Thesis and Dissertation Abstracts

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute
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Reaching Radio Listeners in Northeastern Mindanao Mission, Philippines: A Case Study

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God uses radio to spread the Gospel with speed and urgency to the world. Radio crosses many barriers. It penetrates all classes of people. These facts are also true for the radio evangelism in the Northeastern Mindanao Mission (NEMM). This entity manages Hope Radio Butuan which runs *Pattern of Truth* broadcast ministry. However, the program hosts of Hope Radio Butuan lament that the church is not participating fully in reaching out to the radio listeners. Thus, the local churches have demonstrated minimal engagement in reaching out to the *Pattern of Truth* program listeners. There is, therefore, a need to develop a strategy to effectively reach the radio audience in NEMM.

However, the officials of Hope Radio Butuan lament the fact that the church's support is inadequate for the successful and effective outreach of the radio audience. Therefore, there was a need to develop a strategy that would effectively engage the church in reaching the radio audience. The purpose of this project was to reach the radio listeners of the evangelistic radio program of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in NEMM.

In order to achieve this overall objective, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the biblical basis for using radio to advance the mission of the church?
2. What are the historical and cultural backgrounds that influence the broadcast of the radio program *Pattern of Truth*?

3. How successful are the strategies that are used by the radio program *Pattern of Truth* to reach the radio listeners in NEMM?
4. What strategy could be developed to effectively reach the radio listeners in NEMM?

I conducted this research in NEMM. The participants of this study were 5 newly baptized members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 5 district pastors, and 5 local church officers from different areas of NEMM. The selection criteria for the newly baptized members were the following: (a) they accepted the Adventist message through the radio program *Pattern of Truth* of Hope Radio Butuan, (b) they were baptized not more than 2 years at the time of their participation in this study, and (c) they were still active members of their respective local churches during the conduct of this study. The selection criteria for the local church officers (elders, deacons/deaconesses, and department leaders) were as follows: (a) they were active financial supporters of Hope Radio Butuan, (b) they had been local church leaders for not less than 2 years, and (c) they had been involved in nurturing the newly baptized radio converts. Lastly, the pastors must (a) be ordained ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, (b) had conducted at least 2 annual reaping campaigns sponsored by Hope Radio Butuan, and (c) were daily listeners of *Pattern of Truth*.

The participants in the study were referred to using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. I audio recorded the face-to-face interviews and then transcribed them. The data that emerged from the interviews include

1. Participants' perceptions, experiences, and observations
2. Participants' perceptions and experiences through the radio program as a tool for their conversion
3. Participants' perception of the effectiveness of the strategies and activities of *Pattern of Truth* broadcast to encourage the listeners and the local church involvement in the follow-up programs
4. Participants' suggestions of necessary steps to improve the effectiveness of the radio program *Pattern of Truth* and the activities of the local church in reaching the radio program audience.

Based on the findings, this study recommends further action to improve Hope Radio Butuan for the benefit of the listeners. Furthermore, the district pastors should train the local church members to be involved in consistent follow-up operations to reach the radio audience. It is paramount to increase the effectiveness of local church members' initiative to reach out to radio program listeners.

A Contextualized Adventist Model for Reaching Orthodox Christians in Northern Ethiopia: A Case Study of Converts from the Orthodox Church with Muslim Background

Researcher: Aytegeb Berhanu Awoke, PhD in Religion, 2022
Research advisor: Olaotse Gabasiane, PhD

Ethiopia officially accepted Christianity in the 4th century. Though 1,700 years have passed since then, Orthodoxy remains strong. Ethiopia is one of the few ancient Christian countries in Africa that survived the expansion of Islam. That is why some scholars call Ethiopia an island of Christianity. The Orthodox Church's contribution to the nation's survival was tremendous.

Ethiopia has the second largest Orthodox population in the world, next to Russia. It also hosts the largest oriental (non-Chalcedonian) church. The oriental churches did not accept the christological theology of the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. History reports that there were Christian centers in Africa between the 1st and 6th centuries in Egypt, Carthage (Tunisia), and Nubia (Sudan). Many prominent African theologians who influenced early Christianity emerged from these Christian centers. However, many of them were ill-fated and got destroyed, while others became weak because of the emergence of Islam in the 7th century.

According to the 2007 Ethiopian census, 44% of the population belonged to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Also, that but the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are considerably more religious than Orthodox Christians in other parts of the world. Studies show that of the 50,000,000 adherents, 78% attend weekly and 65% attend daily services, while in Russia 6% attend weekly and 18% attend daily church services (Pew Research Center, 2017).

The Orthodox Church fused Christianity, Judaism, and paganism. Many of the Old Testament rituals are still practiced by the church. Practically, the tradition of the fathers of the church has more prominence than the Bible. The believers are sincere Christians. They prefer to read the Psalms and other prayer books for their morning devotional and to attend church services regularly to grow in their knowledge of the Word of God. They attend daily and weekly church services for their spiritual nourishment.

Northern Ethiopia is the origin of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The northern part of the country constitutes the Amhara and Tigray regions. The people of the Amhara and Tigray regions are considered the protectors of the faith. A great number of the clergy are from northern Ethiopia. They spread the Orthodox faith all over the country and uphold the church.

The Seventh-day Adventist mission spent 97 years in north Ethiopia. However, the growth of the Adventist Church is insignificant. The past experience shows that the northern Orthodox Christians, including those with Muslim background, are highly resistant to the everlasting Gospel presented by the Adventist Church. This research employed a qualitative explanatory case study approach. The purpose of the study is to develop a contextual missiological model for reaching out to Orthodox Christians with Muslim background in northern Ethiopia. It seeks to explore and analyze the background of the northern Ethiopian Orthodox Christians with Muslim background and identify factors that created barriers that resulted in resistant attitude to the gospel truth.

Overcoming Cultural Prejudice of the Seventh-day Adventist Members in Bacolod City to Facilitate Cross-Cultural Mission

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Researcher: Rafael J. Carado, DMiss, 2022
Research advisor: Pavel Zubkov, PhD

This study aimed to develop a strategy on how to overcome cultural prejudices among Adventist members in Bacolod City to reach people from other cultures. Bacolod is a highly urbanized city where various ethnic groups reside. The local Adventist Church members lack effective strategies to reach people of different cultures such as the Chinese Filipinos (CF) and Maranao Muslims (MM).

To develop a strategy, first, this study established the biblical and theological foundations of cross-cultural mission (CCM). The OT and the NT reveal God as the prime mover of mission, the God who crosses cultures, and the God who executes His love and judgment to all the people of the earth. Second, the history of the Philippines and the background of the Adventist Church in the Philippines support the necessity for an intentional CCM initiative and contextualized CCM strategies.

Furthermore, to reach the goal of this research, this qualitative study used focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. This study investigated the existing approaches used by some of the Adventist members who tried to reach the CF and the MM. This study revealed that traditional approaches have not been effective in reaching out to CF and MM. The findings of this study identified several challenges faced by Adventists in Bacolod City that need to be addressed for them to effectively engage in CCMs.

These challenges include cultural values, assumptions, and prejudices of local Adventists towards CF and MM; lack of CCM training; unresolved missiological issues; and lack of CCM structure. Moreover, Adventists in Bacolod City were given an opportunity to suggest more effective CCM approaches based on their experiences.

As a result, a strategy on how to overcome prejudices while reaching people from different cultures was developed based on the Bible, extant literature, and empirical data. The strategy is divided into two parts: (a) the preparation stage and (b) the implementation stage. The first stage prepares the Adventist members, pastors, and leaders for CCM in Bacolod City. The second stage consists of the steps on how to implement the CCM initiative. The developed strategy ensures the establishment of a relationship-based mission and a contextualized approach to building relationships.

A Missiological Model for Cross-Cultural Mission to Chakma Buddhists in Mizoram, India: A Case Study

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Researcher: Lalrokima Fanai, PhD in Religion, 2022
Research advisor: Pavel Zubkov, PhD

In this study, I aimed to develop a missiological model that could assist Adventist missionaries in evangelizing Chakma Buddhists in Mizoram. To reach the research goal, I first investigated the Chakma worldview, religious rituals, social practices, and overall context to understand them better. Second, I used case study as a research design to discover how the Seventh-day Adventist mission became successful in Sedailui amidst cultural, language, social, political, and religious barriers.

Chakma's version of Buddhism blend elements of animism and Hinduism. The components of their Hinduism include the Chakma creation narrative, the idea of karma, festivals, and the worship of some Hindu deities for protection and blessings. The aspects of animism include fear of invisible powers, offering of animals and rice to appease ghosts, and worship of Bogabhan and other deities. Elements of Buddhism include merit making, the 3 jewels (the Buddha, dhamma, and sangha), the 4 noble truths, the middle path, removal of the 10 fetters, and admiration of Buddha. The other aspects of Buddhism include salvation by works, the law of karma, the cycle of death and rebirth, the cessation of reincarnation, and the panchosil (5 precepts). The mixture of these religious elements greatly influences Chakmas and leads them to religious syncretism.

Relationship building through a group-oriented approach, sharing Bible stories in ways through which Chakmas could relate the teachings to their beliefs and practices, and winning their confidence played a crucial role in the success of the Adventist mission in Sedailui. These components of the successful Adventist mission in Sedailui, along with the challenges faced by Adventist missionaries, contributed to the creation of a contextualized missiological model for presenting the Gospel in the Chakma's frame of reference. At the same time, existing contextual communication methods were integrated into this model.

A contextualized missiological model proposed in this study consists of 7 main points. The first point is pre- and on-field trainings to prepare Adventist missionaries for fieldwork. The second point is the top-down model, Christ's integrative evangelistic approach, and multi-individual, mutually interdependent conversion methods to establish relationships with Chakmas and pave the way for evangelism. The third is integrating contextualized communication models. The fourth is presenting Christ in a way Chakmas can relate Him to their everyday life and worldview. The fifth is providing functional substitutes and making changes in the 3 dimensions of culture to assist worldview transformation. The sixth is assisting Chakmas in decision making for conversion. Finally, the seventh point is discipling Chakma converts to grow spiritually. These 7 components worked together to create a missiological model which Adventist missionaries can use to convey the Gospel to Chakmas in terms that are understandable to them and can transform their worldview.

A Biblical Theology of Service among People with Special Needs

Researcher: Watland François, PhD in Religion, 2022
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People with special needs are spread in all communities and social groups. They represent 15.3% of the world's population. The most recent Adventist global survey revealed that about 10% of Adventist members live with some form of disability. In some places like Haiti, this percentage goes up to 15%. However, despite being so significantly present within Adventist communities, this particular category of brethren continues to be a marginalized and underserved group in several places. Moreover, non-members with disabilities represent an under-explored mission field worldwide. This disser-

tation is built on the premise that an appropriate theology of service among people with special needs can help reverse this situation.

Consequently, this dissertation purposed to develop such a theology through a comprehensive documentary research approach. Therefore, a literature review was carried out and revealed the existence of a few disability-related and service-related theologies. This review also showed how the Adventist Church has been responding to disability so far.

However, the assessment of these existing related theologies demonstrated that several aspects of a holistic service to their targeted group were left unaddressed. In addition, these theologies do not suggest strategies or models for their application. This theological gap partially explained why the Adventist Church is yet to respond adequately to disability in several places and confirmed the need for a more specific theology aiming to foster a holistic service to people with special needs. Consequently, a 6-passage analysis series was conducted to discover biblical principles that would inform this much needed theology.

In the last chapter of this dissertation, the findings of the series of passage analyses are arranged into a Christ-centered model for holistic service among people with special needs. This model shows how an appropriate theology of service can enable a holistic service among those with special needs through 6 biblical principles: the consciousness of Christ's covenant of grace, the intentionality and protection for people with special needs, the balanced Christ-centered view of disability, the holistic embrace of people with special needs, the enabling of self-determination, and the authentic worship to Christ through His disabled children. Lastly, some recommendations are offered to make the Adventist Church more inclusive. These findings are also applicable to other denomination

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Malachi's Use of Joel's "Day of the Lord": An Inner-Biblical Allusion Study

Researcher: Petronio M. Genebago, PhD in Religion, 2022
Research advisor: Teófilo Correa, PhD

The Day of the Lord texts of Malachi (3:2, 7; 4:5) seem to allude to Joel's Day of the Lord (2:11, 13; 3:4). However, the interpretive significance of Joel's Day of the Lord in Malachi has not been investigated comprehensively as the review of literature, intertextual, and inner-biblical studies on Malachi

have validated. The threefold purpose of the study is to (a) establish the criteria to verify the inner-biblical connection between Malachi and Joel on the Day of the Lord, (b) determine how Malachi uses Joel's Day of the Lord motif, and (c) find out how Malachi develops the Day of the Lord theme in his book.

To address the problem and the threefold purpose of the study, this dissertation employs the five steps of the inner-biblical allusion study established in Chapter 2. After applying this method, this study concludes that Malachi alluded to Joel on his Day of the Lord as indicated by these lexical coordinates: וּמִי (but who) and כּוֹל (endure; Joel 2:11, Mal 3:20; שׁוּבוּ (return; Joel 2:13, Mal 3:7); יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא (the great and the fearful day of the Lord; Joel 2:31 [MT 3:4], Mal 4:5 [MT 3:23]); אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם (where is their God) and אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּט (where is the God of the judgment; Joel 2:17, Mal 2:17); בְּרָכָה (blessing) and מִנְחָה (offerings; Joel 2:14; Mal 3:3, 10); and ישב (sit) and שָׁפַט (judge; Joel 3:12; Mal 3:3, 5) and as verified by these criteria for validation: the volume of parallels and the frequency and distribution of the shared lexemes. Applying step 1 concretizes Malachi's allusion on Joel's Day of the Lord.

To proceed with the second and third purposes, steps 2 to 5 have been observed, namely: determine the direction of dependence between texts, delimit the passage where the allusion is found in both Malachi and Joel, exegete both passages to find out the interpretive significance of the allusion from the earlier text to the alluding text, and ascertain the development of the allusion in the alluding text.

This study concludes that Malachi has saturated himself with the message of the book of Joel on the Day of the Lord. His allusions to it extends the powerful message of Joel to the audience of Malachi. However, Malachi develops more the Day of the Lord theme in his book. He starts with Edom's Day of the Lord as historical fulfillment, where Joel ends his book looking forward to it. From this historical fulfillment of Edom's desolation (Mal 1:2–5), Malachi moves to the future orientation of the Day of the Lord, which looms upon Yehud (Mal 3:1–7) and the Earth (Mal 4:1–6).

Malachi's allusion on the Day of the Lord has been enriched when the earlier source is considered. Thus, this method (inner-biblical allusion) can also be used in analyzing other themes in the book of Malachi as it alludes to other books of the OT. It will be helpful to understand Malachi's use of Scriptures in other motifs through the inner-biblical allusion study. Finally, this method can also be applied to other allusion studies from one book to another.

A Self-Awareness Survey of Pastoral Leadership Values in Central Philippine Union Conference

Researcher: Richard Dean Masangcay, DMin, 2022
Research advisor: Dioi Cruz, DMin

This is a descriptive research study on authentic biblical leadership values of Seventh-day Adventist pastors in Central Philippine Union Conference. It evaluated and described the leadership values of church pastors under the perspective of the authentic biblical leadership model. A modified survey questionnaire was used to gather data. A total of 205 church pastors from Central Philippine Union Conference completed the survey. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data. The results of this study showed that the overall authentic biblical leadership values of the participants can be described as good. However, there are leadership values from other components of the authentic biblical leadership model that church leaders still need to improve. Also, a cohort of church leaders found the need to enhance their leadership skills based on the authentic biblical leadership model. Capacity building, provision of guidance, formulation of training modules, and a guidebook or training toolkits necessary to enhance church leaders' authentic biblical leadership values were recommended.

The Culture of Overseas Filipino Adventist Members' Giving and Its Effect on Tithing in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Researcher: Samson S. Pagunsan, DMin, 2022
Research advisor: Reuel Almocera, DPS

The tithing system is God's way to finance His work on earth. God's people primarily carry it out as members of His church. The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church follows this principle and has made policies for its appropriate usage to fulfill its mission. The leadership implements these agreed policies about the tithes and is also followed by the church membership worldwide. Nevertheless, there is a reality that members are making *tithe diversion* because of the mission field's need or for cultural reasons.

The problem of tithe diversion tends to be a *concern* to the SDA Church. There seems to be a common belief among Adventists in five continents of the world (Africa, Europe, Australia, North America, and South America) that it is reasonable to divert tithe. This is seriously alarming. The leading

purpose of this study is to find out whether this practice is also evident among Filipinos who are Asians, as Filipinos are the majority of Adventists in Asia—the 6th continent.

This study has explored the culture of Overseas Filipino Adventist Members' (OFAMs) giving and its effect on tithing in the SDA Church. The research study included seven OFAMs as participants working and living in the United States of America. They are baptized and active members of the church. They are also mature Adventist members who are also involved in supporting the mission of the church in the Philippines. Finally, the findings created a strategy to educate OFAMs to practice tithing by the church policy.

Developing a Cycle of Training for Local Church Elders in Masbate in Central Visayan Conference, Philippines

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Researcher: Dianito P. Pantaleon, DMin, 2022
Research advisor: Dioi Cruz, DMin

In the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, the success of local church leadership is highly reliant on the church elders. The shortage of pastors required to oversee each local church is a primary concern. Many local church leaders struggle to carry the burden of responsibility placed upon them. The leadership abilities of local church elders in Central Visayan Conference—Masbate, Philippines—were examined in this study.

The study employed descriptive research, a quantitative design. The survey results, based on the data gathered from 130 local church elders from 207 churches throughout Masbate's 8 districts, had a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. This study determined (a) the biblical-theological foundation of elders' training in the local church, (b) the conditions faced by church elders in the districts in Masbate, (c) the type of training required for church elders, and (d) the theoretical basis for the cycle of training for local church elders in the districts in Masbate.

The abovementioned training cycle is reinforced in Exod 18 and Num 11. The NT also supports this idea. Masbate is located in the farthest territory of Central Visayan Conference and the conference's poorest province. Hence, conducting seminars and implementing programs in the province is challenging. It was found that church elders' attendance in care group meetings is very low and they least read Ellen G. White books. The leadership satisfaction of elders in the province of Masbate is far below the ideal rating.

Survey questions number 18 (M = 4.42, SD = 1.769) and number 24 (M = 3.05, SD = 1.501) did not yield satisfactory answers.

The leadership professionalism questions number 20 (M = 5.38, SD = 1.102) and number 23 (M = 5.01, SD = 1.640) received more satisfactory answers than the abovementioned questions. However, this improvement (or difference) only means that the church elders still have more to learn about leadership professionalism. Servant leadership is achieved through a continuous process of learning. Question number 21 (M = 4.52, SD = 1.681), which focused on church conflict management, and question number 22 (M = 4.88, SD = 1.434), which was about rivalry and jealousy between members, indicate the reality of constant conflict within the SDA Churches in Masbate.

The multi-church structure of the SDA Church, wherein one pastor is responsible for multiple churches, proves the need for better leadership skills among church elders. Elders must perform their tasks very efficiently as the church membership grows. This study's results suggest the urgent need to create and implement a training cycle for church elders. The training cycle should aim to improve the spiritual leadership skills of church elders to become shepherds of God's flock in the local churches.

Impact of an Adventist Television Channel in the North Philippine Union Conference: A Case Study

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Researcher: Joel L. Sarmiento, DMin, 2022
Research advisor: Aivars Ozolins, PhD

This study assessed the possible impact of Hope Channel Philippines (HCP) broadcast on its Adventist viewers. This mixed-method study used a survey with 384 respondents and 8 participants for the in-depth interview and 8 focus groups. These respondents and participants were all members of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in the North Philippine Union Conference territory.

HCP is the television network of the three unions of the SDA Church in the Philippines in coordination with the Southern Asia Pacific Division. The three unions produce programs that air on their specific time slot. Since 2011, the start of its broadcast, the HCP programs have not undergone evaluation. Thus, this study attempted to evaluate the impact of HCP's broadcast to the North Philippine Union Conference territory among its SDA viewers.

Through the questionnaire used, the Adventist viewers' profile and viewing habits were determined. With the in-depth interview of newly converted members through HCP broadcast and the focused group interviews, its impact was assessed. Furthermore, suggestions for improvement were gathered through these interviews.

As a result of the analysis of the qualitative data, two themes emerged as the impact of HCP's broadcast on its Adventist viewers. These were conversion and nurture. The conversion theme had three categories: baptismal decision, reclamation, and transformation. Moreover, the nurture theme's categories were involvement, knowledge, and spiritual growth. In addition, the answers to the improvement research questions were composed of two themes: programs and motivation. The study revealed that for HCP to have a greater impact on its Adventist viewers, new programs should be initiated based on their needs.

The findings indicated that HCP broadcast positively impacted its viewers. Some viewers were converted and made a decision to be baptized, others returned to the church, and others were transformed. Likewise, other viewers were nurtured; and this was shown in their involvement in church activities, according to the participants. Others watched to gain knowledge and grow spiritually. With these results of the study, it is therefore recommended that there should be an increased production of programs in Bible study especially on prophecy, livelihood, and others. These programs should be focused on the middle-aged individuals or the youth to increase HCP's impact on its viewers.

Discipleship Program Integration for Selected Departments in North Philippine Union Conference: A Case Study

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Researcher: Jose V. Zabat Jr., DMin, 2022
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Discipleship is the primary responsibility of the church leadership. Different departments in the North Philippine Union Conference (NPUC) were organized to implement discipleship in their specific areas of ministry. However, issues were raised that the implementation of discipleship programs caused competition, program duplication, overlapping, and burden to pastors and churches. This study explores how selected NPUC departments contribute towards the accomplishment of NPUC's discipleship mandate as a basis for interdepartmental discipleship programs integration (IDPI) in NPUC.

To approach the issue, a qualitative case study was used. The study interviewed six officers, six pastors of conferences and missions, and six department directors in NPUC. They are directly involved in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of department programs. This study found seven essential principles of discipleship programs: (a) empowerment, (b) equipping, (c) nurturing, (d) relationship, (e) evangelism, (f) leadership, and (g) program integration strategies.

Based on these findings, methods and practices for IDPI was developed and suggested. The suggested IDPI methods and practices include two main elements: Collaborative Leadership and Discipleship Programs Integrations Strategies.