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TELLING THE STORY

Archives, Statistics,
and Research (ASTR)
Newsletter - Issue #9



Holiday 2021 Greetings!

Greetings to our larger ASTR family, our readers! As we move through another holiday season, from Thanksgiving toward Christmas, we wish to thank you for your continuing support and interest in our shared history.

In this issue, we have a couple interesting articles highlighting our non-American pioneer missionaries. The point is worth emphasizing: although most of our pioneer missionaries originated from North America or Europe, our missionaries have, in fact, always gone from everywhere to everywhere. We trust you'll enjoy learning about the Richardson and Sheppard families, and the Fernando family, who served respectively in the Australasian and Southern Asia regions during the 1930s and 40s. In this issue, we also have statistics about where our missionaries come from and serve. In connection with this, we also have some data on the issues of unity and uniformity by our global members.

We also are both sad and glad this year, as we bid a fond farewell to one of our longtime staff members, Kathleen Jones, while offering a warm welcome to Meredith Carter, as our *Annual Statistical Report Editor*.

Last, but not least, we are pleased to announce the publication of our new book, "We aim at nothing less than all the world": *The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Missionary Enterprise and the General Conference Secretariat, 1863-2019*, in our new General Conference Archives Monographs series. Read more about it below!

Early Australian Indigenous Missionary Couples

Dick and Jessie Richardson

The idea of sending Aboriginal couples from Australia to Papua [part of what today is Papua New Guinea] originated in discussions with church leaders visiting Mona Mona mission in Australia and Port Moresby in Papua in the late 1920s. Dick and Jessie Richardson

were the first of three such couples sent from Mona Mona to Pacific locations.



Dick and Jessie Richardson

After their marriage on August 2, 1931, Dick and Jessie embarked on the *Montoro*, a steamer departing Cairns for Papua. Referring to their departure on November 20, 1931, Superintendent of Mona Mona Mission J. L. Branford wrote that their going out was "an event that we have long waited for, and at last it has come. We trust that they will be blessed of God in winning souls for Him."¹ Their departure was noted in the secular Brisbane newspaper *Worker*, which speculated that they might be the first

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Aborigines to leave Australia as missionaries.² Notably, around the same time, six Solomon Islander teachers arrived in what later became Papua and New Guinea, to join a number of Fijians already working for the Adventist Church.

After arriving in Papua, the young couple worked at the Aroma Mission, where Dick oversaw construction of two mission houses and a dispensary; then Mirigeda training school, which they helped pioneer on a modest salary of £1 per month. Finally, the couple worked at Vailala River Mission, where Dick also taught classes. Conditions were often difficult. While at Aroma, Jessie wrote that the house they were living in had ". . . great big holes," which allowed the building to fill with sand when the west winds blew. Despite not knowing the language initially, they were said to have visited up to five villages each Sabbath.³

Dick took charge of an entire area in the absence of missionary C. J. Howells. He oversaw construction of a new school and church, taking part in the dedication of the building with about 400 people present. Jessie was also busy. Apart from assisting Dick, she oversaw the needs of a growing family. At least three of her nine children were born in Papua: Leonard, Robert, and Earnest. The couple served in Papua until May 1939.⁴ After permanently returning to Mona Mona, Dick became the farm manager and played a key role in the Mona Mona church, and later the newly established Kuranda SDA Church.

Willie and Minnie Sheppard

The second Aboriginal couple to share the distinction of becoming missionaries to Papua was Willie (Bill) and Minnie Sheppard. In Papua they assisted missionary C. E. Mitchell with the supervision of the Vilirupu school while the Mitchells returned to Australia in 1934. While there, Willie conducted walking tours of bush villages and assisted with events such as the 1934 Week of Prayer



Willie and Minnie Sheppard

meetings at the Aroma Mission, and weekend meetings at remote outstations. At weekly services the young couple taught Bible, and Minnie also played an active role, taking sewing classes and leading out in song services, using an accordion.

Writing at the age of 92, missionary Robert Frame remembered Willie and Minnie with fondness. He described them as a loving couple, "meek and lowly" and a "fine example of Christian missionaries."⁵ In 1988 Gapigoli Ravu, a respected pastor and a Papuan who had known the couple in the 1930s, described them as quick

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learners of the Motu language and effective in preaching, visiting from house to house and conducting baptismal classes. Another pioneering pastor recalled how well they sang together and taught people to sing, how Willie was popular for playing such games as football and cricket with villagers, and for teaching Papuan people how to wash their clothes with soap.

Minnie is listed in the *Adventist Yearbook* as a licensed missionary as late as 1942, whereas Willie was not reported as such after 1938.⁶

Stanley and Mabel Sheppard

The third couple from Mona Mona to serve in Papua was Stanley (Stan) and Mabel Sheppard. Accompanying Stanley and Mabel were children Marian Beryl and William Theodore (Theo). Initially Stanley seems to have worked as a teacher and mechanic.



Although he was a teacher at the Mirigeda school, Stanley also led out in Sabbath services, supervised the boys' work and on Sabbath mornings accompanied a group of students to nearby villages to worship with the people. Mabel was able to use a variety of skills acquired during mission life. Prior to her arrival in Papua, she had sung in the Mona Mona choir under the direction of Superintendent Borgas, and she had also worked as an assistant teacher in the Mona Mona school. Various *Adventist Yearbooks* did not list Stanley as a licensed missionary, although this seems to have been corrected

in 1942. Mabel was not listed as a missionary, possibly because of her responsibilities to her growing family.⁷

Legacy

The Aboriginal missionary couples were a tremendous success and played an important role in imparting not only the gospel of Christ but practical Christianity. Throughout their terms of service the three couples were given significant responsibilities and were well respected by their Papuan peers and nonindigenous Australian colleagues. This occurred at a time when Aboriginal people in the broader Australian community experienced prejudice and hostility. If some claims are correct, they were the only Aboriginal missionaries of any denomination sent from Australia to Papua, and perhaps even the Pacific region, in the pre-World War II period.

¹ "The first appointees from our Mona Mona training school . . .," *Australasian Record*, December 7, 1931, 6.

² "Aboriginal Missionaries," *Worker*, April 19, 1933, 11.

³ J. Richardson. "From Dick and Jessie Richardson," *Australasian Record*, March 14, 1932, 2.

⁴ "Mona Mona Family Book" (South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education).

⁵ Robert Frame, email to Ken Boehm, November 21, 2007 (South Pacific Division Heritage Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education).

⁶ "Papua Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1938), 77.

⁷ "Papua Mission," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1942), 63.

Adapted by Dragoslava Santrac from a [longer article](#) from the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists (encyclopedia.adventist.org)

Brad Watson

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Impelled by the Great Commission

"Countries hitherto closed to the gospel are opening their doors, and are pleading for the Word of God..." That partial quotation from Ellen G. White's *Gospel Workers* (1915) runs on a banner at the bottom of letterhead used by the Southern Union Conference in late 1935. Above the banner, eight men stand, dressed in distinctive cultural garb, and spread above them are the words "Ingathering for Missions 28th Annual Campaign"; behind them, the upper half of the globe.



Southern Union Conference Letterhead, 1935

Ingathering (which was then called "Harvest Ingathering") was an annual worldwide denominational appeal to, and gathering of funds from, the general public. Adventists across the globe would go door to door collecting funds for mission work.



Fernando and Lowry families

Such mission work was carried on by people like Edward D. Thomas, who worked for the Southern Asia Division in various roles over a 44-year career,¹ and his daughter, Mercy, who, with her husband, Roland S. Fernando, served as intra-division workers in Pakistan in the 1950s.² You can see the Fernandos here with their son, Emil, his wife Astrid, and members of another family who served as interdivision workers in India, the Lowrys.³



E. D. Thomas

The work of Ingathering continued even during the years of the Great Depression, when the amount people could (or would) give was lessened. "We recognize these handicaps and disadvantages," wrote Oliver Montgomery, then a General Conference vice president, "but on the whole our Harvest Ingathering work is an outstanding and successful missionary endeavor."⁴

Still, even with the felt effects of the depression, Adventists promoted the importance of Harvest Ingathering. In 1935, for example, Harold H. Cobban, assistant GC treasurer at the time, wrote, "Unbelief and Modernism, combined with lack of funds, has caused many foreign mission boards to withdraw from the foreign mission field, and others are making retrenchments. This is taking place at a time when there is an unusual willingness on the part of the peoples in mission lands to hear the gospel."⁵

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Some of the strongest supporters for raising funds for foreign mission were those involved in promoting home missionary work. In 1935, the office secretary of the GC's Home Missionary Department, Grace D. Mace, shared experiences from previous Ingatherings to promote the 1935 campaign. She emphasized, "Let it be clearly understood that we are Seventh-day Adventists—a people who have understanding of the times, and are impelled by the great commission to proclaim the gospel to every creature in all the world in this little time before the winds of strife are permitted to blow from the east and the west, the north and the south, involving the earth in the darkness of eternal doom. What a grand and glorious time is this for the church of God, called to unite with heavenly intelligences in proclaiming the last call of mercy to the world."⁶

It's likely that Mace and others like her, who were involved in home missionary work, enthusiastically supported Ingathering the way they did because they believed in what was called the "reflex influence". Indeed, in *Gospel Workers*, Ellen White wrote, "To show a liberal, self-denying spirit for the success of foreign missions is a sure way to advance home missionary work for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off. It is in working to supply the necessities of others that we bring our souls into touch with the Source of all power. The Lord has marked every phase of missionary zeal that has been shown by His people in behalf of foreign fields. He designs that in every home, in every church, and at all the centers of the work, a spirit of liberality shall be shown in sending help to foreign fields, where the workers are struggling against great odds to give the light to those who sit in darkness."⁷

everywhere, like the Fernandos who went from Sri Lanka to Pakistan, or the Lowrys who went from the United States to India. There are, of course, countless examples of Adventists who went, and examples—if we look for them in Adventist history—of those who raised the funds to send them, even amid financial hardships. The funds raised wherever home happened to be supported the financial cost of sharing the gospel wherever home was not.

¹ You can read more about Thomas' life at <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=AAM>.

² At their time of service, Pakistan was still under the Southern Asia Division. See, for example, the entry for the East Pakistan Mission, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook for 1955*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1955), 167.

³ The people in the photograph are Roland and Mercy Fernando, Bertha Lowry, Roscoe and Jessie Lowry, and Astrid and Emil G. Fernando. (Emil's middle initial G stands for *Gentry*, the first name of Bertha Lowry's husband, who died in 1942.) The date of the photo is unknown, but it was taken some time between 1958 and 1974, as Bertha Lowry died in 1975.

⁴ O. Montgomery, "Harvest Ingathering for 1935", *ARH* 112:33 (August 15, 1935), 2.

⁵ H. H. Cobban, "Importance of the 1935 Harvest Ingathering Campaign", *ARH* 112:35 (August 29, 1935), 8, 13.

⁶ Grace D. Mace, "Harvest Ingathering Experiences". *ARH* 112:36 (September 5, 1935), 20-21. Mace eventually became the assistant secretary of the Home Missionary Department and pioneered and developed Dorcas Welfare work.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), 465.

Ashlee Chism

Adventist missionaries go from everywhere to

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Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division Prepares for Records Center and Archives Accreditation

What is involved with getting accredited by ASTR? Read on for an account of the journey toward excellence in the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID).

The SID has always had an archive in one form or the other, as evidenced by almost all its historical records being preserved from its inception in the early 20th century. Our ultimate goal is having our archives and records center accredited as a Center of Excellence; however, since the Archives has not been accredited before, the Division has chosen to aim to be accredited as "Recognized" and build from there. The four successive levels for accreditation are Emerging, Recognized, Approved, and Center of Excellence. The Division aspires to work hard to achieve the highest level of accreditation. As Nelson Mandela once said, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

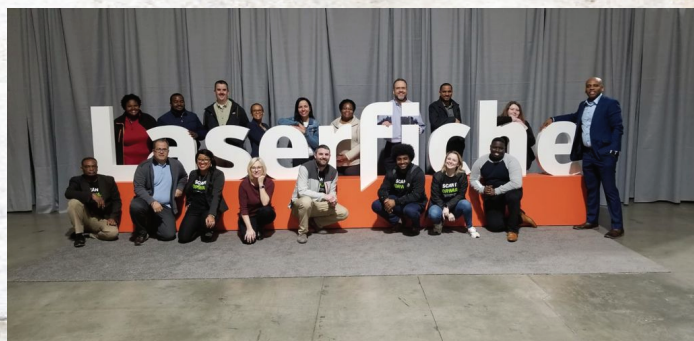


2019 ASDAL Group

The quest for improving our archives has been a priority with SID Secretariat. In June 2019, three staff members were sent to attend the ASDAL (Association of Seventh-day Adventist Librarians) annual conference, which was held that year at the General Conference world headquarters. Their attendance at the conference marked the first steps toward Division staff obtaining a more thorough knowledge of proper archives and records management practices. Our team wishes to express appreciation and gratitude to ASTR Director, Dr. David Trim, for the invitation to attend the conference.

As part of applying some of the knowledge obtained at the ASDAL conference, the SID team desired to improve our electronic records system. When we consulted with ASTR's Digital Records Manager, who at that time was Dr. Kenrie Hylton, we were introduced to

Laserfiche®, a content management platform, which enables its users to automate their business processes and work toward having a nearly paperless office. In February 2020, members of our team went to Long Beach, California to attend the Laserfiche Aspire Congress, which gave us a better understanding of how to set up our own digital archive and records center and provided our staff with additional knowledge. We deeply appreciate being introduced to this product by the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. In 2021, SID acquired a Laserfiche Digital System license. In collaboration with our IT department, a server, solely for digital records, is now fully operational. All the documents of the previous years were appraised and digitized, and are being imported to our dedicated Laserfiche server. These documents include Division minutes, financial records, employee records, and title deeds.



February 2020 Laserfiche Group

In addition to taking care of our electronic records, we took steps to take care of our physical records, which include both an Archives and a Records Center, to be located inside the Division's main office building in Pretoria, South Africa. As part of our preparation for the upcoming accreditation site visit, with the goal of meeting the "Physical Locations and Preservation" requirements, we have taken four key steps:

1. Implementing a security and access control system;
2. Purchasing filing cabinets for bulk storage;
3. Closing air vents; and
4. Identifying a water and fireproof specialist

Access into the vaults is now controlled through a biometric system. Installation of the cabinets will take place upon the completion of water- and fire-proofing of the physical walls, floors, and ceiling. Once the above stages are completed, we will then move on to dealing with other elements listed in the accreditation specifications. We hope to be accredited as "Recognized" by December 2022.

Evodia Khumalo (from SID)

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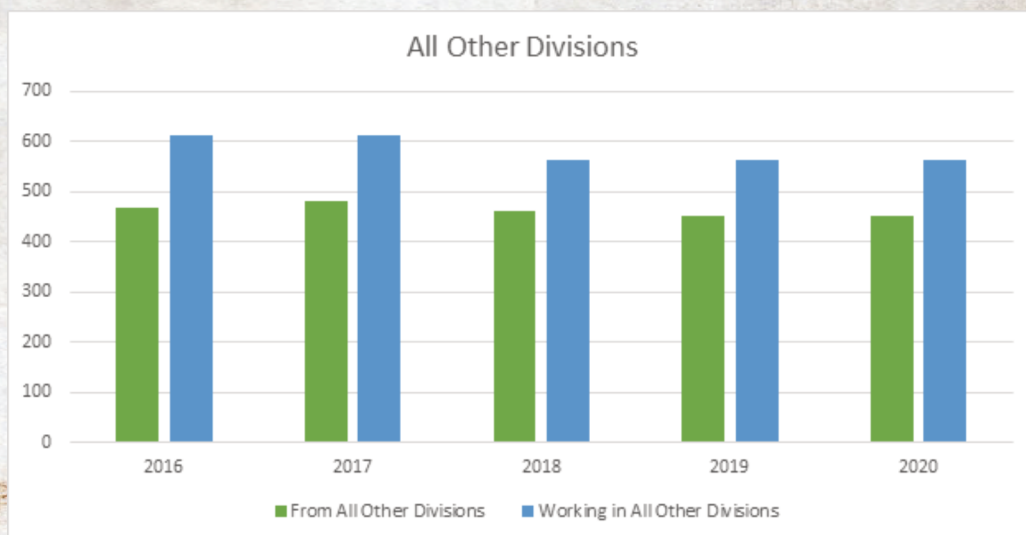
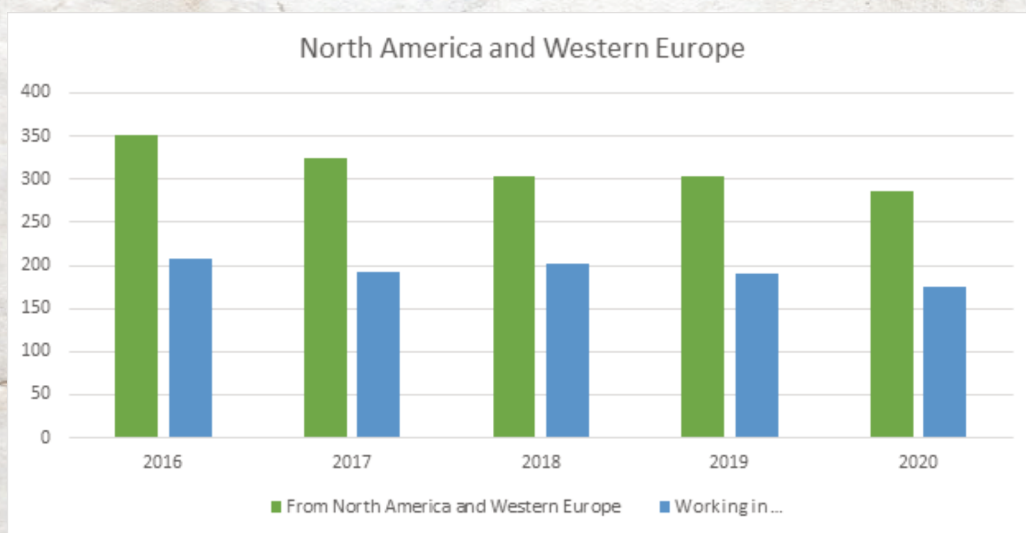
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From Everywhere to Everywhere: The Origins and Destinations of Missionaries

Where do most missionaries come from? Where do they serve? Considered as a ratio of membership to missionary, the greatest number of missionaries came from North America and Western Europe in 2020 (one out of every 5,341.73 members in EUD, NAD, and TED went as a missionary, versus one of every 44,769.21 members going as a missionary from all other divisions). On the other hand, the need is greatest outside of North America and Western Europe, with a ratio of one missionary per 12,202.54 population (versus one missionary per 5,198.97 population within North America and Western Europe). It's not surprising, then, that over the last five years North America and Western Europe have consistently sent out more missionaries than they received. Noteworthy is that even though missionaries come from everywhere and go anywhere, the Church is still reliant on missionaries from North American and Western Europe.



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ASTR Shares a Fond Farewell and Welcome to our Annual Statistical Report Editors



Kathleen A. Jones

Kathleen A. Jones has served as Editor of the *Annual Statistical Report* for 22 years. After these decades of faithful service in ASTR, Kathleen retired as of August 31, 2021. We greatly appreciate her dedication to the mission of the Church. Kathleen, thank you for your long and distinguished service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the many ways you have inspired others through your work. Happy retirement!



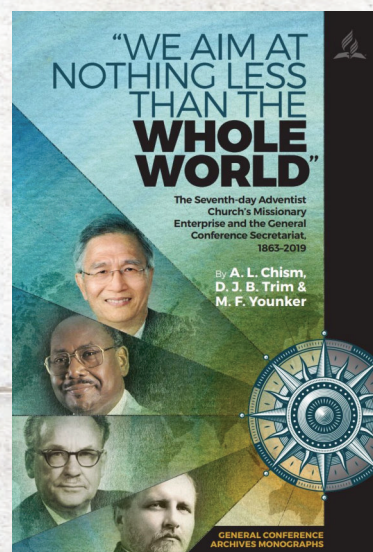
Meredith P. Carter

We are pleased to introduce Meredith P. Carter as the new *Annual Statistical Report* Editor. She is joining our staff from the North American Division (NAD), where she last served as the Assistant Director of Archives and Statistics. Meredith had previously worked for ASTR, from May 2000 to November 2007, before transitioning to NAD. Meredith is a mother of two daughters and the one thing she enjoys the most is spending time with family. Meredith, welcome to the team! We wish you success in your new role.

David Trim

New ASTR Book: "We aim at nothing less than the whole world"

The ASTR team are very pleased to present their latest in-depth scholarship on a very important topic within Seventh-day Adventism's history. The title of our book says it well: "We aim at nothing less than the whole world": *The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Missionary Enterprise and the General Conference Secretariat, 1863-2019*. It is available now on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in hard and softcover formats (312 pages).



In our new book, the first in the General Conference Archives Monographs series, co-authors Ashlee Chism, David Trim, and Michael Younker, explore how the Seventh-day Adventist Church organized itself for missionary purposes to carry God's final gospel message to the world, specifically the structures the denomination put in place to be able to facilitate missions toward unreached fields. We share about the entities and individuals that shaped our global mission endeavors and the associated statistics that illuminate mission trends. We share about the successes, and failures, of the past, with an aim to help guide present and future decisions by Adventist members and leaders. It is the first book of its kind to explore this information in depth from the perspective of the General Conference's Secretariat, which was the primary place from which global mission work was coordinated.

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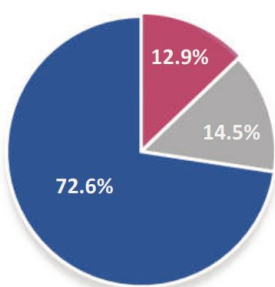
Church Members' Views on Unity & Uniformity

The 2017-18 Global Church Member Survey contained a question on unity and uniformity. Out of 63,576 respondents, 55,029 answered the question, and there was strong agreement that church unity cannot be limited to uniformity in doctrines. Interestingly, in the breakdown by age, all groups preserved the majority in agreement, but the proportion of disagreement, doubt, and conviction varied. More participants in the younger generation were unsure about this question, while overwhelmingly more respondents aged 55+ agreed; their "strongly agree" responses not only outnumbered such responses of other age groups by 30 or more percentage points but also surpassed the total strong agreement for the sample as a whole. Almost all of this older age demographic (95%) were confident that church unity has a deeper meaning.

Jesus prayed about the unity of His followers before His crucifixion. He prayed that His disciples might be one as He was one with His Father (John 17:11). Ellen White writes that "this most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day; for His words were: 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.'"¹ Jesus foresaw challenges that could break the unity of believers, but His utmost desire was their unity in faith and unity with Him and one other. And He is the One who surely can unite us all. As Ellen White also writes, "unity with Christ establishes a bond of unity with one another.... The closer our union with Christ, the closer will be our union with one another.... In unity there is a life, a power, that can be obtained in no other way."² Should we not aim for such unity?

"Church unity means uniformity in more than doctrinal belief."

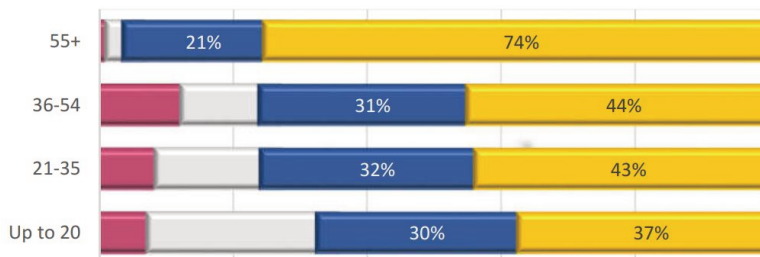
Total sample



Strongly disagree/Disagree Unsure Strongly agree/Agree

"Church unity means uniformity in more than doctrinal belief."

By age groups



Strongly disagree/Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

Visit Adventist Research website for more information on the [2017-18 Global Church Member Survey](https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/114.66)

¹ White quotes John 17:20-21. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, 17.1 <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/114.66>

² Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, 286. <https://m.egwwritings.org/en/book/102.1958#1958>

Galina Steele

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As always, remember to help us Tell the Story!

As a reminder, our purpose here at ASTR is to tell the Adventist story. We want to inform and inspire church members toward a renewed commitment to the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by sharing our history.

You can help us to tell the story in two ways:

First, help us to preserve the story: your stories and the Church's story! Letters and other documents, memoirs, photographs, tape recordings, audio and video cassettes, films, and historic books and magazines: all enable us to recover the story of how, in the words of Ellen White, "the Lord has led us . . . in our past history" and of how God has worked in the lives of individual church members. They are the raw materials from which Adventist history can be researched by scholars and without which parts of that history will be lost. So please, [contact us](#) about sending your family's documents, photographs, and other historic materials to us so that they can be preserved and used to help the great Second Advent Movement fulfill its prophetic mission.

Second, help us to conserve and to share the story—to pass it on to the next generation. Historic Adventist photographs and movies allow us to connect with our past in a way nothing else can, because we look into the eyes of those who sacrificed to make this Church. We want to digitize those precious resources, scanning them electronically so they can be accessed by everyone. We especially want to connect with young people. By digitizing photos and movies, we can help them to understand "the way the Lord has led us and His teaching in our past history"—we can help them to connect with our pioneers and be inspired to service.

Haven't received your Newsletter? Sign up [HERE](#). For previous issues visit our [website](#).



Your gift of at least \$25 could:

- Digitize 100 feet of film = five minutes viewing time, or
- Conserve, digitize, and publicize one historic Adventist photograph from our collection of thousands, or
- Contribute to our continuing effort to preserve and digitize rare Adventist books, pamphlets, and magazines

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- 1) Mail your remittance to:
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www.adventistarchives.org/tellthestory
and click the "Donate" link.

