FINANCING GOD’S WORK IN INTERAMERICA: A LOOK AT THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

SEMINAR FOR LEADERS

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The Inter-American Division ranks 3rd in the world in terms of membership.

With nearly 23,000 congregations of organized churches and groups,

1st in local fields and unions worldwide.

1st is the 4th Division in number of congregations worldwide.
REALITIES

These figures largely represent the potential of the church in Inter-America Division in all aspects.

It can be said that the Inter-American Division is currently operating with about 65% of its potential.

This means that out of the 23,000 congregations, 15,000 congregations can be considered healthy and growing.
THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

01 In the immediate future, we must focus on building and maintaining healthy and growing local churches.

02 Regardless of how many institutions we can operate, the size of our buildings or the strength of our unions and conferences, the financial health of our territory will depend on the health of our congregations.

03 We can not ignore the fact that we depend on the congregations and it would be a serious mistake to show negligence towards them.
THE CHURCH MUST BE OUR FOCUS

The local church consists of members.

If the congregations are healthy and satisfied, we can expect the other levels of the church to be radiant and healthy. But the opposite is not necessarily true.

Having sick congregations is a time bomb.

The only way to ensure the long-term health of the organizational structure is to ensure health at the congregational level.
THE CHURCH MUST BE OUR FOCUS
“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers” (Acts 16:15)
“The churches are ready to die. Because they are not strengthened in Christlikeness. The Lord is not pleased with the loose way in which the churches are left because men are not faithful stewards of God’s grace...The churches are weak and sickly because of the unfaithfulness of those who are supposed to labor among them” (Evangelism, P. 326)
should not call growth an increase obtained while leaving many of our congregations behind.
Historically, Adventism has always been in the midst of tension engendered by two trends that have been its strength as a missionary movement, but which, when over emphasized, have always been negative:

1. Congregationalism
2. Institutionalism
A DANGER TO WAIT

• Congregationalism describes a form of church governance based on the local congregation. Each local congregation is independent and autonomous, governed by its own members, regardless of authority.

• The attractiveness of Congregationalism hinges largely on finances and mistrust in the church.
Institutionalism should not be understood as the fact of owning or administering institutions, in which there is nothing wrong; but as the preponderance of the structure, the buildings, the bureaucratic organization, the program, etc., which are placed before and above the great evangelical commission and the relationship between the members. Institutionalism tries at all costs to preserve the institution and life revolves around enlarging it first and foremost.
1. A healthy church is irresistible. If its members are enthusiastic about accomplishing the mission, there will be projects and initiatives to achieve this mission, and a spirit of service and sacrifice.

2. A good congregation knows the needs of their community very well and can create various programs to meet them.
1. It provides the essential framework for carrying out actions in a concerted manner.

2. The organization can allocate money and personnel in areas of need that would not be within the reach of a local congregation.

3. It provides a global vision, continuity of processes and plans, and contributes in part to the unity of all elements of the system.
DANGER OF COGREGATIONALISM

1. It is easy for a congregation to be a victim of collective egoism or to focus only on the needs of its local community and to forget the wider mission of the church.

2. Independent churches are also fertile ground for pressures to compromise their beliefs, norms and practices, and to induce them to yield to the impulse of a charismatic leader.
DANGERS OF INSTITUTIONALISM

1. Institutionalism can create a serious problem of bureaucratization, which turns the organization into an end in itself and thus causes innovation to die.

2. Institutionalism tends to be rigid and forceful, which in turn destroys initiative, responsibility and interest.
CONCLUSION
Even though the trend towards institutionalization seems to predominate in Inter-America, we must also pay attention to certain congregational developments that have the potential to damage the financial system of the church.

As a territory, it would be our best practice to avoid the exaggerated role of leadership structures and to allow congregations to become the center of our approach.
• As a structure that groups congregations together, local fields should work with the vision of developing their potential based on the number and condition of their churches, instead of working to meet a budget or achieving goals based simply on assigned quantities.

• We must continue to emphasize that the financial health of the church must be evaluated based on the congregations and not on local fields or districts.
• We must maintain a systematic and comprehensive plan for planting new congregations.

• We must also make plans to revitalize congregations that are stagnant or retreating.

• We must pay attention to the pastoral ministry to be sure that it is aligned with the objective of developing new congregations.
Thank you