Adventist Evangelism
A snapshot from history

Some early statistics
“The annual rate of membership increase from 1870 – 1880 was approximately 12 per cent, enlarging the church rolls from 5,440 members to 15,570.” Adventist Evangelism p. 14
-Large denominational camp meetings (T. 6)
-These were evangelistic in nature
-Bible work, canvassing and health work coupled with public evangelism
-The church was rapidly expanding
“By 1900… institutional preoccupations were at last depressing evangelistic enterprise in North America, despite continuing advance abroad.” p. 14
The basic method of this period was… a proliferation of small, one-man tent meetings…. Adventist tent meetings were characterized more by small group teaching than by evangelistic oratory before large audience.” p.15

- Evangelist results began to plummet
- Institutions infrastructure continued to expand
- However, institutions were always spoken of in evangelistic terms:
  Emmanuel Missionary College
  College of Medical Evangelists
  Southern Missionary College

When Ellen G. White returned from Australia in 1900, she viewed with great concern the… situation of the church in North America… At once she began to urge two reforms:
(1) a streamlining of church organization, and
(2) an aggressive plan of city evangelists.” P. 16

-1901 GC - We must reorganize & refocus!

In 1904, all of the North American conference combined, with a membership of 60,000, many institutions, and tithe income of more than half a million dollars, reported a net increase of only 1,325 members!” p. 22

- Her comments seemed to be falling on deaf ears!

Six years later in 1907 White said:
We stand rebuked by God because the large cities right within our sight are unworked and unwarned. The terrible charge of neglect is brought against those who have been long in the work, in this very America, and yet have not entered the large cities…. We have done none too much for foreign fields, but we have done comparatively nothing for the great cities beside our own doors.

White declared explicitly to Daniells,
“Voices are to be heard in every city proclaiming the last message of mercy to the world.” P. 22,23

2 years later (1909 GC), still no change!

“Astonishingly, with few more than twelve hundred ministerial workers in the entire world field, Daniells revealed that more than five hundred persons had been drawn since 1901 into the administrative circle, with what he believed to be greatly increased efficiency...” P. 28

“Daniells, was content to report that during the quadrennium world church membership had increased by sixteen thousand (4 per cent growth). Not mentioned... was the Adventist growth picture in the United States. Here, since 1906, membership had increased by just over 1 per cent per year...” P. 28
Only scant lip service was paid to Whites counsel to work the large cities with the session adopting plans that while good as far as they went, did not emphasize “systematic public evangelism.”

A.G. Daniells - focused on organizational issues.

W.W. Prescott - a scholarly search for theological truth.

“The diffident approach of Daniels and Prescott to the problem of city evangelism, their tendency to concentrate on organization and theology, their failure at the 1909 session to respond to her past appeals to do otherwise, were too much to bear. She sought an immediate audience with the members of the General Conference Committee, and spoke to them in severe terms of what she considered to be their duty.”

“Mrs. White then sought action at once with an insistent message that Daniells and, especially, Prescott lay aside present work and go personally into the field to conduct evangelistic meetings.” P. 50,51

In is interesting to note Daniels description of Prescott’s evangelistic abilities:

“He feels very keenly his lack of experience in that line of work; but he is determined to do his best. As you know he is about sixty years old, and having never conducted a series of tent meetings, nor working in city mission work, it is something of an undertaking for him.” P. 33

-During a question and answer period, someone asked if Prescott could continue to serve as the editor of the Review while at the same time doing some meetings.

How did Ellen White dramatize her message?

“Before returning to St. Helena, Mrs. White…dramatized her message to the General Conference leaders by making a personal tour of some of the eastern cities accompanied by S.N. Haskell and G.B. Starr, two of the old time evangelists, and her son, W.C. White. Included in her itinerary were New York, Philadelphia, Newark and Portland Maine, where Mrs. White…conducted a series of nightly evangelistic meetings with good results.

-How old do you suppose Ellen White was?
-81 years old!

-What else did she do?

Later in 1909 she extensively documented her intense interest in evangelism in the final volume of the testimonies (Vol. 9).

-Health Evangelism
-Canvassing
-City evangelism
-Lay evangelism (Bible Work / Meetings etc.)
-Public evangelism
-Support for Sutherland & Magan (ASI)

Not by proxy - but by personal involvement!

When Daniells came to visit Ellen White and talk with her about projected meetings to be held by others in New York City. “To his surprise and dismay she flatly refused to see him – until he should personally lead out in the work of evangelism in a manner to inspire complete denominational commitment.” P. 38

“When the president of the General Conference is converted, he will know how what to do with the messages God has sent to him.” P. 38
-How important is evangelism?
-How important is personal involvement?
Notice how Daniells related to her message:
“She… sent messages to me regarding the work in the cities in the Eastern states. I seemed unable to understand them fully. Consequently I did not do all that these messages indicated should be done. Finally I received a message in which she said, “When the president of the General Conference is converted, he will know how what to do with the messages God has sent to him.” I did not then have as much light on the matter of conversion as I now have. I thought I had been converted fifty years before, and so I had; but I have since learned that we need to be reconverted now and then…. That message, telling me that I needed to be converted, cut me severely at the time, but I did not reject it. I began to pray for the conversion I needed to give me the understanding I seemed to lack.” P. 38

“At his request the president was relieved of a long-standing itinerary of camp meetings during the summer of 1910 and plans for an October trip to Australia (eventually through 1911 – a year), in order to respond… to the messages of the Spirit of Prophecy.” P. 39

What promises was he given?
“Go forward as you have begun, using your position of influence… I can now take hold with you in full confidence…. The Lord in His mercy will pardon the failure of the past. He will be your helper… We will draw with you and give you all the help we can to use your position of influence as president of the conference, and to work wisely in the education of others to labor in the cities…. Redeem the lost time of the past nine years by going ahead now with the work in our cities, and the Lord will bless and sustain you.” P. 41

Note the impact this had on A.G. Daniels:
“In turning my attention again to evangelistic lines of endeavor, I am something like the old soldiers who hear the bugle call. It thrills my heart, quickens my activities, and give me delight… p. 44

What did he desire to do as a result?
“I wish that I could fire the heart of every minister in this denomination with the feeling I have regarding the importance and the great value of evangelistic work.” p. 44

What was the impact on North America and the world church?

- A special course was inaugurated… (for the) training of “mature young people who can spend but a short time in school.”
- The eighteen week training course included an amazing variety of studies: history and prophecy, Bible doctrines, pastoral training, Bible work, Reformation history, general history, English, journalism, Greek, hygiene and sanitation, botany, bookkeeping and denominational history.” P. 48
- A series of ministerial institutes for all pastoral and evangelistic workers.” P. 48

Daniells: “We are not planning to spend long weeks of systematic study of theology; but… the study of the most vital, fundamental questions which have a bearing upon an efficient, able, successful ministry.” p. 48,49

“Doctrinal themes… studies on the ministry of the Holy Spirit… ministerial duties and methods of work. Not overlooking the personal needs of the workers, he set aside time for prayer meetings and certain “social meetings.” In addition evangelistic meetings for the public were held every evening.” P. 49

What was the result? - Daniells Jan. 8, 1914

“A deep religious revival and reformation are in progress among our people… it is difficult to tell just when and how this revival began… It seems to have begun in the very earnest appeals of the spirit of prophecy during 1909 in behalf of the millions of lost souls in the great cities.”
The Christian Advocate of November 4, 1915
“There are 125,844 Adventists, and the net gain last year was ten percent…” p. 97
“A 1917 survey revealed that during the year major evangelistic campaigns had been conducted in more than half of America’s seventy-one cities of 100,000 population or more; and plans were afoot to cover the rest during the next year or so.” p. 97
“In 1917 evangelistic success brought membership gains to a peak increase of 19 per cent over the preceding year.” p. 99

Prime Time!
The optimal stage of the lifecycle when there is a balance between self-control and flexibility. Vision and mission focuses, unifies and drives the organization. There is vigorous, conscious, mature sharing of vision, mission, goals and priorities.

Christ and His follower did not follow the normal curve. Instead they…

How impressive is the snapshot of Adventist history we’ve been considering?

But studies show that typically… “all good things…”

Multitudes

1
12
70
5000
12
1
0
1
12
120
3120
8120
Multitudes
The same was true in the early 1900’s in Adventism!

“With all its complex organization and its heavy commitment to institutions, the Adventist Church had once again been confirmed as an evangelical movement with public evangelism re-established as a prime function – truly a remarkable reversal in the history of what was already a highly institutionalized denomination.” P. 41

Can it happen again?

**Vision**

If it’s God ordained it will be God sustained!

It IS happening!

Paul S. Ratsara, president of Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division (SID), said his division is targeting Johannesburg, South Africa—with a population of about 3.2 million—for evangelism. The church leaders’ focus is training lay members to become soul winners.

Following Ratsara’s presentation, Finley added that in one SID pastoral district, 273 members scattered in a few small churches were empowered for evangelism through prayer and training. They began holding evangelistic meetings, and 3,000 people were baptized by the end of the first series. Two-and-a-half years later, the district membership has grown to 21,000.
It IS happening!
Duane McKee highlighted the transformation that has taken place in the Arizona Conference over the last four years. They went from a conference that was having to lay off pastors to have a 47 percent tithe increase. They’ve invested in evangelism, and it appears to be paying off in some amazing ways. Their conference has held some 900 evangelistic meetings (700 in Arizona, 200 overseas), and the results are in: the Pacific Union's growth rate has been 1 percent, and the Arizona Conference during that same time has grown by 17 percent.

What about you?  What about now?

“If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as beacons of warning. Thus you turn defeat into victory, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer.”

E.G. White, Christ's Object Lessons p. 332

Becoming a New Creature

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

II Corinthians 5:17