

SIMPLE CHURCH IN THE OHIO CONFERENCE

“Simple church” is a term used to refer to small congregations that meet in homes, temporary meeting rooms and at places of work. These are not “small groups” because they are not a mid-week activity of a regular church. They are full churches on a par with the conventional churches that own, lease or rent a building where worship and ministry are conducted. They do tend to be smaller in membership, on average, and have a simpler worship format, organizational structure, etc. Research by George Barna reveals that about six million Americans currently attend a church of this kind.

Simple church is more effective at reaching some people groups than is the more conventional form of church. These include the unchurched and younger adults. Since the largest number of Ohio residents are not active in any religious congregation, this is an approach that needs to be used to achieve the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ohio.

This is not a new form of church for Seventh-day Adventists. During the early decades of the movement, most local churches met in homes or rented lodge halls. In fact, this concept lives on in Adventist heritage under the old-fashioned terminology “cottage meetings.” There are many indicators that the time has come to dust off this old concept and re-invent it for the 21st century.

Pastor Milton Adams is directing a Simple Church Project for the North American Division. He has had success with a pilot project in the Florida Conference has offered to extend his assistance to any who may be interested in starting a simple church. He provides training, coaching and resources through a web site and online Webinars. He has met with the Ohio Conference administration to review his approach and been invited to be a speaker at the Ohio Ministry University (OMU) in February (2010). This fits neatly with the presentations made by Peter Roennfeldt at the 2009 OMU and a pastors meeting. In collaboration with the Pennsylvania Conference, Roennfeldt will be joining with Monte Sahlin from the Ohio Conference to provide a week of in-depth training on how to start fresh expressions of the church in Pittsburgh, May 2-8, 2010.

ACTION TAKEN BY OHIO CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SEPT. 1, 2009:

VOTED, To establish an Ohio Simple Church as one of the recognized congregations in the Ohio Conference with mission status. This will provide an official structure in which to hold the memberships of those individuals who may join a simple church or other fresh expression within the conference, as well as an avenue to receive tithes and denominational offerings, conduct baptisms, etc. The conference president or his designee will serve as the pastor of this church in order to provide oversight for the various informal groups involved, each of which will have someone (as soon as practical) serving within the group as a local elder.