM Director, who

- Small groups as bases from retention
- Small group, baptismal service, and retention
- Bible study in small groups

presented these topics. Brother Joseph Ma, TWC Education Director translated all the presentations.

Although small group ministry being the basis for evangelism and church life is not a new idea, it has not been implemented thoroughly and properly in many the churches. Yes, there are Sabbath School classes, but many of these classes meet only on Sabbath morning for discussing the Sabbath School lessons. Logically, the idea of splitting into smaller groups for Sabbath School discussion is to have the involvement of as many members as possible in the discussion. This is the principle that should be also applied in other aspects of the church life, including mission and evangelism. The Bible gives examples on the success of small group ministries: Moses who divided the people of Israel into groups of 10 people; Jesus who had the foundation of Christianity by training 10 disciples; Paul who decided to train 12 disciples in Ephesus to spread the gospel in Asia minor and beyond. So, small group ministry is not only an option for evangelism. It is the biblical way of doing evangelism and managing the church.

One component of small group activities is Bible Study. Many have been trying their best to find good resources. Yes, there are good materials for Bible Study in the small groups. The most accessible material is what the church has provided, namely, the Sabbath School Bible Study Guide. Small groups may use this in their meetings during the week. This will help them not to spend the whole one hour in the Sabbath School classes just to discuss the lesson. This one hour for Sabbath School classes should also include mission planning, fellowship, and prayers.

At the end of the training, all pastors made a commitment to implement small group ministries in their local churches, in preparation for the TMI 2019 Evangelism this year. Public evangelism without proper soil preparation and seed planting through small groups will not be as successful as it should be. Therefore, is small group ministry an option for church growth? No, it is not simply an option, it is the way to do it! - Richard Sabuin, NSD SSPM Director



Monthly SEEK 2020 Leaflet published by NSD SSPM Department and Retention Committee

**E = Empower** them to serve

a. Empowering through **celebrating** their return

- (1) Some returning members would request for re-baptism due to a great guilty feeling of their past sins. Usually this is the case of those who were disciplined by the church. In most cases, re-baptism is not necessary. However, a celebration is an imperative as exemplified by the Great Shepherd
- (2) Every year, or every six months, or even every quarter, set a date for celebrating the return of the lost-but-found members

- (3) Celebration may include a special sermon, special musical presentation, special Sabbath meals, special prayer, special welcome-home announcement, etc. Each local church may have its unique way of celebration
- b. Empowering through re-installing them into church ministry
- (1) The church has to prepare a work in which returning members can do, and introduce them during the celebration: They should immediately be attached to a DNA (preferable the DNA that found them); tell them what sort of ministry in the church that they could be part of. Call them to the front and offer a prayer of dedication.
  - (2) A returning member who has been lost for many years may find it strange on the first Sabbath of his return. They may be considered like a new convert that has to go through a process of assimilation into the flock
  - (3) Give the reclaimed members discipleship training to equip them for service and becoming active members of the DNA.
  - (4) The returning members do not necessarily take a responsibility of being a church officer. A service could be being a member of a prayer team, being an interest coordinator in a DNA, etc. The bottom line is that every returning member should be given something to do immediately
- c. Empowering them by asking them to encourage others
- (1) The reclaimed members may be the best leaders of the next SEEK effort program
  - (2) Ask them to give testimony before the church about God's love, and the situation of being far from God's love. Their testimonies may encourage those members who may have been thinking of leaving the church not to leave the church.

#### K = Keep them until Jesus returns

This is a stage in which the reclaimed members have been fully restored, assimilated, and have strong faith. In this stage, they are no longer the target of the initiative. They are the initiators and the implementers of the initiative.

- a. Keeping one another
- (1) Love one another (John 15:17)
  - (2) Receive one another (Rom 15:7)
  - (3) Admonish one another (Rom 15:14)
  - (4) Care for one another (1Cor 12:25)
  - (5) Serve one another (Gal 5:12)
  - (6) Forgive one another (Eph 4:32)
  - (7) Bearing with one another (Col 3:13)
  - (8) Comfort one another (1Thess 4:9)
  - (9) Edify one another (1Thess 5:11)
  - (10) Minister spiritual gifts to one another (1Pet 4:10)

b. .... till Jesus comes

- (1) Be good stewards of the talents until Jesus comes (Luke 19:13)
- (2) Proclaim the salvation till Jesus comes (1Cor 11:26)
- (3) Be faithful till Jesus comes (Rev 2:25)

## **F. Closing Words**

Retention of our church members is a continuous work that requires collaboration of all components of the church, thus a Total Member Involvement (TMI). More things need to be done. But more than strategies and efforts, is our commitment to keep the members in the church until Jesus comes again. This is a demonstration of our love to God and to others.