

Ministering to Single Parents among Young Adults in Central Monrovia District, Liberia

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.802013>

Received: 08 January 2024; Revised: 23 January 2024; Accepted: 27 January 2024; Published: 29 February 2024

ABSTRACT

It was unusual for single parents to exist in Africa. It's a rapidly expanding family pattern these days. A few of the difficulties associated with being a single parent are insecurity about raising children on one's own without assistance, poverty, loneliness, and resentment toward the missing spouse. It is regrettable that certain churches that are supposed to support this group of individuals also fall short of their obligations. Attention must be paid to the social stigma, financial difficulties, humiliation, and derision that lone parents endure. This study investigates how churches in Central Monrovia District, Liberia, provide support to young adults who are single parents. This was achieved through a qualitative study and the study concluded that local churches in the Central Monrovia District of Seventh-day Adventist do not seem to have intentional programs for ministering to single parents within their congregations. It concluded that there was a quest for love among the single parents and they all needed attention, care and wanted to be treated fairly and given equal opportunities to serve in their local churches.

INTRODUCTION

One significant wonder that the world faces is the issue of single parents, most often thou not always a woman as the single parent. Every now and then we think of single parents as those who have conceived a child out of wedlock. Nonetheless, that is not continuously the case. Hagar the maid of Sarah was pressured into having a child with Abraham and then was forced to leave with her child (Gen. 16:3, 4; 21:17). Also, in the Old Testament the prophet Elijah was sent to a village called Zarephath to assist a single mother who was a widow (1 Kings 17:9). When Jesus was beginning His earthly ministry Joseph, His adoptive father, had died, thereby leaving Mary as a widow and a single parent. Death had separated Mary from Joseph, the partner who had shared her knowledge of the mystery of the birth of Jesus. Now there was no one to whom she could open her heart to, no one to whom she could express her hopes and fears. The past two months had been very sorrowful.”^[1]

^[2] Being a single parent is possibly one of the greatest thought-provoking occupations a person can have. Countless of people face difficulties, such as handling their finances, dealing with the other parent, or basically having time only for themselves or to spend with God, and contemplating whether they will ever be loved again.

According to White 2023 the church have the responsibility to help single parents. As recorded in the book of James “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble” (James 1:27). One could add, in principle, “and single parents in their trouble, too.” The help that can be offered doesn't necessarily have to be just financial. We could allow them to have some breathing space by taking their children for a little while so they can do other chores, rest, pray, and study God's

Word. We can function as counselors to their children or help repair things around the house. We can be God's hands in several ways to help support single parents.

The true Christian flourishes in respectable works; he produces much fruit. He nourishes the starving, put clothes on the naked, visits the sick, and ministers to the distressed.^[3] Christians take a genuine concentration in the children that are about them, who, through the delicate temptations of the adversary, are prepared to perish. According to White 2023 fathers and mothers should be up to the task in providing protection for their children from the deceits of the enemy. God looks at parents, the church with the responsibility to save the souls of the children who have not such care. There are young people all around us to whom the memberships of the church have an obligation of duty; for Christ has died for them. They are valuable in the sight of God, and He is yearnings for their everlasting happiness. . . . Christ calls for charitable collaboration on the part of His representatives in doing intense, dependable work for the salvation of souls. Our High Calling, p 121.

Every time they are capable of working for the salvation of souls, it ought to be the opportunity of the members of every family to minister to their personal relations. Whenever this can't be, it becomes the sole responsibility of the church, and it should be recognized both as an opportunity and also as a responsibility.

The existence in our families of one of these abandoned ones is a treasurable prospect to work together with Christ in His ministry of compassion and to advance qualities of personality like that of Christ Himself. There is an approval in the relationship of the old and the young.^[4] The young ones may possibly convey brightness into the hearts and lives of the aged. The young ones may be facilitated by the knowledge and understanding of the older ones. Beyond this, they need to learn the example of considerate ministry. The presence of one in need of compassion and tolerance and self-denying love would be to many a household an invaluable blessing. White 2023, further said that it would crystalize and upgrade the home life of those in need of compassion, and call forward those Christ-like graces for the old and the young ones that would make them beautiful with a divine beauty and rich in heaven's everlasting prize. ^[5]

God is delighted when His children retain their faces turned toward the Sun of Righteousness. Whenever we are in deep misfortune and constrained down with apprehensions, the Lord is near, and He offers us cast all our care upon Him, because He cares for us. He comes to all His children in their sickness. In time of endangerment He is their refuge. In sorrow, He offers them joy and comfort. Shall we turn from the Redeemer, the fountain of living water, to hew out for ourselves shattered reservoirs, which can hold no water? When endangerment approaches, shall we seek for assistance from those as feeble as ourselves, or shall we run away to the One who is enormous to save? His arms are always opened extensively, and He expresses the courteous solicitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." ^[6]

Social Challenges of Single Parents Families

1. Many single parent families experience the children moving in between the two parents either on weekends, holidays, etc.
2. One of the parents possibly will not be a devoted Christian so the child may only be getting a partial dosage of spiritual leadership. The Christian parent may be struggling to compensate for the complete dosage to ensure the kids have the best likely opportunity to see faith in action demonstrated, to be given the right education and to create the adequate environment for the Holy Spirit to be able to work in their hearts.
3. Children of single parents might feel isolated and pushed aside, especially considering children of both parents. They can see the other kids have both parents with them at church.
4. The children of single parents might be going through emotional struggle and hurts as a result of the separation of their parents. The child might be introverted, miserable and anxious, as well as

hypersensitive to any apparent condemnation, disapproval, chastisement. Such children might also tell you that something hurts them and that they don't feel well which could be a signal that they are feeling apprehensive or speechless.^[7]

Providing Spiritual Nurture for Single Parents Families:

1. Regularly visitation to the single parents family or highlight the parent for a pastoral visit from the pastor. Single parents often need to feel as though they matter, and so one on one attention will be encouraging to them.^[8]
2. Discover a method that could be used to make available materials for the children for activities of the church.
3. Discover a method that could provide a single parent family devotional or Bible study materials so they are well informed to teach and lead their children also in the home.
4. Recommend Bible studies for the children and if possible devotionals that could empower them in their own spiritual journey.
5. Communicate to the children the importance of prayer and encourage them to pray for their single parent. The faith of children is uncontaminated and striking, and this can encourage the single parent who may feel alone on the journey.
6. Inspire the children in a peer group so they advance a group that keeps them powerfully associated with church.
7. Find out from the parent to know what could be the children attitude toward their emotional instability. Try to discover if their signals are uneasy and reserved or insecure or anxious, etc. in this way you are better prepared to support the children when you can tell that they are uncomfortable, distressed or incredulous. It may also assist to encourage the parent on how the kids are doing, or inform them if the kids were feeling easily broken, apprehensive, and hesitant.
8. Make yourself available to look after the children when service is over so the parent can associate with other people. A single parent will often leave straight after church rather than try to make small talk with other so that they don't miss out on fellowship.^[9]

Difficulties Faced by Single Parents in the church

In some of the churches one usually see couples walking through the front door with their courteous children behind them. Inside there is a play group for infants and toddlers and Sabbath School classes for children up through middle school and high school. Take a look at the bulletin, it will notice that in addition to the pastor and support staff, there is also a youth leader and education secretary. All of this is intended for one thing: to appeal to young couples who want the church to help them nurture unadulterated family. It is a good thing that young couples want to raise fine and godly children who love Jesus Christ. It is also good that churches appoint staff to help them do this. However, there are few problems with this private and ardent nuclear family emphasis.^[10]

The first being that there are no perfect nuclear families. There are some of the couples we see in the church that are in their second or third marriage. Other couples are struggling and thinking about separation or divorce. Some husbands according to statistics are incontrollable engaged in online porn and may even be acting it out in a relationship or more. Significant amount of the young people who are following these kind of couples will leave the church and turn their backs on the Lord once they reach adulthood.^[11]

A second problem with this private and ideal nuclear family is that it is repellant for people who are not part of a nuclear family, especially in the case of single mothers. Accept for an instant, the perception of a single mother coming to your church for the first time. When she sees all of those intentional families in your church, she doesn't know about their problems that lie just below the surface. All she sees is what she assumes to be her ideal: perfect couples with their perfect children. She draws out a conclusion, that she is a

failure and doesn't belong there.”[\[12\]](#)

According to Walker 2015, in his interviews with single moms about their experiences with the church. “A lot of the single mothers felt not accepted by the church. They were in the church however they were viewed as uncharacteristic. Most of them had to answer such question as “where is your husband?” Some people did not know how to converse with them. In most of the churches, there were not a place for single-parents. The focus of the singles group was not relative to the single-parents, while the adult group was full of married couples. They felt they were the outsider.”[\[13\]](#)

Let's take for instance a couple with their young children who see a single mother with her children visiting their church. With respect to the immediate family observing her, the single mother is immediately at a disadvantage. The single mother is at a disadvantage because she cannot cover-up her problems behind the frontage of a perfect marriage and family. The absence of her husband and the father of her children places her problems right out there in the open. The single mother, then, symbolizes a threat to the church's immediate family ideal. She symbolizes failure. Though the married couple would not dare say it out loud, by their actions they communicate to that single mom, “We don't want to be like you. You don't belong here.”

Walker 2015 summarized his interviews with pastors about their thoughts on single parents in their churches. According to him single-parents walk into the church with an open sin. The parent would walk into the church with everyone seeing that he/she most likely got a divorce or has marital issues. People could see that he/she was full of potential burdens. As a result, some of the members were very uninterested in that they would reject single-parents as needy or sinful.[\[14\]](#) That is the message of rejection single parents get from churches in many parts of the world. This means that the church has failed miserably in obeying all of the Scripture that applies to single parents and their children.

Jesus Christ way of Identifying with the Needy and Rejected

Jesus asked the question “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” Matthew 12:48-50

Jesus Ministry to a Single Mother

A number of persons may not understand that the last thing Jesus did before he died was to care for a single mother, which was his mother, Mary. We are told that Jesus was the oldest among his four half-brothers and at least two half-sisters (Mark 6:3). That means when Jesus' father died, Mary became a widow and single mother of seven children, there could possibly be more. As the oldest brother, Jesus was responsible for his mother's wellbeing. So when he saw his mother at the foot of his cross, along with his disciple, John, he assigned John the responsibility of caring for his single mother (John 19:25-27).

Mary had four sons and at least two daughters who could have cared for their single mother (Matthew 13:55-56). But instead, Jesus went outside of his family and gave the responsibility to John one of His twelve to care for His single mother. He did this in spite of the fact that just a few days later, all four of his brothers came to faith in him (Acts 1:14). One of his brothers, James, even became the head of the Jerusalem church. But it was John who cared for Mary from that time on. The reason Jesus gave the responsibility to John is because at the time, John was a believer and thus, in Jesus' mind, his real brother. In Mark 3, Jesus makes this clear when Mary and his brothers came to take him away because they thought he had gone infuriated: Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.

Consequently, Jesus entrusting Mary into John's care is not only another example of how Jesus did not "focus on the family," but also a clear demonstration of Jesus' love and concern for single mothers and their children and how the church should treat them as their own mothers and sisters and children 1 Timothy 5:1.

Sometimes the church is faced with such difficult question like Why should we invite unremorseful, bachelor and spinster parents and their illegitimate children into our church? The simple answer is, because they need Jesus and Jesus would welcome them in with open arms. We know this because Jesus said so. It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Mark 2:17). Jesus said this after being criticized for eating in the homes of tax collectors and sinners.

Jesus didn't wait until sinners ask for forgiveness before he loved them and connected with them. First he loved the sinners, then he dealt with their sin. Jesus had an astonishing capability to show love to sinners. When he reached Jacob's well He asked a non-accepted and foreign woman at a well for water and got into a conversation with her. He also invited himself to Zacchaeus' home for a meal. Taken in their contexts, both of these acts were extremely radical demonstrations of love on the part of Jesus. But after Jesus showed his love to the woman at the well and to Zacchaeus in his home, he spoke truth to them and dealt with their sin, at the first instance He showed love and after that he presented the truth.

The natural reaction of many in the world today would be to judge and condemn the sinner, like the Pharisees did with the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11. Unlike her hypocritical accusers, Jesus didn't condemn her. But he did tell her to go and "sin no more." Again, at the first instance He showed love and after that he presented the truth. There are in the world millions and millions of single parents with their children who desperately need to first be loved with the love of Jesus. Not judged. Not condemned. Not rejected. Loved. And when they are at first loved by the church the way Jesus loves them, then they will be ready to hear the truth.^[15]

METHODOLOGY

Research design: This descriptive research employed qualitative methods in collecting and analyzing data regarding single parents in the Central Monrovia district of the Adventist Church. As a result, focus group discussion was conducted among selected groups of single parents and church leaders (pastors). Among the qualitative methods of conducting research two primary methods were chosen—focus group discussions comprising single parents—male and female, and interviews of knowledgeable church leaders who minister to these single parents.^[16] A total of five focus groups was used for the study, they include: single mothers, single fathers, single parents by death, single parents by divorce and separation, single parents outside marriage.

Population: There are five organized churches within the Central Monrovia District of Seventh-day Adventists. About two thousand two hundred members constitute the population of the Central Monrovia District. The Monrovia Central Church has a membership of about six hundred, Better Living Church has a membership of about eight hundred, the Breath of Life Church has a membership of about four hundred, Popo-Hwie Church has a membership of about two hundred fifty, while the Follower of Christ Church has a membership of about one hundred fifty. Single parents who are young adults are the targeted population for this study and the church pastors who minister to them. Each of the five local churches have single parents, with an estimated amount of two hundred single parents within the Central Monrovia District. There are also four assigned pastors in the district.

Sample Size: Four single parents who are young adults from each of the five local churches were considered for the data collection, giving a total of twenty single parents, while two of the pastors were chosen for interview. Since there are more recognized single mothers in the churches than single fathers, the

respondents were comprised of three single mothers and one single father per church, giving a total of fifteen single mothers and five single fathers. The participants were also categorized into groups of those who became single parents by death (one per church), divorce and separation (one per church), and those who had children out of wedlock (two per church). Those who became single parents by death among young adults were five, those by divorce and separation were five and those by birth outside wedlock were ten.

Sampling Technique: The researcher used random sampling technique in the selection of participants. For the purpose of this research a total of twenty single parents made up the sample. Out of all the single parents in each of the five churches two single mothers each were randomly selected while one single father was also randomly selected from among the single fathers. This amounted to roughly ten percent of single parents from each local church which has a total of about two hundred single parents in the district. About seventy-five percent of the sample size are mothers while twenty-five percent are fathers.

Instrument: In gathering the data relevant to the study, the researcher made use of a semi-structured set of questions in order to facilitate the focus group discussions.

Procedure for data Collection: Separate focus group discussions were conducted for five different groups using the same questions. The five groups were: (a) 15 single mothers, (b) 5 single fathers, (c) 5 single parents by death, (d) 5 single parents by divorce and separation, (e) 10 single parents who had children out of wedlock. Two other separate personal interviews were conducted with two pastors of the district. A weekend was dedicated for the various group discussions and interview. Each session lasted approximately one hour.

The researcher personally facilitated the group discussions and personal interviews on Saturday and Sunday, September 9 & 10, 2023. On Saturday focus group discussions were conducted with single mothers from 1:30pm to 2:30pm, and single fathers from 2:45 to 3:45pm. On Sunday there was discussion with single parents who had children outside marriage from 11:00am to 12:00noon, single parents by divorce and separation from 12:15pm to 1:15pm, and single parents by death from 1:30 to 2:30pm. From 2:40pm to 3:40pm and from 3:45pm to 4:45pm Personal interviews were conducted with two separate pastors serving in the district.

Data Analysis: The data was collected from the from the focus group discussions using a Tecno Camon 18 phone recorder. The discussion was recorded and stored within the phone and later transcribed for analysis.

RESULTS

Table 1: Themes and Results

SN	Themes	Results
1	The need for love	Single parents do not feel loved in the local churches. From their responses other members' needs are specifically met while theirs are not met
2	The need for care and attention	Majority of members and church leaders do not intentionally show care and attention for single parents
3	The need of fair treatment	Single parents do not feel equal treatment from church leaders in relations to other church members
4	Active involvement in church activities	Lack of active involvement among single parents in church activities

5	Discouraged passive membership	There are active and passive members in each local church. a greater percentage of single parents are passive, as highlighted from the focus group discussion
6	Neglect of members	Single parents feel neglected. Much attention is not given to them as other members look down on them

DATA PRESENTATION

Question: Does your church have any program for single parents?

Single mothers: There is no intentional program plan for single parents in the local churches. Some of us are even ashamed of being called single parent in the church. Fifteen out of fifteen single mothers spoke in affirmation that the local church has no direct and intentional program for single parents. However, four of the single mothers stressed the point that during family life program, which usually comes once in a year single parents are recognized briefly.

Single fathers: There were five single fathers who are all convinced that there is no plan and direct program intended for single parents in the church. One of the single fathers pointed out that if only there was love and attention shown to them by the pastor and elders they would have considered every other program in the church as program for single parents.

Single parents through death: Out of the five who became single parents through death three of them were not sure of any program targeted at single parents. The three of them are not regular in church as compare to the other two single parents who were emphatic that there were no special programs designed for single parents in their church.

Single parents through divorce or separation: This focus group appeared to be the most hurt and frustrated among the five single parents groups. All five of them spoke one after the other giving identical account of how single parents are ignored and treated carelessly. If there was anything like that in the strategic plan of the church they haven't seen any intentional program for single parents.

Single parents through children outside marriage: This focus group had ten single parents who had children outside of marriage. It was discovered from their responses that there was really no intentional program for single parents in their churches. Two of them however added that even though there was no intentional program targeting single parents, credits were given to some of the church leaders who once in a while show some concern for some of them.

First pastor: Findings reveal that there is really no specific and targeted program plan for single parents in the local churches. Even though there are programs and activities in the church that every member can benefit from, including single parents. It is however established from the discussion that these program are not designed to meet the needs of the single parents.

Second pastor: findings show that all programs planned in the church are designed to meet the need of the various groups in the church. When workshops, seminars, teaching, preaching, prayer, Bible study, counseling, musical concert, revival, visitation, camp meetings, etc are planned they are planned to meet the needs of every member. The local churches don't have program design exclusively for single parents.

Question: How does the church assist you in meeting your needs as a single parent?

Single mothers: The fifteen single mothers agreed that the church provide good teachings and preaching from the Bible which help meet their spiritual need. However the church doesn't assist much in other needs

of single parents. Each of the mention one particular need they hope the church could meet, they include: financial, educational, emotional, friendship, psychological, physical, business, accommodation, etc. the church doesn't assist much in meeting the need of single parents, especially single mothers.

Single fathers: The five single fathers had two high points, the first is that their church do not plan specific programs for single parents. The second is that whatever assistance single parents, especially single fathers receive in the church is usually as a result of general program planned for the whole church and not for specifically for single parents.

Single parents through death: Of all the focus groups this group seems to be the least apprehensive. Three of the five shared testimonies of some assistance they have received from church leaders and members. Two of them claimed that they are seen to be comfortable therefore people do not see them to be in need of assistance. All of them however agreed that the church as a body doesn't assist in meeting their needs.

Single parents through divorce and separation: Members of this focus group also mentioned various needs that they are expecting the church to be able to meet. Nevertheless, the church as a whole is insensitive to these needs thereby leaving them to feel abandoned. Though there are friends in the church who assist some of them in meeting their needs.

Single parents through children outside marriage: Ten persons in this focus group receive spiritual assistance from the church in the form of general prayer, and Sabbath sermons. However, they do not received assistant from the church in meeting their specific needs.

Question: Do you feel that your Pastor is supportive to you as a single parent? If yes or no why do you feel that way?

Single mothers: Nine out of the fifteen single mothers feel that the church pastor support them by offering occasional visitation, prayer and phone calls. Six out of the fifteen feel that the pastor of the church is not supportive to them as single parents. The kind of support they expect from their pastor include regular visitation or phone call, love, care and concern for their families, participation in church activities.

Single fathers: Five out of five single fathers in this focus group spoke with conviction that their pastors are supportive to them. They see praying for them, preaching to them regularly, teaching them as the best and primary support any member can get from their pastor. They termed as secondary any other form of support.

Single parents through death: The five who became single parents as a result of the death of their spouse say that their pastors are supportive to them, because what they expect form them are prayer, messages from the pulpit, biblical teachings, counseling, etc. their pastor s provide these services.

Single parents through divorce / separation: The five who became single parents as a result of divorce and separation say that their pastors are not supportive to them as single parents because they do not meet any of their regular basic needs which they described as financial, social and emotional. They claimed that the pastors are only performing their pastoral functions.

Single parents through children outside marriage: Single parents in this focus group feel that their pastors do not provide special support to single parents in the local church. There was minor division in the group over the issue of specific and general support. Six of them agreed that the pastors are not supportive to single parents in the church since they do not financial and physical support to them. Four of them think that pastors are supportive to single parents because they provide spiritual care and nurture to the whole church including single parents.

Question: What office or role do you have in the activities and programs of your church?

Single mothers: Out of fifteen single mothers only one of them is playing an active role in her local church as a deaconess. Fourteen single mothers say they do not play any major, important or active role in the local church. Three of the fourteen agreed to playing insignificant role in the church, all in the youth department.

Single fathers: All the single fathers in this focus group are members of the men's department, even though they are not playing major role in the activities of the department. They are generally passive in the collective activities of the church.

Single parents through death: This focus group of single parents feel they are pitied by most of the church members and leaders. Four of them confirmed their not being interested in playing major role in the church especially when their spouses had recently passed away. One of them wants to actively be involved but hasn't been given eh opportunity.

Single parents through divorce / separation: Members of this focus group were slightly divided over their role play in the church. Four out of the five say that church leaders do not consider them for any major position in their churches because they are divorcee. One parent out of the five said he is playing minor roles in the church, which according to him is sufficient.

Single parents through children outside marriage: All ten of the single parents in this focus group had similar view on the role plaid by single parents in the church. According to these single parents church leaders of their local churches doesn't show concern or regard to those who had children outside marriage. Thirty percent of them say they are given less important responsibilities in the church, while seventy percent say they are not given responsibilities at all.

Question: What do you think is right or wrong with the way your church leaders are treating single parents?

Single mothers: Single mothers are generally satisfied as church members, they join the congregation to sing hymns, they hear the same messages, and they are included in the Sabbath school classes, etc. however the majority of them hope to be more involved and recognized by the leaders of the church.

Single fathers: Single fathers are also satisfied with the teachings, preaching, and doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist church, they are also satisfied because all of them claimed to have some friends in the church. The aspect of the church that they are not satisfied with is the manner in which the leaders administer of the church.

Single parents through death: There are different things in the church that different single parents are satisfied and dissatisfied about. Two of these single parents say they are satisfied in their churches because the church has good teachings and doctrines. Three of the single I this group say that although the teachings and doctrines of the church are good the style of administration by the church leaders sometimes bring dissatisfaction.

Single parents through divorce / separation: This focus group of single parents are satisfied with the general structure of the Seventh-day Adventist church and its teachings. They are however dissatisfied with the unequal treatment that different group of people receive in the church.

Single parents through children outside marriage: Single parents in this focus group are generally dissatisfied in their local churches. These single parents say they don't get attention from the leaders of the church and are sometimes ridiculed by other members of the church. They expect more love and generosity

from the church than they receive.

Question: If you were asked how your church can better meet your needs, or the needs of other single parents in your church, what would you say?

Single mothers: Single mothers in this focus group want the church leaders to offer equal opportunities to them to serve in the local church. They also want to be shown love and attention.

Single fathers: The single fathers in this focus group said that the church can meet their needs by doing the following: (a) members should show love for each other (b) every member should be their brother's keeper (c) church leaders should offer equal treatment to all members (d) let the single parents who are qualified be involved in decision making of the church.

Single parents through death: Single parents in this focus group stated that their needs can be met in the church when the church practices love and respect for each other. Once in a while give gift to those in need in the church.

Single parents through divorce / separation: Single parents share the same view that all church members including single parents should be giving the same treatment, attention and care. They feel that they are not cared for and shown love.

Single parents through children outside marriage: Single parents in this category revealed that majority of them want special attention and love from the church. Seven out of the ten single parents in this focus group expressed regrets for having children outside marriage. They hoped that they and their children will be treated as other members.

Question: How does your church assist single parents in meeting their needs?

First pastor: Finding shows that the churches in this district do not have intentional programs to support the needs of the single parents. However the pastors have recognized the discrepancies and are planning to improve the care and attention to the single parents in the local churches.

Second pastor: Findings indicate that the local church do not have intentional program which target single parents. Some of the programs planned by the churches meet some of the needs of the single parents, however much of the activities that are planned by the church leaders do not target single parents.

Question: Do you feel that you as a pastor is supportive to single parent in your church? If yes or no why do you feel that way?

First pastor: Pastors feel that they are providing necessary spiritual care to members, including single parents. However, they are of the view that they need to improve on intentional care for specific group of people in the church. According to the pastor because they do general teaching, preaching, visitation and prayer all members should benefit from the pastoral care.

Second pastor: Pastors feel that they provide spiritual, moral as well as educative support to single parents in the church as they also provide to every other member. They also feel that more need to be done to be more intentional in planning programs to specific groups.

Question: How involved are the single parents in the activities and programs of your church?

First pastor: Pastors know that there are people in the church, especially large churches, who are inactive, and this cuts across every group of people found in the church. Pastors also believe that there are some who

would serve better but are not given the opportunity to actively get involved, either they are not called to serve or they do not make themselves available to serve in various capacities.

Second pastor: Pastors of the local churches do not know that there are some group of people in the church who feel that they are not given opportunity to serve in certain position. According to the pastors there are single parents who are active while some are passive based on their own volition.

Question: Would you say that single parents are satisfied or not as church members in your congregation? What do you think is right or wrong with the way your church treats single parents?

First pastor: The pastors think that single parents could partially be satisfied in the church, because if they were not satisfied they would have left the church. Some members may treat them good while some members may be unfriendly with them.

Second pastor: Pastor show that they generally think that single parents are satisfied in the churches. According to the pastor the church and its leadership may not be able to satisfy every member including single parents.

Question: If you were asked how your church can better meet the needs of single parents what would you say?

First pastor: Findings from the interview of this pastor reveal that the leaders of the church would better meet the needs of the single parents if the single parents would make themselves available and relevant in the church. According to him if the single parents are known and relevant in the church their needs are easily known and if they are known they can be addressed.

Second pastor: Pastors of the local church would better meet the needs of the single parents by personally getting to know each of them, their names, their homes, their occupations, their families and their needs. As they engage the single parents closely, they will open up and make themselves available.

DISCUSSION

All single parents who participated in the focus group discussion believe that the church has the truth and is well structured, even though they think that it is the human factor of the leaders that need transformation. Single parents within the local churches have over the period of time experience neglect, abandonment, lack of care and love from fellow church members and church leaders. It has become evident that single parents want recognition and roles to play during worship services, they want to be visited at home and offices, they want to be called and prayed for by the pastors, etc. these positive attitudes will create in their minds acceptance and boost their morale.

Furthermore, the enhancing of the confidence of single parents for being a part of one big church family, the increase in the participation of the single parents among young adults in the ministry of the local church are some of the outcomes that can be appreciated. As the church pastors and elders recognize and give attention to single parents, especially those who are young adults, members of the church are also encouraged to exhibit the same positive attitude toward single parents. The more they feel recognized and accepted by the leaders and members of the church the more they have confidence to participate, support and interact in the church. The church will gradually becoming like a big family.

Leaders of the church should have stronger understanding on how to purposely involve every existing group in the local church in the activities of the church. This can be done by organizing programs that meet the needs of each of the groups in the church. Through intervention church leaders can be made to understand

that everyone in the church need pastoral and practical assistance from time to time. Because of the quantity of pressures on the single parents, they may need more pastoral and practical assistance.

Additionally, Single parents will begin to feel their involvement in their local churches by the way in which the leaders and members are giving them attention. This kind of consideration removes the idea and feelings of neglect. All members of the church including single parents have to be treated equally so as to disabuse the minds of the single parents in the congregation that they are of lesser value.

CONCLUSION

It has been observed and concluded that:

1. There are several single parents in the local churches in the Central Monrovia District of Seventh-day Adventist. During the focus group discussion, participants revealed other mothers and fathers who they knew to be single parents in their churches. The researcher had earlier invited all single parents for a discussion at the beginning of the exercise.
2. Majority of single parents are not actively involved in the activities of the local church. Before choosing the sample size all single parents who are young adults were invited for an acquaintance meeting. From this acquaintance meeting the sample size of 20 was determined.
3. Local churches within the Central Monrovia District of Seventh-day Adventist do not seem to have intentional programs for ministering to single parents within their congregations.
4. Local churches of the Central Monrovia District of Seventh-day Adventist to a large extent may not be meeting the spiritual, emotional, financial and physical needs of single parents within the congregations.
5. Single parents within the local churches of the Central Monrovia District want to play a more active and important role within the local church.

The above themes generated from the findings of the study were pronounced in all the samples. It could clearly be seen that there was a quest for love among them. They all needed attention, care and wanted to be treated fairly and given equal opportunities to serve in their local churches. This was the bedrock on which the intervention was designed in order to respond to the challenges confronting single parents in Central Monrovia District.

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FOOTNOTE

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