

2026 ANNUAL COUNCIL STATISTICAL REPORT

David Trim, Director of Archives, Statistics, and Research

[FIRST SLIDE] Before I move into the report, Council members and viewers of the livestream should know that, if they want to find out more about the subjects covered in this report, [NEXT] they can access historical and current church statistics at adventiststatistics.org, that's adventiststatistics.org. And shortly after I end, my report will be available online at adventistresearch.info.

[NEXT] First let's look at our latest membership figures, from June 30, 2026, and compare them to statistics for the mid-year point of each year over the previous eight years. We know that these are not accurate because we know that the membership figures in some divisions that have not completed redemptive membership reviews are overstated, but these are the figures that we have.

[NEXT] In contrast, we have a great deal of confidence in figures for accessions, so let's look now at accessions for the calendar year 2025. There

was a total of 1,460,185 accessions, the overwhelming majority of which were baptisms.

Membership is affected both by accessions and by losses; so, what were the living losses in 2025? [NEXT] As you see in this slide, losses totalled 659,024, split almost evenly between dropped, missing, and adjustments. Dropped and missing are categories all the pastors listening will recognize from the Church Manual. Adjustments typically come from membership reviews when statistics are rectified after a period of inaccuracy. So this slide shows the ongoing impact of redemptive membership reviews.

The next two charts show net accessions per year rather than total membership. These are for each calendar year, rather than the twelve months ending June 30.

[NEXT] This chart shows the last ten years, including both the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the recovery from it. 2024 was a record year for accessions. 2025 was lower than both 2024 and 2023. Some will wonder why? After all, as the Church's membership and number of congregations

both grow larger, should there not be an ever-increasing number of accessions? However, we know from experience that General Conference Session years usually have lower accessions. In 2025, many church leaders were “grounded in the travel and focused on the Session”, instead of being focused on the mission. We look forward to concluding 2026 statistics in a few months and hopefully to finding that accessions rose again this year, while we eagerly anticipate the harvest to come from OneVoice27.

[NEXT] This chart is a close-up just on the last quinquennium and shows the upward trend in net accessions, which totalled 8,044,011 from 2020 through 2025 – this despite the impact of the pandemic. It shows that adjustments can be positive as well as negative, as errors are rectified through reviews. Last year was the 23rd year in total in which there were one million or more accessions; the first such year was 1999, and the only year in the last 21 in which there were fewer than one million accessions was the worst year of the pandemic, 2020.

As already mentioned, however, church growth is the function both of accessions and of losses. So, in the next two slides, we will look again at net losses.

[NEXT] This chart is another that shows the past two quinquennia. [NEXT] And this chart is another close up, which also again shows the way losses are divided between dropped, missing, and adjustments. From 2020 through 2025 a total of 4,711,836 members were recorded as leaving the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While the last quinquennium saw two record-breaking years for net accessions, it also saw the second- and third-highest years on record for net losses.

[NEXT] This slide shows an important statistic but one that I have failed to highlight in previous reports. It shows the annual *net increase* over the last quinquennium. After all, though 2023 was the second-highest year on record for accessions it was also the third-highest year on record for losses. It is the interplay of the two that results in church growth. 2024 was not only the record year for accessions but also the highest year on record for net

increase. 2025 was both the third highest on record for accessions and the third highest net increase.

We celebrate people coming to Christ and into the remnant Church and we celebrate growth in the Church. Why then do I talk about losses? First, as I have noted already, it has a direct impact on church *growth*. But second, Ellen G. White has powerful words on this subject. In *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 187, she writes of the divine Good Shepherd in the parable of Luke 15:

“No sooner does the sheep go astray than the shepherd is filled with grief and anxiety. He counts and recounts the flock.”

In the spirit of that quotation, of counting and recounting the flock, I will share now slides on cumulative total losses, which I have shared and updated at each annual council starting in 2017.

Starting in 1965, church statistical reports provide data on losses and different kinds of accessions, as well as baptisms, so that, through 2025, we have sixty-one years of data on accessions and losses. This is a very robust data set.

[NEXT] We know that in those six decades, a total of 48,431,544 people have been members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

[NEXT] Of those, *at least* **20.95 million** have chosen to leave.

[NEXT] This means that **our net loss rate is slowly *rising* and is now 43.26%**.

[NEXT] Thus, more than **4 of every 10** church members are slipping away.

We also know that there are more losses to be reported. We can have a sense of the accuracy of membership statistics by looking at *mortality rates*. The mortality rate is the number of deaths per thousand people.

[NEXT] This slide compares the global Adventist mortality rate with the world's general population mortality rate. Given the Adventist health advantage, our global mortality rate should be around two-thirds of general mortality, whereas it actually is significantly lower than that. Thus, when all the losses are finally counted and included in statistical reports, our loss rate will be worse than currently reported.

[NEXT] This slide compares total gains and losses in the past quinquennium, and you can see how losses literally undercut the accessions. The world Church rightly continues to address the challenge of high losses, but it is a challenge not only to the leaders gathered in this Council, but also to every church member – to every disciple of Jesus – to be their brother's keeper, and their sister's, too.

Nevertheless, praise the Lord, the Church continues to grow, thanks to the large numbers of accessions, which are themselves due to a strong focus on mission at all levels of church structure and to increasing integration of our missional efforts, an integration that will only be reinforced in the next 12 months with OneVoice27. What is the effect?

What do our increasing accessions mean for how our global membership stands in comparison to the world population?

[NEXT] This next slide shows the population-to-member ratio in the world – the number of people for every Seventh-day Adventist. As membership *grows*,

the population-to-member ratio gets *lower*, and therefore, in the case of this graph, the *lower* the number the *better*.

Throughout our history, the ratio *has* dropped, and, as of December 31, 2025, there were 332 people to every Seventh-day Adventist. Two years earlier the ratio was exactly 350 to 1. And you can see that, as recently as the year 2000, the global ratio was 519 people to every member. So we are heading in the right direction.

[NEXT] As the next slide shows, the world church in 2025 achieved an average of 4,000 accessions every day. Around the world, someone became a Seventh-day Adventist every 21.6 seconds.

Thus far we have looked at actual accessions, losses, and growth. What about the growth *rate*?

[NEXT] This graph, which shows the last decade, reveals that there is some volatility in the growth rate, whereas we would ideally hope, as mentioned earlier, that, as the world Church grows larger, growth would also steadily

increase. Yet, again, growth is the product of both losses and accessions, and the Church's greater emphasis on redemptive membership reviews in recent years has affected the growth rate.

There is another metric that is important to consider in statistically assessing the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and that is church planting, which I will explore in the next few slides.

[NEXT] This chart shows the last quinquennium. In 2020, there was actually negative growth in companies, but there has been an explosion in planting of new companies in 2024 which continued in 2025, and this has fed through into a sizeable increase in the number of new churches.

[NEXT] This next chart gives a broader perspective, showing new companies and churches over the last 15 years. This brings out how planting of new congregations was dwindling in the late 2010s, even before Covid, but has dramatically grown in the mid-2020s.

[NEXT] This graph shows the annual *total* number of congregations – both churches and companies – also over the last fifteen years. In that period, the number of companies has increased by one fifth, from 65,157 in 2010 to 78,061, even though many companies have become local churches. The number of local churches in the same period has increased by 52%, from 70,188 in 2010 to 106,936 at the end of last year.

[NEXT] This chart shows the trend over those 15 years in the *annual* growth rate of congregations. We can see that the percentage increase in congregations dropped through the 2010s but has now rebounded.

A final statistic – this is another ratio, one that gives the global number of accessions per congregation. [NEXT] This is how many accessions each local congregation produces on average in the world Church. [NEXT] This graph shows the figures for the last 25 years, and we can see that while the ratio was stagnant throughout the late 2000s and the 2010s, a high point was reached in 2024. But with the decline in accessions last year, the accessions per congregation ratio also fell in 2025. We hope that, if the figure is not higher

for 2026, it will reach a new high in 2027 as we see the results of the Church working in an integrated way with OneVoice27 and All Things New.

[NEXT] Having reviewed all these numbers, some of them challenging, some of them encouraging, I want to conclude by pointing us away from the importance of numbers. Counting baptisms and members is a means, not an end in itself. It is a way to tell us how we are doing in reaching our greater goal of lifting up Jesus.

[NEXT] If we use numbers to identify trends in mission, they can help us. If we rely on numbers for other purposes, they will harm us. We see that in the readiness of a previous generation of Church leaders to ignore losses.

[NEXT] I would adapt the words of the prophet Zechariah, “Not by might, nor by power, *nor by numbers*, but by my spirit says the Lord” – that is how the work will go forward successfully and that is how, in due course, our mission will be accomplished. Let’s keep our focus on mission, let’s work in an integrated way, and let’s move forward in God’s power to finish the work.