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The Adventist Mission: A 50-Year Perspective

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The first *Seventh-day Adventist* baptism didn't take place until October 22, 1860. It couldn't have happened much earlier because the name *Seventh-day Adventist* was not generally approved prior to October 1, 1860. Those initial seven baptized Seventh-day Adventists who were entered as members of the Richmond, Iowa, Seventh-day Adventist Church, began a process of accepting the church covenant that has since been embraced by millions who have joined the Adventist community by baptism or profession of faith. In fact, between the time when baptismal statistics were first officially reported (1913) and the end of 2009 (the latest full year of baptismal reports), a total of 27,057,602 have joined the Seventh-day Adventist faith through baptism or profession of faith.

During this past quinquennium, a new record of baptisms for a five-year period was established, and offers the fullest evidence that the mission of the Church has not strayed from its commission to 'tell the world' of the marvels of the gospel we proclaim.

The 5,294,765 accessions during this quinquennium exceed the total baptized between 1913 and 1978. In other words, in the past five years, more people have accepted the truths proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists than had accepted the message for the first 65 years since we began keeping baptismal statistics. Truly the spirit of evangelism is powerful within the Seventh-day Adventist Church as it builds upon the heritage established by our predecessors.

Looking back 50 years at the cycle of growth beginning in 1960, we welcomed into our fold, newly baptized members in the recently-entered countries of the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea in the then Southern European Division. While we might not be overly impressed with the current total membership per country (the Central African Republic is 83rd in country membership, and Equatorial Guinea ranks 130th), their *overall* statistical results are quite remarkable. Both countries, over the past half-century have reported remarkable growth rates, baptismal rates, and amazing retention rates, that far exceed the overall denominational average. In addition to those countries, Seventh-day Adventists entered 25 other countries previously unentered during this half-century of mission.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began the past half-century with 1,194,070 baptized members and by the end of 2009 our membership was 16,307,880. Such themes as "Revival, Reform, Evangelism," "One-Thousand-Days of Reaping," "Harvest 90," "Global Strategy/Mission," and "Tell the World," outline a history of 50 years that began with an average of 295 accessions a day and has

reached 2,889 accessions per day. (See Chart 1). And we should note that although our statistical tabulations ended at the end of 2009, our accessions continue at this elevated pace.

Quinquennial Accessions by Division

In 1966, General Conference Secretary, Walter R Beach, made exciting statistical observations in his report to the General Conference Session. He noted that the then Trans-Africa Division established a new record for accessions of more than 100,000 during the four years since the 1962 session. Today we reap the momentum generated by our predecessors. During this past quinquennium, eight of the 13 world divisions recorded more than 100,000 accessions. At that same 1966 session, Beach made yet another relevant statistical observation: in 1965 the Southern Asia Division baptized more than 3,000 members into church fellowship and that one year total equaled the entire Seventh-day Adventist membership in Southern Asia as late as 1930. What would he say today if he knew that in 2009 the Southern Asia Division baptized 59,610 new members? That is more than the total membership of that Division in 1970.

Another first in our history during this quinquennium shows two of our world divisions with more than one million accessions. Both the Inter-American and South American Divisions baptized more members than the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church membership as late as 1955.

Just as dramatic are the baptismal results for 2006: the highest calendar-year of baptisms in our entire church history, and the first time in our history that the average daily baptisms surpassed 3,000. In 2006, an average of 3,032 were baptized every day of the year. Chart 2 shows us the accessions for each of the divisions during 2005 to 2009, as well as the divisions where those baptized in 2006 live. Chart 3 gives us the 2005-2009 percentages of the total accessions by division. Expressed on a scale of 100, we can see that 40 of those baptized during the past quinquennium live in Latin America, and 34 within the African divisions. Eleven live in Southern Asia, six in Southern Asia-Pacific, about four in North America, and the remaining five live in the Euro-Africa, Euro-Asia, Northern Asia-Pacific, South Pacific, and Trans-European Divisions. The location of our newest members surely emphasizes the worldwide nature of the gospel we proclaim.

Chart 4 enables us to see the divisional home of our entire membership at the end of 2009. Because of the members who were already part of the church prior to 2005, these percentages vary somewhat from the accessions between 2005-2009: Africa 36%, Latin America 32%, Southern Asia 9%, North American 7%, Southern Asia-Pacific 6%, Northern Asia-Pacific 4%, South Pacific 3%, Euro-Africa, Euro-Asia, and Trans-European each 1%.

World Population to Member Ratios

At the 1962 General Conference Session, Secretary Beach informed the delegates about ratios. In the 30 years prior to 1962, 5,732 persons existed for every Seventh-day Adventist, yet by 1962 that ratio had cut by more than half to 2,154-to-1. The Australasian Division had the best ratio of 257-to-1, and North America maintained a 572-to-1 ratio.

We can now report that by the end of 2009 there was one Seventh-day Adventist for every 418 persons dwelling on our planet. Chart 5 gives ratios for each of the world divisions at the end of 2009, and Chart 6 notes various country ratios.

Some rather amazing transitions have occurred within the divisions during the past decade. At the time of the 2000 Session, the South Pacific Division maintained the best density of Seventh-day Adventists to general population at one Seventh-day Adventist for every 88 persons of the general population. Now the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, with a population of 159,164,000 has a ratio of one Seventh-day Adventist for every 64 persons. And the ratio for the Inter-American Division with a population of 268,528,000 is 82-to-1. Those are rather remarkable ratios given the large populations within those territories. Indeed, the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division improved its ratio of Seventh-day Adventists to general population from 79-to-1 during the previous quinquennium to its current 64-to-1 ratio. And the South Pacific Division, with a ratio of 84-to-1, now ranks third among the divisions. Southern Asia exhibited an amazing improvement going from a ratio of 1,392-to-1 reported at the last session to 812-to-1 at the end of 2009, and Northern Asia-Pacific moved from 2,918-to-1 to 2,500-to-1.

Selected country ratios with members of over 100,000 likewise exhibit meaningful results during the past five years. Jamaica went from 13 general population per one Seventh-day Adventist to 11-to-1, and Zambia, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Papua New Guinea also show relatively high densities of Seventh-day Adventists to general population. China has shown great improvement as well, moving from 4,027-to-1 to 3,577-to-1, a difference of 450 in the ratio.

And the Audits Continue . . .

The current church administration has encouraged its leaders to take church membership statistics very seriously. Gathering and reporting statistics are indeed administrative functions. Presidents, managers, and directors need and use statistics in their work. Statistics of growth improve morale. Statistics of status quo support calls for action. Statistics of decline alert leaders and members about issues to be faced. Each of these aspects depends upon the accuracy of the statistics rendered.

Following the 2000 General Conference Session, most divisions began to look carefully at their church membership books. The resulting audits, that continue to this time, have greatly enhanced the credibility of our current world membership totals. At the same time, however, the diminishing of our church rolls through the auditing process, has had a negative impact on our quinquennial growth rate as well as on our accession-to-loss ratios. Although our membership grew from 13,936,932 at the end of 2004 to 16,307,880 by the end of 2009, the resulting growth rate of 3.19% is the lowest within the 50-year period we have surveyed.

Chart 7, "Membership Retention Analysis, 2005-2009," depicts our losses division by division. While the overall ratio of accessions to losses is quite high because of the auditing, a number of positive results from the auditing can be seen by close analysis of some of the divisional results. For instance, the Southern Asia-Pacific Division vigorously undertook church membership audits from 2003 to 2005. Since that auditing process has been completed, the division has led the world church for the past two years in growth rates of 7.31% and 7.01% and its accession to dropped and missing ratio is likewise amongst

the best within the divisions. Chart 8 shows the loss-to-gain ratios for the Church from 2000 to 2009 and the average loss-gain ratio for the past decade.

New Categories in Tithes and Offerings

At the 1958 Cleveland General Conference Session, Statistical Secretary Henry Klaser rejoiced that Seventh-day Adventists had finally entered the billion-dollar category. By adding together all the tithes, foreign mission offerings, Sabbath School offerings, ingathering, home mission offerings, offerings for Faith for Today and the Voice of Prophecy, and all local church funds and expense offerings from 1863 to the close of 1957 (94 years), he could report an amount of \$1,075,095,762.14.

Compare that to the most recent reporting *year* of this quinquennium. The North American Division alone surpassed Klaser's 94-year total by more than \$432 million. While our office does not break down the total to the penny as did Klaser, we can affirm that during the past quinquennium we received tithe and offering reports from the divisions for \$12,750,173,973. This means that on the average, every day during the past five years, Seventh-day Adventist members contributed \$6,981,614 to spread the gospel message. *In any one day of this last quinquennium*, on the average, our members thus contributed more than that received by the Church in its initial 36 years (from 1863 to 1899).

Audited Financial Statements and Fiscal Well-Being

Even as growth rates, accessions, and church membership figures reflect the numerical expansion of the Church, so do assets, liabilities, and net worth reflect the financial stability from which the work of the Church is conducted. The figures exhibited in Chart 9 are drawn from information found in 1,683 financial statements for the fiscal year ending 2006. In 42 cases unaudited statements were used for these summaries, and in 988 cases current financial statements were unavailable so the latest available data was used.

Information from Chart 9 reveals that at the close of fiscal year 2006, denominational assets reached \$23.7 billion and represented a 37.1 percent increase over the audited statements available at our last General Conference session. The net worth of all denominational entities, excluding churches and primary schools, rose from slightly more than \$10 billion last session to slightly more than \$15 billion as currently reported.

Conclusion

We have briefly surveyed our past 50 years of mission history. We could have mentioned the innovative evangelistic tools developed by our predecessors: tools such as television ministry, airplane evangelism, Five-Day Plan evangelism, open-heart team evangelism, medical mission launches, orphanages, and other means of alleviating the suffering of the world while pointing toward a perfect kingdom of the future. As we develop the tools of the future, we recognize that we are the inheritors of the blessings that God has poured upon our predecessors and continues to give in the advancement of the Kingdom.

Chart 1
Average Daily Accessions 1960-2009

<i>Years</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Avg Daily Accessions</i>
1960-1964	No Specific Theme	295
1965-1969	Revival, Reform, Evangelism	397
1970-1974	Revival, Reform, Evangelism	528
1975-1979	Revival, Reform, Evangelism	674
1980-1984	One-Thousand-a-Day for 1,000 Days	927 (began mid-1982)
1985-1989	Harvest 90	1,347
1990-1994	Global Strategy/Mission	1,678
1995-1999	Global Strategy/Mission	2,209
2000-2004	Global Strategy/Mission	2,765
2005-2009	Tell the World	2,899
2009	Tell the World	2,889

Chart 2
Accessions by Divisions 2005-2009 and 2006

<i>Division</i>	<i>2005-2009 Accessions</i>	<i>2006 Accessions</i>
East-Central Africa	797,245	150,286
Euro-Africa	25,441	5,153
Euro-Asia	34,201	6,298
Inter-American	1,008,066	212,149
North American	197,905	38,718
Northern Asia-Pacific	95,776	17,923
South American	1,123,724	222,585
South Pacific	79,303	17,950
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean	787,343	134,729
Southern Asia	595,769	195,610
Southern Asia-Pacific	330,093	61,888
Trans-European	20,202	3,635
West-Central Africa	199,697	40,501
World	5,294,765	1,107,425

Chart 3

2005-2009 Percentage of Total Accessions by Division

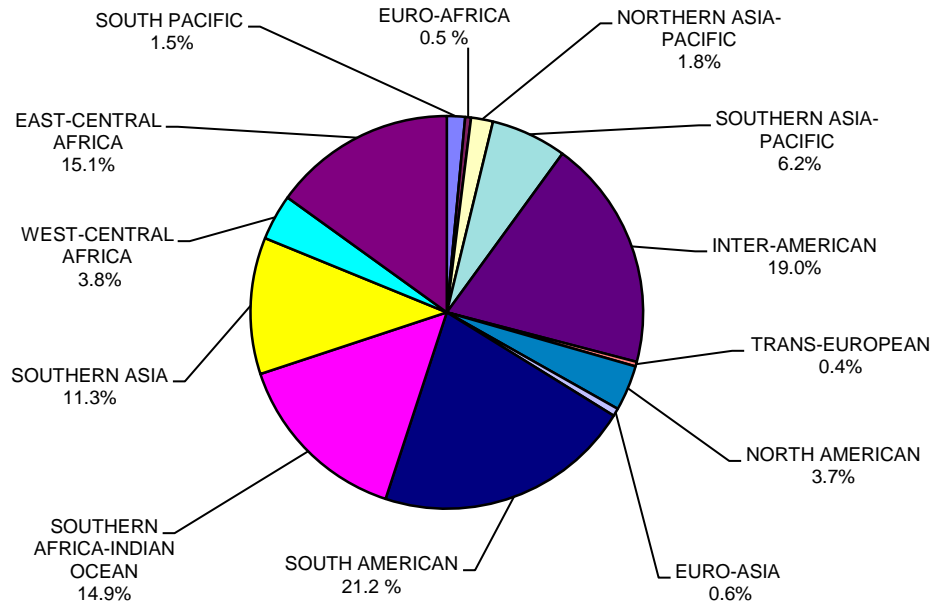


Chart 4

2009 Division Membership

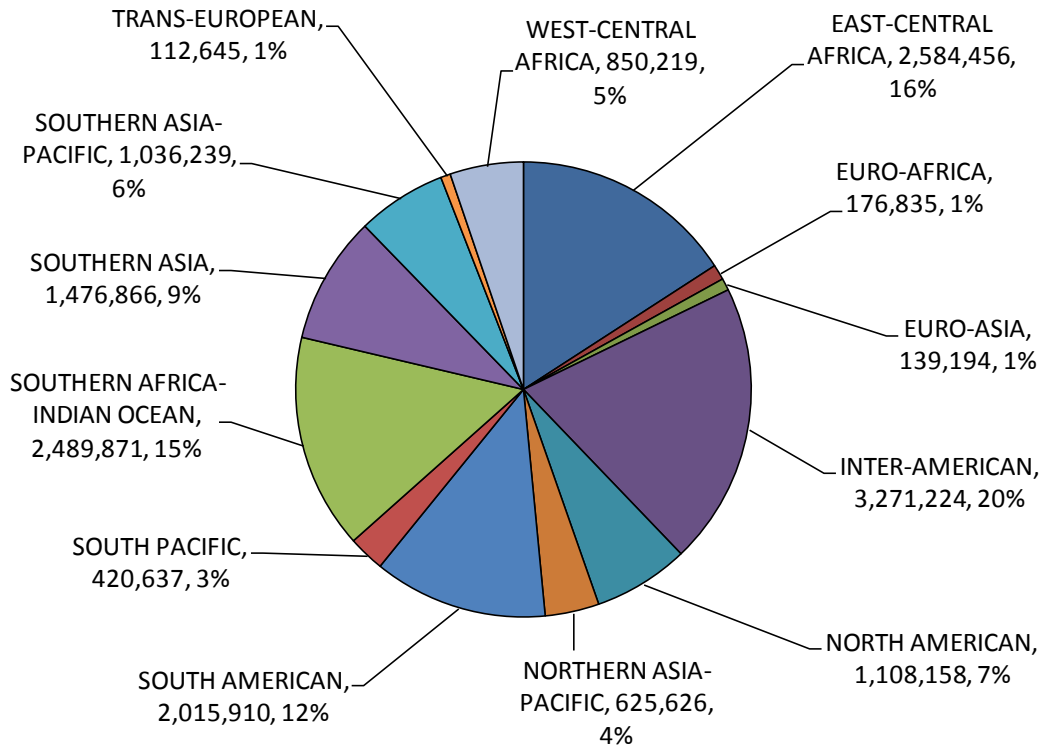


Chart 5

Ratios Within Divisions, 2009

<i>Population per SDA Member</i>	<i>Division</i>
64	Southern Africa-Indian Ocean
82	Inter-American
84	South Pacific
115	East-Central Africa
154	South American
307	North American
396	West-Central Africa
753	Southern Asia-Pacific
812	Southern Asia
2,008	Euro-Asia
2,500	Northern Asia-Pacific
3,370	Euro-Africa
5,665	Trans-European

Chart 6

Selected Country Ratios

(For countries with over 100,000 members)

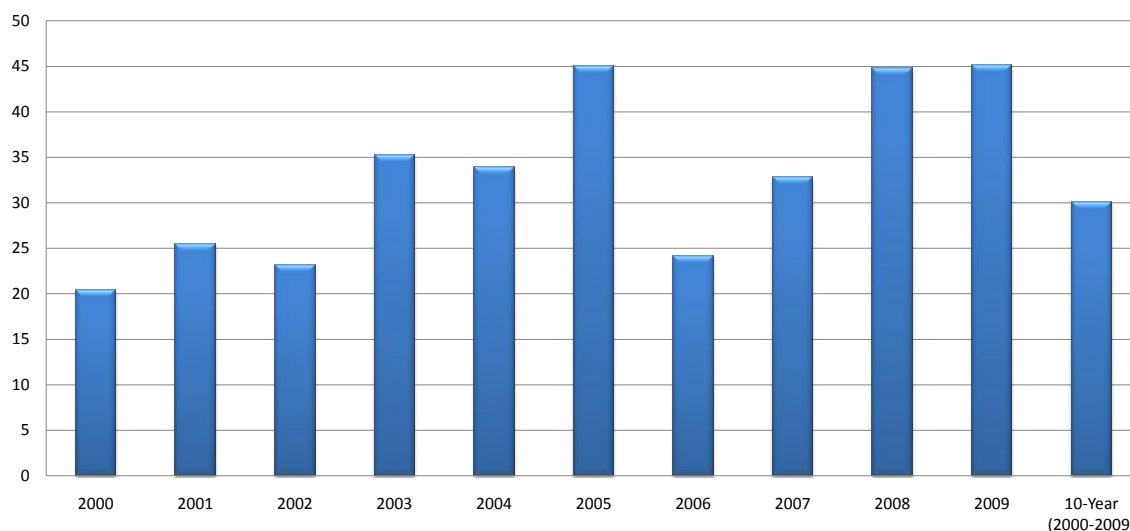
<i>Population to SDA Member</i>	<i>Country</i>
11	Jamaica
20	Zambia
22	Rwanda
24	Zimbabwe
27	Papua New Guinea

<i>More Challenging ratios</i>	<i>Country</i>
471	Ethiopia
555	Nigeria
808	India
1,214	Indonesia
3,577	China

Chart 7
Membership Retention Analysis - 2005-2009

Year	Accessions (Bapt & POF)	Losses (Drop & Miss)	Accession Rate	Loss Rate	Growth Rate	Loss:Gain Ratio	Year	Accessions (Bapt & POF)	Losses (Drop & Miss)	Accession Rate	Loss Rate	Growth Rate	Loss:Gain Ratio
EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION							SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION						
2005	148,169	38,200	7.14	1.84	4.55	25.78	2005	18,544	5,444	4.90	1.44	3.21	29.36
2006	150,286	35,615	6.93	1.64	5.24	23.70	2006	17,950	10,032	4.60	2.57	1.73	55.89
2007	182,697	34,988	8.00	1.53	4.10	19.15	2007	10,586	6,807	2.67	1.71	0.70	64.30
2008	149,253	34,122	6.28	1.44	4.10	22.86	2008	13,333	4,839	3.33	1.21	1.88	36.29
2009	166,840	27,254	6.74	1.10	4.45	16.34	2009	18,890	5,076	4.64	1.25	3.22	26.87
5-Yr Total	797,245	170,179	38.42	8.20	24.54	21.35	5-Yr Total	79,303	32,198	20.96	8.51	11.20	40.60
EURO-AFRICA DIVISION							SOUTHERN AFRICA-INDIAN OCEAN DIVISION						
2005	5,094	1,648	2.97	0.96	1.16	32.35	2005	141,835	24,623	7.61	1.32	5.25	17.36
2006	5,153	1,776	2.97	1.02	0.58	34.47	2006	134,729	21,071	6.87	1.07	5.26	15.64
2007	4,833	1,812	2.77	1.04	0.75	37.49	2007	145,520	17,801	7.05	0.86	5.92	12.23
2008	4,954	1,964	2.81	1.12	0.09	39.64	2008	167,593	17,869	7.66	0.82	6.34	10.66
2009	5,407	1,803	3.07	1.02	0.36	33.35	2009	197,666	25,549	8.50	1.10	7.05	12.93
5-Yr Total	25,441	9,003	14.81	5.24	2.97	35.39	5-Yr Total	787,343	106,913	42.24	5.74	33.58	13.58
EURO-ASIA DIVISION							SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION						
2005	9,129	11,051	6.32	7.64	(3.63)	121.05	2005	151,289	1,250	16.45	0.14	16.26	0.83
2006	6,298	4,253	4.52	3.05	(0.52)	67.53	2006	195,610	14,296	18.29	1.34	16.60	7.31
2007	6,249	4,543	4.51	3.28	(0.65)	72.70	2007	101,950	2,377	8.18	0.19	7.92	2.33
2008	5,631	3,142	4.09	2.28	(0.06)	55.80	2008	87,310	2,435	6.49	0.18	6.21	2.79
2009	6,894	2,317	5.01	1.68	1.16	33.61	2009	59,610	10,412	4.17	0.73	3.34	17.47
5-Yr Total	34,201	25,306	23.66	17.51	(3.71)	73.99	5-Yr Total	595,769	30,770	64.77	3.35	60.57	5.16
INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION							SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION						
2005	187,021	45,680	7.41	1.81	4.84	24.43	2005	62,347	252,887	5.86	23.76	(21.93)	405.61
2006	212,149	42,498	8.01	1.61	6.02	20.03	2006	61,888	26,353	7.45	3.17	3.39	42.58
2007	199,005	38,148	7.09	1.36	5.39	19.17	2007	60,798	14,569	7.08	1.70	5.04	23.96
2008	223,778	43,769	7.56	1.48	5.72	19.56	2008	66,341	9,939	7.35	1.10	7.01	14.98
2009	186,113	40,523	5.95	1.30	4.59	21.77	2009	78,719	5,149	8.15	0.53	7.31	6.54
5-Yr Total	1,008,066	210,618	39.91	8.34	29.52	20.89	5-Yr Total	330,093	308,897	31.01	29.02	(2.64)	93.58
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION							TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION						
2005	36,700	14,575	3.65	1.45	1.76	39.71	2005	4,357	634	4.42	0.64	3.07	14.55
2006	38,718	16,150	3.78	1.58	1.72	41.71	2006	3,635	832	3.58	0.82	2.48	22.89
2007	37,359	16,707	3.59	1.60	1.97	44.72	2007	4,441	1,230	4.27	1.18	2.82	27.70
2008	39,709	14,687	3.74	1.38	2.13	36.99	2008	3,799	652	3.55	0.61	2.64	17.16
2009	45,419	13,386	4.19	1.23	2.15	29.47	2009	3,970	908	3.61	0.83	2.52	22.87
5-Yr Total	197,905	75,505	19.67	7.50	10.12	38.15	5-Yr Total	20,202	4,256	20.49	4.32	14.27	21.07
NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION							WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION						
2005	17,997	4,397	3.30	0.81	2.40	24.43	2005	34,807	3,038	4.79	0.42	4.01	8.73
2006	17,923	1,309	3.20	0.23	2.98	7.30	2006	40,501	12,175	5.36	1.61	2.30	30.06
2007	20,186	5,056	3.50	0.88	2.56	25.05	2007	40,086	8,172	5.18	1.06	3.22	20.39
2008	19,160	2,569	3.24	0.43	2.77	13.41	2008	39,408	5,882	4.94	0.74	3.34	14.93
2009	20,510	2,155	3.38	0.35	3.06	10.51	2009	44,895	12,268	5.44	1.49	3.04	27.33
5-Yr Total	95,776	15,486	17.54	2.84	14.55	16.17	5-Yr Total	199,697	41,535	27.47	5.71	16.94	20.80
SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION							WORLD						
2005	240,563	72,924	9.96	3.02	6.61	30.31	2005	1,057,852	476,351	7.59	3.42	3.32	45.03
2006	222,585	81,794	8.64	3.18	2.85	36.75	2006	1,107,425	268,154	7.69	1.86	4.98	24.21
2007	226,932	188,899	8.57	7.13	(1.17)	83.24	2007	1,040,642	341,109	6.88	2.26	3.60	32.78
2008	213,265	321,181	8.15	12.27	(14.03)	150.60	2008	1,033,534	463,050	6.60	2.96	1.67	44.80
2009	220,379	329,803	9.79	14.65	(10.42)	149.65	2009	1,055,312	476,603	6.63	2.99	2.43	45.16
5-Yr Total	1,123,724	994,601	46.52	41.18	(16.54)	88.51	5-Yr Total	5,294,765	2,025,267	37.99	14.53	17.01	38.25

Chart 8 -- Loss to Gain Ratio 2000 - 2009



In 2005, Accessions (Baptisms and Professions of Faith) equaled 1,057,852, and Losses (Dropped and Missing) equaled 476,351, for a Loss to Gain Ratio of 45.03. Thus, the ratio between losses and accessions was 45 to 100. Such a high number of losses is due to revisions of church membership lists in many Divisions. Membership audits help obtain a more accurate count of church members worldwide.

Chart 9
Recapitulations of All Organizations
World, 2006

By Division	Total Assets	Total Liabilities	Net Worth or Fund Balances	Earned Operating Income	Operating Expenses	Net Operating Donations	Net Operating Gain (Loss)	Liquidity Ratio
General Conference	1,654,033,703	839,160,104	814,873,599	218,796,751	244,510,898	21,439,180	(4,274,967)	1.050
East-Central Africa	101,832,121	19,295,575	82,536,546	14,934,689	15,742,165	2,107,582	1,300,106	1.141
Euro-Africa	985,067,569	351,988,727	633,078,842	25,022,101	28,409,703	1,834,427	(1,553,175)	1.248
Euro-Asia	52,272,845	6,727,316	45,545,529	-	-	-	-	0.457
Inter-American	524,502,868	211,306,110	313,196,758	575,872,991	575,491,338	8,339,780	8,721,433	1.470
North American	12,389,768,612	5,652,823,137	6,736,945,475	2,437,563,390	2,392,060,759	116,815,368	162,317,999	2.250
Northern Asia-Pacific	2,448,382,635	518,391,740	1,929,990,895	977,221,408	1,132,131,188	271,566,573	116,656,793	2.343
South American	713,212,090	177,520,583	535,691,507	517,464,090	525,813,361	37,642,624	29,293,353	1.059
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean	2,759,810,123	49,421,307	2,710,388,816	502,629,668	367,269,186	139,508,586	274,869,068	18.037
South Pacific	1,200,378,082	454,352,468	746,025,614	-	-	-	-	1.038
Southern Asia	49,651,875	13,354,271	36,297,604	7,853,520	9,237,275	1,794,576	410,821	0.838
Southern Asia-Pacific	440,747,577	95,460,662	345,286,915	43,517,599	39,548,404	1,797,857	5,767,052	2.234
Trans-European	344,576,659	126,733,463	217,843,196	117,821,776	125,874,841	6,564,842	(1,488,223)	1.930
West-Central Africa	55,120,764	13,711,354	41,409,410	9,180,140	9,201,665	819,666	798,141	1.315
Totals	23,719,357,523	8,530,246,817	15,189,110,706	5,447,878,123	5,465,290,783	610,231,061	592,818,401	1.964
By Line of Work								
Conferences	7,368,947,312	1,308,342,317	6,060,604,995	2,065,469,322	1,847,100,528	213,927,862	432,296,656	3.171
Associations	1,681,862,227	868,671,439	813,190,788	205,577,003	202,441,288	2,828,979	5,964,694	0.983
Adventist Book Centers	68,615,823	33,117,918	35,497,905	35,381,762	35,058,876	1,939,985	2,262,871	0.524
Educational Institutions	5,309,560,198	808,759,182	4,500,801,016	890,047,876	1,095,460,947	303,483,809	98,070,738	2.552
Healthcare Institutions	8,435,867,313	5,206,528,367	3,229,338,946	1,826,043,192	1,811,159,282	22,983,795	37,867,705	1.596
Publishing Houses	235,179,547	57,786,820	177,392,727	97,919,462	93,555,903	1,655,608	6,019,167	1.018
Food Industries	513,435,969	229,300,767	284,135,202	318,954,778	364,061,847	55,691,134	10,584,065	0.779
Media Organizations	105,649,111	17,688,543	87,960,568	8,484,728	16,452,112	7,719,889	(247,495)	2.479
Temperance Societies	234,680	51,464	183,216	293,834	277,232	16,602	16,602	2.667
Servicemen's Centers	5,343	-	5,343	13,130	65,330	49,565	(2,635)	-
Totals	23,719,357,523	8,530,246,817	15,189,110,706	5,448,185,087	5,465,633,345	610,297,228	592,832,368	1.964