

## **Our Statistical Life After the Audits**

### **Introduction**

The full Annual Council statistical report is located in the front of your notebooks and is a blue document.

Its 3 inserts contain information on world population to Seventh-day Adventist member ratios within the divisions, the average daily accessions by division for the past four quarters, a membership retention analysis encompassing the years 2002 to 2006, and a projections calculation to 2036 based upon the annual growth rate of the past year, and also calculations based upon the average growth rates of the past 5, 10 and 20 years.

This report was largely prepared by Kathleen Jones of the Office of Archives and Statistics.

She was assisted by Carole Proctor.

### **Our Statistical Life After the Seventh-day Adventist Church Membership Audits**

This Annual Council is our first after most of our world divisions have completed rather intensive membership audits.

Over the past several years over one million members have been found to be no longer affiliated with local Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Now that those membership audits are essentially completed, the question can be asked, 'what kind of statistical life in the future can Seventh-day Adventists expect'?

This Annual Council statistical report evidences that *it might be a quite positive future*.

This is our *fourth consecutive* Annual Council with over *one million* baptisms.

But the best news for this Annual Council is that the *growth rate* of 4.62 percent is the highest since the 2002-03 Annual Council.

That isn't a shabby result either: a growth rate of 4.62 percent means that for every 100 Seventh-day Adventists at the end of the second quarter 2006, 4.62 more were added by the end of the second quarter 2007.

When you recognize that our starting membership was 14,754,022 that meant we had a net membership increase of 681,448. That's the *highest* net increase since the 2001 Annual Council report.

Actually, it took us from 1844 to slightly beyond 1948 to reach a *membership* of 681,000 and yet we gained that number within the past four quarters.

## Comparison with the Post World War II Years

The period of the 1940s might provide us some helpful insights as to what we *might* hope for in our immediate future.

If we did repeat the growth pattern initiated by our colleagues from the past, what would be the result?

The war-time and immediate postwar Seventh-day Adventist growth rates moved from a low of 1.79 percent in 1943, then to 2.40, to 3.34, to 3.87, to 5, and then to 7.01 percent by 1948. There was a steady increase from 1943 to 1948.

A 7 percent growth rate, as in 1948, given our current membership, would mean a total of 16,515,953 baptized members by next year or a year's net increase of 1,080,483 members.

Imagine a future with an annual increase of over one million members.

I can see some skeptical looks concerning that analysis.

I can almost hear the words 'the post-World War II experience represents a far different context than our current situation.'

OK. What if we instead took the *average* growth rate for the past 20 years?

Insert 3 in your Annual Council statistical report reveals that the average growth rate for the past 20 years was 5.59 percent.

If we were to maintain that rate for a little over the next four years, we would have reached the point where we are actually increasing our *membership* by over one million a year.

An increase of one million believers a year might not be all that far on the horizon.

There's yet more good news in this year's Annual Council statistical report.

Insert 2 reveals the ratio of accessions to losses throughout the world field.

We find that for every 100 baptisms that the dropped and missing losses amount to 24.21.

That is the best ratio since year-end 2002, and almost half of that for 2005.

So the vision for the future continues to seem optimistic for our post-membership audit world.

One last observation seems pertinent.

2006 concluded with the highest total *year-end baptisms* in Seventh-day Adventist

history: a total of 1,107,425 accessions.

That meant that on the average, every day during 2006, 3,032 chose to enter the Seventh-day Adventist Church through baptism or profession of faith.

Evidence thus abounds that God's Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost, convinces Seventh-day Adventists to share the good news of salvation with people throughout the world.

The results of that sharing, as illustrated in this report, are bringing greater and greater conviction to the people of our world.

Brother Chairman, that completes our Annual Council statistical report.