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***Implementing a Mission Scorecard***

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(book chapter for GC Nurture & Retention book, 2020)

During the first few years of my ministry, I was more effective at getting new people into the church than at retaining them. New members were immersed in water without being immersed in a clear discipling process. And unfortunately, because there was not an intentional plan before and after baptism, several of these individuals and families are no longer part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church today. I was most certainly a product of my environment, having grown up and been trained in a paradigm where baptism is the primary metric of success. Fortunately, there was a shift in my experience. I discovered that while baptism will always be a key milestone in the journey of evangelism and discipleship, it must be placed within the larger framework of mission. Developed in the trenches, refined through study, and adaptable to your context, what follows is a simple process to implement a mission scorecard in local churches. Specifically, this scorecard asks what areas should our churches focus on both before and after baptism, and how might we measure it? Furthermore, how can such a process be adaptable to various contexts, contributing to a more holistic culture around evangelism? A four-step process

is recommended: start with Biblical principles rather than best practices, identify what you will measure, create a functional scorecard, and celebrate culture change.

### **Start with Biblical Principles, not Best Practices**

As with any initiative, it is essential to start with biblical principles rather than best practices. What follows are a few key concepts which speak to the “why” before the “how”.

### **We Cannot have the Retention of all Believers without the Ministry of All Believers**

Jesus’ commission in Matthew 28:18-20—the most familiar of his five great commission communications (Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:46-48; Jn 20:21; Acts 1:8)—applies not only to the apostles but to all believers. While the exact sequence of these communications is debated, what emerges from these forty-day, post-resurrection interactions, is the larger body of believers whom Jesus instructed (Mt 28:7-10; Lk 24:36-49; Acts 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:6). “The commission had been given to the twelve when Christ met with them in the upper chamber; but it was now to be given to a larger number. At the meeting on a mountain in Galilee, all the believers who could be called together were assembled...about five hundred.” (Desire of Ages, 818-819). Emphasizing how all believers are ordained to carry out the great commission, White continues:

“The Savior’s commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to assume that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men.” (Desire of Ages, 822).

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Given the role language plays in shaping culture, how might our terms of reference become synchronized with the ministry of all believers as taught in Scripture? The late British evangelist, writer, and preacher John Stott writes about such realignment that took place in his personal life around 1950:

“We do a great disservice to the Christian cause whenever we refer to the pastorate as ‘the ministry’, for by our use of the definite article we give the impression that the pastorate is the only ministry there is...I repented of this view, and therefore of this language, about twenty five years ago, and now invite my readers, if necessary, to join me in penitence.” (Stott & Wright, 2015, p. 55)

Together, built upon Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone, all believers are living stones forming a new priesthood (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:20-21; I Pet 2:4-6). Shifting our focus from holy places to holy people, the New Testament expects all believers to minister in all places. (WagenerSmith, 2019)

### **The Way we Come into the Church Shapes the Way we Continue with the Church**

When new people join a church culture as consumers without contributing in meaningful ways before baptism, expecting them to actively minister after baptism is often foreign. In the New Testament, being baptized into Christ is not simply a change of status but one of identification and participation in the ministry of Christ’ suffering, death, and resurrection (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27; Col. 2:12, et al). In the same way, being baptized into the body of Christ is about engagement with the mission of Christ, not merely a change in religious self-identification. We are all baptized into “one body” (1 Cor 12:13) of which we all have our parts to play (1 Cor 12:14-31), based upon the various giftings we have received from the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:5). Indeed, the very act of “equipping” within this “one body” can be likened to setting a broken bone in place to restore functionality (Eph 4:4, 11-13) (Strong, 2007).

What does this all mean for nurture and retention of new members? Put simply, since involvement with mission and ministry is a key predictor of member longevity, before baptism is

an ideal time to begin incorporating this engagement and culture of service. If there is no pathway to such involvement before baptism, then becoming a member through baptism lacks the biblical involvement in ministry forcing attempts to solve the problem on the back end.

### **Church Growth is God’s Job, Intentional Disciple-Making is our Job**

Our belief in who grows the church has a direct effect on the retention of new believers. If we believe church growth is our job, then making members (not disciples) becomes the primary objective, rendering retention as a secondary consideration. Fortunately, Jesus clarified that the church belongs to Him and He will grow His church (Matt 16:18). This understanding is not only a safeguard from the adulation of human workers—only God can be praised for growth—but also creates an authentic and attractive culture as new people are not treated as mere numbers. Our responsibility as ministers in God’s church (whether administrators, pastors, teachers, elders, etc.) is to make disciples. According to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, our mission imperative is to “make disciples” through the three participles or means of: “going” (forming deep relationships in new places and among new people groups), “baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (immersion in water and the character of the triune God), and “teaching them to observe all things” (active obedience to the doctrines of Jesus Christ and Holy Scripture). If we will embrace our view as intentional disciple-makers, equipping and nurturing new people both before and after baptism, God will surely grow His Church. As expressed by Ellen White in the context of all members being called to mission work, “God depends upon you, the human agent, to fulfill your duty to the best of your ability, and He Himself will give the increase” (E. White, 1990, p. 190).

The primacy of making disciples over making members takes on an expanded significance when placed within the context of God’s end-time commandment-keeping people:

“The Adventist Church has always claimed to be God’s remnant church, because it keeps all the commandments of God. Could it be that a church cannot claim to be the remnant church if it does not keep the commands of Christ as well? That would simply mean that to be God’s remnant, the church must be keeping the Great Commission, which demands the making of disciples as the primary aim of the mission of the church. Any church that is not doing so cannot claim to be the remnant. Such a disobedient church needs to repent of its omission—its failure to fulfill the Great Commission.” (Burrill, 1996, p. 51)

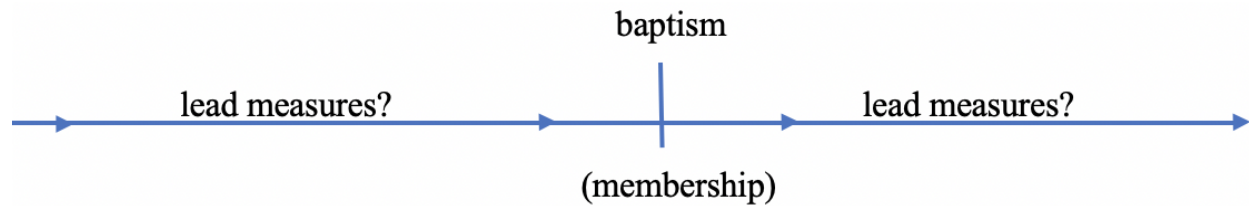
### **Identify what you will Measure**

Building upon basic biblical principles, since God is responsible for the outcome, the church must develop new metrics other than outcomes. A key concept to stimulate thinking around what you will track is the difference between a lead measure and a lag measure. Lead measures are present tense activities that are influenceable and predictive of future goals; lag measures tell us if those goals were reached, exist in the past, and cannot be changed (McChesney & Covey, 2016). While we will always measure outcomes, conventional church culture overemphasizes lag measures to the exclusion of lead measures. Here’s a chart illustrating this needed shift in a local church or conference:

	<b>Lag Measure</b>	<b>Lead Measure</b>
Baptisms	# of people baptized	# of people in baptismal class
Financial Giving	# of tithe and offering dollars given	% of family units actively giving
Small Groups	# of small groups meeting	# of people being trained to become small group leaders

Only God can change the human heart and bring the outcomes. Our job (under His guidance and empowerment) is to make disciples as we bring clarity, priority, and accountability to the lead

measures. Take time in your local church or conference to identify what lead measures you will focus on in the lives of new disciples both before and after baptism:



Through experience in adapting the mission scorecard to different contexts, here are three suggested lead measures for each side of the baptism experience in the lives of new people.

### **Recommended Lead Measures Before baptism:**

- Relationship—what are the names of at least three members who have formed a deep and authentic friendship with the new person?
- Ministry—what is the name of the ministry the new person serves on?
- Theology—when did the new person start Bible studies and what was the date of the most recent study?

A few notes on lead measures before baptism are important here. In terms of relationship, you might decide to track the names of individual members or the names of family units—which creates a culture of families on mission and brings young children into the task of disciple-making. Secondly, a close relationship means sharing real life outside of the Sabbath worship or other official church events. In regards to ministry, common sense is in order here. While a local



church does not ask unbaptized persons to preach and teach Sabbath School, they must create ministry opportunities that are immediate and intentional for new people (these vary based upon context). In regards to theology or Bible as a lead measure, intentional and regular Bible conversation and study places new people in a position for God to transform their heart in surrender towards baptism. Some churches excel at theology but fail miserably at relationship and ministry engagement before baptism. The other extreme thrives on friendships and involvement but minimizes our prophetic message as Adventists. It doesn't have to be a sequential process; balance and a holistic approach is key.

**Recommended lead measures after baptism include:**

- Ministry—What is the name of the ministry the new member serves on?
- Discipleship Path—How is the new member being equipped to live as a disciple?
- Relationship—What is the name of a new person the member is relationally discipling?

A few comments on lead measures after baptism. First, while the specific ministries that every member serve on should be counted towards the goal of complete member involvement. Secondly, while a church's discipleship path (or specific strategy for disciple-making) begins in a person's life long before baptism, the specifics of what a church does are key to produce multiplication and disciple-making disciples. Track progress through this process or steps. Third, the name of someone the new member is relationally discipling creates a full circle with the new member now becoming one of at least three individuals or family units forming authentic and intentional relationship with a new person. Nurture and retention is impacted positively through this process as new members continue in meaningful relationship, engagement with ministry and deepening discipleship, and a clear sense of a larger purpose or mission. While the above

recommendations must obviously be contextualized, it is essential to decide what you will measure both before and after baptism. Building upon the above, here's a sample grid for the mission scorecard:

### **Create a Functional Scorecard**

With your key lead measures in place, it's time to create and implement a functional scorecard. To accomplish this, think through four basic questions:

#### **What Group of Leaders is Best Suited to Work with the Scorecard on a Regular Basis?**

Since the scorecard is an internal way to intentionally make sure new people not only join but stick with the church in full engagement, what specific team in the local church is best situated to have access to and work with the scorecard? Some common examples include the elder team, Sabbath School or small group leaders, church board, ministry leaders, evangelism planning council, etc. This is the group that needs to be involved in shaping what the lead measures will be, and taking an active part in its implementation.

#### **Who will be the Caretaker of the Scorecard?**

Once you have a designated group, you need a specific individual to be the caretaker of the scorecard. While anyone on the team will report and can update the scorecard, the caretaker is the primary person responsible to make sure it is updated and current (including adding or removing names). A common choice is the church secretary, a role with significant mission potential. Since they already track membership transfers and adjustments, being a caretaker of the scorecard enhances their role in tracking lead measures around becoming and retaining a

fully engaged membership. Some churches have also selected their personal ministries leader as a caretaker. A temporary but meaningful option would be a Bible worker for an evangelistic effort, where their primary purpose is not simply giving Biblical studies with interested persons but ensuring the new people are connected to the lead measures which you have decided on in advance.

### **What Tool will you Use to View and Update the Scorecard?**

The scorecard both combines the traditional “interest list” (those who are not yet members) and “inactive member list” (those who are technically members but have left or often on the verge of leaving the church), placing them within a more holistic context of disciple-making. In order to have a functional list that is easily viewable and updatable by your designated team, decide what tool will be best for you to use. One simple and free practice is to place your pre and post-baptism lead measures on a spreadsheet, have each of your team members download it onto a free spreadsheet app (like *Google Sheets*) on their phones or computers, then each person can update it in live time. To shape intentional prayer and awareness of needs, it is important that the scorecard be both accessible and confidential among team members.

### **How will you Create a Healthy Rhythm of Accountability when using the Scorecard?**

Now that you have identified your lead measures, the specific group and caretaker working with it, and how you will view and update the scorecard, it’s time to implement it. To create an ongoing culture (not merely one-off events) which prioritizes discipleship and retention, it is essential to create a rhythm of accountability for the team members working the scorecard. Gather your team regularly to pray over and give reports on the scorecard, either through integrating it into an existing meeting (i.e. elders, church board, small group leaders) or

a scorecard-specific meeting. When you're together, review the process, pray over the names, and ask (don't tell) each team member what one thing they will do to move someone further along in the scorecard (either towards baptism or after baptism) before you meet next. Have the caretaker of the scorecard write down everyone's commitments ("who does what by when") including the person leading out. For example, if a new person is receiving Bible studies and has close relationships but is not yet involved in ministry, one commitment might be to introduce the new person to a ministry leader involved in an area of common interest before the next meeting. Then, at the start of each meeting you ask team members to give a report on the commitments they made and how it went. This ensures a rhythm of built-in accountability where following through becomes the norm, not the exception. While it's true that all cultures handle accountability different, the engagement of team members in who and how they are nurturing others on the scorecard goes a long way.

### **Celebrate Culture Change**

The future of growth and retention will be realized in placing a greater emphasis on developing an evangelistic culture than on evangelistic programming. As changes begin happening, celebrate how the Lord is changing you culture. The implementation and impact of a mission scorecard carries with it the retention of new members as a consequence of holistic evangelism and intentional disciple-making. In light of the massive membership losses in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it has been observed in many settings that what we are facing is fundamentally a discipleship—not a retention—issue. The scorecard is simply one of many ways to address the disease rather than the symptoms. Further opportunities to assess and address a church's culture—what people feel and experience when they connect with a church—also

contribute to courageously approaching this issue in practical ways. And yet, while strategies and scorecards do indeed have their place, the God's church is fundamentally a spiritual organism, not an organization. Program-driven views of the church create programmatic solutions, yet there are ultimately no administrative solutions to the spiritual problems of how we relate to others both before and after baptism. May the same Lord who promised the accompaniment of His Spirit to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) transform our hearts to honor Him in stewardship of the millions of precious souls who will join or are a part of the Adventist movement.

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