



The Center for Community Change

The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
at Andrews University

HOW TO REACH AN INCREASINGLY URBAN
AND UNCHURCHED SOCIETY

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Introduction

Current Challenges:

- The Adventist Church faces difficulties in growth and community impact in urban areas, with very low growth rates.
- Factors such as lifestyle changes, rapid societal transformations, and a lack of relevance in evangelistic methods have contributed to this situation.



Transition from Rural to Urban Societies

Origins in an Agrarian Culture:

- The Adventist Church emerged in a rural context, where life was simpler, and social connections were deeper, facilitating church growth.
- Rural families were larger and relied on each other, fostering a sense of community and making it easier to share faith.

Urban Growth:

- Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, representing a drastic change from the church's early days.
- This urban growth has resulted in greater social isolation and a decline in meaningful human connections, despite physical proximity.



Step 1: Make the Church a Connecting Place

"Third Place" Communities:

- Churches should become a “third place” for the community, a space where people can interact meaningfully outside of home and work.
- Churches can offer a variety of programs and services, such as gyms, sports leagues, craft classes, tutoring, or cafés, to attract the community and meet their needs.

Focusing on Loneliness and Disconnection:

- Churches can be a solution to the loneliness and disconnection many people experience in urban areas by providing a sense of community and belonging.



Step 2: Make the Church a Healing Place

Addressing Community Needs:

- Urban churches should open their doors for the community to gather and also to meet their emotional and social needs.
- This includes offering programs such as support groups, educational classes, and other services that address physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.

Fostering Personal Relationships:

- It is not enough to simply host activities; it is crucial for churches to personally engage with participants, building relationships and showing Christ's love through tangible actions.
- Ellen G. White emphasizes the importance of personal ministry, suggesting that members should directly engage in the lives of others to show genuine compassion and care.

Conclusion: Connecting and Healing

A New Paradigm of Evangelism:

- Evangelism in an urban context requires a new approach, where the church becomes a place of connection and healing.
- To be effective, churches must understand demographic needs, use a variety of methods, intentionally build relationships, and show love and care as Jesus did.

Reflection Questions

Where can my church start if it currently has no community engagement ministries?

What is the difference between a 'connecting place' and a 'healing place'?

Do we have a mechanism to know the pressing needs of our community? What has our church done recently to engage the community? Was it effective or not? Why?

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