

Go SEC

Inspired for Mission

DRAFT 1 22nd November 2023

FOREWORD

It is with great excitement that I present this 2023-2027 Strategic Plan for the South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This plan provides a roadmap to guide our Conference over the next five years as we strive to fulfil our vision and mission.

The development of this strategic plan was a collaborative process involving leaders and members from across our conference. I am grateful for the time, passion, and ideas that so many of you contributed. The plan we now have reflects our collective hopes and aspirations for the future of SEC.

The coming years will no doubt bring new opportunities and challenges. However, this plan under the direction of the Holy Spirit positions us to seize the opportunities while remaining adaptable and resilient. Our strategic priorities reinforce the core of who we are as people awaiting the soon return of our Lord while compelling us to grow in impact.

At its heart, this plan calls us all to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and our commitment to sharing His love. It reminds us that we are united in purpose even while diverse in gifts and backgrounds. And it challenges us to embrace new and creative ways to spread the Gospel and serve our communities.

I believe this plan lays a thoughtful, prayerful, and practical foundation for the future of SEC. With God's blessing and guidance, and all of us working together, I am excited as we together start work of bringing this strategy to life. It will not be easy, it will require effort. It will also require courage and faith on all our parts. But I know the God we serve is able to do above and beyond what we could ask or imagine.

The South England Conference (SEC) strategic framework is intended to guide conference activity over the next five years and is summarised as follows:

Vision

SEC aspires to be "Inspired for Mission" as a vibrant, growing community united by faith

Our Spiritual Mission:

- Christ in Our Homes: Deepen faith and relationships in our families
- Christ on Our Streets: Impact and serve our local communities
- Christ in Our Churches: Strengthen our congregations and ministries
- Christ in Our Hearts: Foster personal relationships with Jesus Christ

Our Strategic Aims:

- Growing Our Presence
- Impacting Our Communities
- Integrating Our Operations
- Listening To Understand
- Deepening Our Relationships

Our Values:

SEC upholds Integrity, Respect, and Compassion as core shared values.

This strategy was developed through extensive analysis, input and collaboration. It provides clarity on SEC's identity, priorities, and desired future. Detailed objectives, targets, and initiatives will be formulated under each strategic aim.

At its core, this strategy calls for everyone in SEC to be united by faith and inspired for mission. By embracing this framework with commitment and courage, SEC believes it will grow in vibrancy and positively impact communities for Christ. All members are invited to reflect on how to activate this strategy for God's glory.

Dr Kirk Thomas
SEC President

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INTRODUCTION

The South England Conference (SEC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a rich history marked by its organisation and growth in the region. Here are key highlights:

Formation and Early Years: The South England Conference was originally organized in 1898. This period marked the formal establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's presence in the region, focusing on spreading its religious teachings and establishing a community of believers.

Reorganisation: In 1928, there was a significant reorganisation of the Conference. This reorganisation could have been a response to growth, changes in administrative needs, or other developments within the church and its community.

Territorial Scope: The Conference covers a wide geographical area. It includes the English counties of Avon, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Devonshire, Dorset, East Sussex, Essex, Gloucestershire, Greater London, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Suffolk, Surrey, West Sussex, and Wiltshire, and Guernsey, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, and Jersey. The SEC's geographical indicates a significant expansion of its influence and activities over time.

Growth in Membership and Congregations: As of recent reports, the South England Conference has over 200 congregations (TBC) with approximately 26,000 members. This growth signifies the increasing influence and reach of the Conference within the region.

Largest Conference in its Division: With over 26,000 members, the SEC stands as the largest Seventh-day Adventist Conference within the British Union and the Trans-European Division, highlighting its significant role and influence within the Adventist Church globally.

Building on our rich SEC heritage

The Inspired for Mission strategy provides a framework for aligning the efforts and priorities of the South England Conference around a shared vision and mission. Having weathered significant disruption and hardship of the COVID years this strategy sets the direction for how SEC will sustainably grow God's kingdom during the next phase of its journey.

The strategy emerged from an extensive process of prayer, analysis, workshops and input from across the organisation. It encapsulates the critical priorities and shifts required for SEC to effectively pursue its mission in today's environment.

By having a clear strategy we hoping to focus the energy of the conference with everyone on the same page regarding our shared values, aspirations and priorities, for impact; directing resources and efforts for maximum results.

Most importantly, this strategy calls the SEC family to action. It is only through the collective efforts, skills, and resources of everyone united around GO SEC that it will come to life and bear fruit. We all have a role to play in living out these strategic aims.

This strategic plan aims to provide a broad framework and priorities for SEC, while leaving room for local translation and application. The vision, mission, values and strategic shifts set the direction and aims for the conference as a whole. However, each church, school, and organisation will need to interpret what this looks like in practice for their specific context. The plan seeks to strike a balance between establishing alignment around shared goals, while enabling flexibility in local implementation. There is no one-size-fits-all model for bringing this strategy to life across our diverse churches and ministries. Each community will need to assess their unique needs, resources, and approaches to enacting the spirit of the strategy in a way that is meaningful and realistic.

At a high level, the strategic plan maps out where we collectively want to go as a conference. But there is ample space for each church, school, and organisation to navigate the particular route that makes sense for their community. We aim to provide a guide that unifies and inspires, while inviting local ownership and contextualization. By embracing the strategy through diverse expressions, yet staying true to the heart and values, we will write the next exciting chapter for SEC.

The remainder of this guide will unpack what GO SEC means and how each of us can activate the strategy for God's glory. Let's move forward together inspired for mission!

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES SEC

The 2023-2025 SEC Strategic Plan was shaped by extensive consultations and open discussions focused on addressing the most pressing issues and challenges identified across the Conference. Our discovery process explored issues including, declining youth engagement to rising knife crime, conversion of our youth to islam and growing dilemmas like dementia and mental health in an aging congregation and conflicts around doctrinal positions on contemporary cultural issues. Our work also included exploring the debate between disconnect between mono-cultural and multi-cultural churches, the decline of men in our churches, discrimination face by women in church leadership roles, navigating issues regarding sexuality, issues with regards to estate/property, declining collective engagement with important spiritual practices such as prayer.

The strategic planning process engaged a diverse range of voices in framing crisp descriptions of the challenges facing the SEC.

Rigorous careful analysis by a wide range of stakeholders, and prayerful reflection informed the articulation and prioritization of pivotal challenges pertaining to the spiritual vitality, social responsibility, operational effectiveness and cultural relevance of SEC churches across domains. The resulting Plan was designed through collaborative discernment of needs and organisational capabilities to tackle the highlighted issues through focused objectives, resourced initiatives and impact-oriented outcomes. The emphasis on collective problem-solving aims to mobilise the SEC community around shared challenges affecting members, churches and regional communities. More detailed descriptions of the challenges are captured in **Appendix 1**. Our work on understanding the challenges is not complete and will continue with the help of your help.

The scale and complexity of the most pressing challenges identified across the spiritual, social, cultural and operational realms of the Conference can seem daunting at first glance. Yet we've been reminded throughout this process that ultimate resolutions lie not in our human strength and wisdom, but in the power and sufficiency of Christ. This recognition led to the framing of a Christ-centric strategy that calls us to our knees in earnest prayer to seek divine wisdom, grace and guidance in addressing each challenge. While practical solutions

and action plans have their place, we recognise that success will only be possible through a strategy centred on Christ.

SEC STRATEGY ON A PAGE

The Strategy contains overarching themes informed by our exploration of the challenges and opportunities impacting the SEC. In the following sections will provide detail behind these themes.



Fig 1.0 This schematic diagram below describes the key elements of the "Inspired for Mission" strategy

Careful alignment of priorities and activities ensures coherence across the multi-year strategic plan. As the strategy is deployed to the churches in the SEC we would like every to consider how their proposed tactical activities align to the Inspired for Mission Strategy. We propose using the following colour code:

- Everything to do with Impacting our Communities is marked as **ORANGE** dot activity
- Everything to do with Growing our Presence is marked as **RED** dot activity
- Everything to do with Integrating our Operations is marked as **BLUE** dot activity
- Everything to do with Listening to Understand is marked as **PURPLE** dot activity
- Everything to do with Deeping our Relationships is marked as **GREEN** dot activity

It is possible that some activities touched on multiple strategies. If that's the case just add the appropriate dots accordingly. (See Joint Projects Section)

INTERPRETING OUR SHARED VALUES

Shared values say something important about an who we are collectively. They are foundational in shaping culture across the South England Conference (SEC) and are integral to achieving its mission of "Christ in our hearts, Christ in our homes, Christ in our churches, and Christ on our streets." We identified shared values of respect, compassion, and integrity. These values not only define the internal ethos of the SEC but also guide how members interact with each other and the wider community.

Respect

A culture of respect within the SEC encourages inclusivity and understanding among its members and in interactions with the broader community. It means valuing each person's dignity, beliefs, and contributions, which is crucial in a diverse and multi-faceted society. Respect aligns with the mission of Christ in our hearts and homes, as it promotes harmony and unity within homes and communities. In churches and on the streets, respect is foundational to dialogue and community outreach, fostering peaceful and productive relationships with individuals of all backgrounds.

Compassion

Compassion drives us to empathize with the struggles of others and motivates them to engage in acts of service and kindness. This reflects Christ's teachings of love and care for one's neighbour. Compassionate action within homes, churches, and communities embodies the essence of Christ's message and mission. It ensures that the church's presence in society is marked by tangible acts of love and care, making a real difference in people's lives.

Integrity

Integrity involves honesty, ethical behaviour, and consistency in actions and values. By upholding integrity, the SEC builds trust and credibility both among its members and in the wider community. It also ensures that all actions and decisions within the church are in alignment with Christian principles. This is crucial for maintaining the authenticity of the mission across various facets of church activity, from internal governance to public ministry and outreach.

In summary, the values of respect, compassion, and integrity are crucial for fostering a culture within the SEC that is reflective of Christ's teachings. They support the mission of bringing Christ into every aspect of life, ensuring that the church's ministry is carried out with love, empathy, and ethical consistency. These values not only strengthen the internal community of the church but also enhance its witness and service in the wider world.

INTERPRETING THE VISION

The Adventist church today faces many challenges that require us to rediscover our prophetic calling to mission. Young people are leaving the church at alarming rates, causing our pipelines for future workers and leaders to run dry. Many congregations have lost their passion for outreach and evangelism, focusing inwardly rather than reaching out to their communities.

At the same time the culture in which we operate is rapidly changing and the church must exercise sensitivity and wisdom in how we engage people inside and outside our walls. Retaining faithful members requires meeting people where they are spiritually and culturally.

Our vision "Inspired for Mission" calls us back to our core Adventist identity as a prophetic movement called to prepare the world for Christ's soon return. We are reminded of our calling to proclaim the three angels' messages to every nation, tribe, tongue and people. This vision beckons us to reignite our passion for outreach, compelled by God's love, with the hope of seeing people prepared for eternity. Inspired for mission envisions a future when people of men and women from all backgrounds will be mobilised for mission.

When our congregation is inspired for mission, we will see a church equipped, vibrant and evangelistic to its core. Our members will grow spiritually as they reach inwardly and outwardly. As we fulfil the prophetic calling of the Advent movement, we will develop new leaders and reverse the trend of losing our youth. With Christ as our inspiration, we will become a church prepared for the second coming and ready for heaven.

The themes of prophecy, preparation, and Christ's soon return shape our unique Adventist identity. "Inspired for Mission" calls us to embrace our prophetic role in sharing God's final message with the world as we live expectantly for the blessed hope.

Vision statement expands on the meaning of GO SEC inspired for Mission and is described as follows.

Vision Statement

The South England Conference-"An inspired, growing church community united and mobilised by faith to extend Christ's mission in our world."

INTERPRETING THE MISSION

Aligning the Mission to the Vision

The thorny issues confronting our church transcend neat solutions, intertwining the personal, familial, ecclesial, and communal. Christ alone can unravel the intricacies of cultural change, injustice, declining health, fragmented community, and waning spirituality. Our dialogue revealed dilemmas embedded in sinful systems, requiring not just tactical fixes but surrender to the One who designed and understands our human complexities. We

acknowledge our limitations and need for divine wisdom, united by the hope found in Christ's redeeming light.

More than good ideas, wise planning or proper resources, what we need most is Christ. He stands above these issues and alone comprehends each fully. Only through seeking Him earnestly, humbly acknowledging our limitations, and surrendering our wills to His perfect wisdom and love do we find hope.

Christ's presence is the only answer to the challenges we discussed. By having Christ in our hearts, homes, churches, we will see transformation of our Communities.

Christ in our hearts

"Christ in our hearts" encompasses the idea of inviting Jesus Christ to dwell within our innermost being, influencing thoughts, actions, and attitudes. It's about nurturing a personal and transformative relationship with Jesus Christ, one that shapes how we view ourselves and the world around us. It's about living out the teachings of Christ in everyday life, allowing His love and wisdom to guide our choices and interactions.

Christ in our homes

"Christ in our homes" is a concept that goes beyond merely practicing religious rituals within a household; it's about infusing the essence of Christ's teachings into the very fabric of life in at home. It is as applicable to singles as it is to family. It's a commitment to cultivate a spiritual environment where every member grows in their faith and learns to express it through their actions, both their nearest and dearest and in their interactions with the wider world.

Christ in our churches

"Christ in our churches" is about creating spaces that are nurturing and safe, centers of learning and evangelism, and hubs of active service and outreach. It's about harnessing the diverse gifts of the congregation for a united purpose, fostering a sense of community and belonging, and extending the love and teachings of Christ beyond the church walls into the wider world.

Christ on our streets

In essence, "Christ on our streets" is about taking the church's mission into everyday life, actively engaging with and serving the community in diverse, creative ways. It's about being visible and present in the public sphere, not only as representatives of a faith but as active, compassionate members of society, striving to make a positive, tangible difference in the lives of those around them. We take instruction from 1 Cor 9-22 We become all things to all men.

Mission Statement (DRAFT):

Mission Statement Fostering Love Anchored Missional Engagement- F.L.A.M.E.

Breakdown:

F = Fostering personal relationships (Christ in our Hearts)

L = Loving families and deep relationships (Christ in our Homes)

A = Anchored congregations and ministries (Christ in our Churches)

M = Missional service and impact (Christ on our Streets)

E = Engagement in communities (outward-focused)

Some critical considerations around this acronym:

Leads with a personal relationship with Christ, "fostering" growth

Builds the connectedness from self, to family, to church community

Ends with action and outward focus using "engagement"

Emphasises relationships, faith depth, service and impact overall

INTEPRETING OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

Five Key Strategic themes

Five key strategic aims have been identified for the SEC based on extensive analysis of critical issues facing the church now and in the coming years. The aims are: Growing Our Presence, Impacting Our Communities, Integrating Our Operations, Deepening Our Relationships, and Listening to Understand. While Listening to Understand supports Deepening Relationships, it is specifically highlighted on its own given its vital enabling role.

By actively listening across various stakeholders, we gain crucial insights that allow us to execute and magnify the impact of the other four aims more effectively. Listening to Understand sits as a significant overarching strategic priority because understanding needs and perspectives will boost our ability to grow our presence, serve our communities, integrate operations, and deepen Relationships. It provides input that allows us to refine approach across all domains. In this sense, actively listening to understand is a critical capability that powers the execution of our broader strategy. It informs the other priorities and helps harness their full potential.

The SEC's mission areas of Christ in our Hearts, Homes, Churches, and Streets outline the broad areas of focus for the church's ministry. The strategic aims of Growing Our Presence, Impacting Our Communities, Integrating Our Operations, Deepening Relationships, and Listening to Understand detail strategic priorities for how the church will accomplish its mission.

There is a mutually reinforcing relationship between the mission and strategy. Each strategic aim supports and strengthens the mission areas in the following ways:

- Growing Our Presence provides more opportunities to impact Hearts, Homes, Churches, and Streets.
- Impacting Communities directly fulfills the mission of Christ on Our Streets while also shaping Hearts, Homes, and Churches.

- Integrating Operations optimizes resources to focus on ministering effectively across Hearts, Homes, Churches, and Streets.
- Deepening Relationships creates an engaged community to enhance ministry across Hearts, Homes, Churches, and Streets.
- Listening to Understand helps tailor approaches to resonate across Hearts, Homes, Churches, and Streets.

And in reverse, focusing on the mission areas compels and informs the strategy:

- Pursuing Christ in Hearts, Homes, Churches, and Streets drives the need for Growing Our Presence.
- Fulfilling the mission requires Impacting Communities and Listening to Understand.
- Managing ministry across multiple Hearts, Homes, Churches, and Streets leads to Integrating Operations and Deepening Relationships.

In summary, there is alignment between priorities highlighted in the mission and strategy, with each reinforcing and supporting the other in a reciprocal relationship. The mission highlight the areas of focus, while the strategy provides the roadmap

GROWING OUR PRESENCE

Growing Our Presence directly expands opportunities to positively influence Christ in our Hearts, Homes, Churches, and presence on the Streets. Increased membership strengthens our capacity to impact personal spirituality, support families, equip congregations, and improve communities. A wider reach for the gospel enhances all domains. In essence, the "Growing Our Presence" strategy is about making the organisation more visible, accessible, and relevant to a larger group of people. It's a comprehensive approach that combines outreach, engagement, collaboration, and innovation to expand influence and impact. Impacting communities is primarily service and transformation-focused, while growing presence is about expansion and visibility.

IMPACTING OUR COMMUNITIES

The aim of Impact Our Communities means the SEC conference embracing an outward focus and actively working to meet needs and make a positive difference across the many neighbourhoods and contexts our churches exist within.

On a broad level, impacting communities involves mobilizing the combined talents, resources and energy of congregations, groups and members toward creatively serving populations and issues in their backyards. At a local grassroots level, we want churches moved to action in addressing community problems through compassion and practical assistance.

This strategic priority means establishing the SDA church as a presence that uplifts by improving people's lives across communities. It looks like coordinating an array of programs, partnerships, events and efforts that provide value and alleviate hardship for those around SEC churches.

The emphasis is on community engagement, outreach and service versus passive presence or internally-focused activity. Impact implies constructive action and delivering results that matter to neighbours and neighbourhoods.

Impacting Our Communities aligns with directly serving local needs under Christ on our Streets while also exposing more hearts, connecting with families, and engaging churches in practical service. Outreach shapes every level of mission.

INTEGRATING OUR OPERATIONS

Integrating Our behind the scenes operation will help us to more efficiently minister across personal spirituality, homes, churches and neighborhoods. Aligning systems enables focus on mission. "Integrating our operations" is a strategic approach that focuses on creating a more cohesive, efficient, and effective organisation. This strategy is particularly relevant in contexts where an organisation, such as a church, business, or non-profit, operates across multiple locations or departments. Integration involves streamlining processes, sharing resources, and fostering collaboration across different segments of the organisation. Here's how it relates to efficiency and learning through model offices: In summary, integrating operations is about bringing different parts of an organisation together to work more efficiently and effectively. It involves streamlining processes, sharing resources, and improving communication. Learning from model offices plays a crucial role in this strategy by providing opportunities for sharing best practices, training, and innovation. This approach not only enhances operational efficiency but also builds a more cohesive and adaptable organisation.

LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND

The Listening to Understand priority recognizes that deeply connecting with both our members and local communities requires leadership intentionally adopting a posture of compassionate listening. This strategic focus on listening links to fulfilling our Christ-centered mission in the following ways:

Listening to our members across churches helps discern opportunities for nurturing personal spirituality, supporting families, and strengthening congregations to have "Christ in our hearts, homes and churches." Understanding needs and feedback guides more relevant ministry.

Likewise, carefully listening within local neighbourhoods and building relational bridges enables adapting our community service and outreach to best demonstrate selfless love on our streets. Listening brings Christ's presence into sharper focus by tuning into hurts. At a higher level, embedding a culture of listening across SEC fosters greater openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance in how we carry out kingdom work in various contexts. It surrenders our agenda to be able to hear God's leading.

As Christ Himself modelled meeting people where they were and listening before speaking truth, so too this strategic priority recognizes listening as key to impact. It bridges the gap from our mission to relevant action.

In summary, listening to understand plays an integral, cross-cutting role in living out our mission effectively across all domains by tuning our ears to identifying needs and then adapting accordingly. Listening prepares the soil for seeds of change.

DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS

"Deepening Relationships" as a strategic focus, particularly for an organisation like the South England Conference (SEC), involves moving beyond simply offering programs and events to cultivating more meaningful, authentic, and lasting relationships with and among its constituents. This strategy emphasizes the quality of interactions and the strength of relationships rather than just the quantity of activities or participants. Here's how it can be implemented and its significance:

Rather than treating constituents as mere attendees or numbers, this approach focuses on engaging with them on a more personal and individual level. Understanding their needs, challenges, and aspirations can lead to more relevant and impactful interactions.

Furthermore, Deepening Relationships fosters an engaged, supportive church community. This undergirds vibrant ministry by stimulating personal faith, tightening family bonds, energizing congregations, and presenting a united front for outreach. Finally, Listening to Understand provides insights to help tailor approaches that resonate across all mission areas - from ministering to personal needs to preaching relevant sermons to launching community programs. Feedback and discernment drive effective strategy.

In summary, by interlinking strategy and mission, we ensure our aims stay rooted in serving Christ in hearts, homes, churches and streets. The mutual reinforcement powers collective impact.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

A key component for successfully executing our strategic plan is having clear metrics and consistent feedback loops to track progress and impact.

Baseline metrics will be established for each strategic priority to benchmark where we stand today. From there, specific targets will be set to spur progress over the 4-year timeframe. These metrics will be monitored through an online data dashboard, providing real-time visibility into how well each area is trending. Where we see gaps emerging, we can quickly take corrective actions.

In addition to objective data, regular pulse surveys will enable a subjective view into how our members are experiencing the strategy activation. Bi-annual surveys at gatherings like the Evangelism Expo will gauge sentiment across SEC on key issues addressed in the plan. We aim to take the pulse of our constituents often, not just annually. This regular feedback allows us to continuously adapt and improve based on input from the field.

By combining hard metrics with frequent surveys, we gain both objective and experiential insights into what's moving the needle on our strategy. This enables data-driven decisions, while keeping the members' voice front and center.

Our strategic plan is not intended as a rigid script, but rather a living framework that evolves based on real impact and input. With consistent measurement and member engagement, we can activate the strategy responsively and collaboratively.

Here are some examples of qualitative survey questions that could be used to gather feedback on the SEC strategic plan:

Growing Our Presence

- How satisfied are you with the opportunities to get involved at your local church?
- How well do you feel new members are welcomed and assimilated into the church community?
- What types of church events or programs would you like to see more of?

Impacting Our Communities

- How aware are you of your church's community service initiatives?
- How would you rate your church's involvement in the local community?
- What local needs could your church help address?

Integrating Our Operations

- How smoothly do processes and operations at your church function?
- How effective is communication between church leadership and members?
- What could improve the operational efficiency of your church?

Deepening Relationships

- How connected do you feel to others in your church community?
- How well does your church foster a sense of belonging among members?
- What could your church do to deepen relationships within the community?

Listening to Understand

- How often does your church leadership seek member feedback?
- How comfortable do you feel voicing your opinions and needs to leadership?
- What channels would improve communication between leadership and members?

The aim is to use open-ended questions to understand members' experiences and perspectives related to each strategic priority area. Follow-up "why" and "how" questions can also help dig deeper into responses. The qualitative feedback complements quantitative metrics to get a full picture.

JOINT PROJECTS

In our ongoing pursuit to fulfil our Christ-centric mission more effectively, we are excited to announce a new initiative aimed at fostering greater connection and collaboration across the various departments of our Conference. We believe that by working together, beyond the traditional boundaries of departmental silos, we can achieve more and make a deeper impact in our communities.

To facilitate this vision, the SEC has identified and will be launching several joint projects that bring together different departments and teams. These projects are designed to leverage the unique strengths and perspectives of each group, creating a synergy that can address the multifaceted needs of our community more holistically.

AYS HUBS



A key focus within our strategic plan is finding ways to empower the youth of SEC to play a leading role in shaping our future direction. Our young people offer invaluable perspective, energy and potential to propel our mission. Their creativity and courage provide fresh impetus for evolving to meet new challenges.

As the demographic the SEC exists to serve, it is vital that we involve our youth meaningfully in enacting and leading strategic initiatives. We aim to provide platforms for their voices and talents. Across our goals from growing our presence to deepening relationships, youth play an integral role in generating momentum. We will pursue avenues to increase youth participation and leadership in shaping the spiritual climate of their peer community.

They often intuitively grasp what connects with their generation. By tapping into the promise of our youth, while guiding and uplifting them, our strategy will gain relevance and vibrancy. We trust that the Creator who calls us all has placed divine potential in their young lives waiting to be ignited.

Our vision is to fan into flame their gifts, empower their leadership, and unite their energies towards creating a brighter future together. Our strategic direction must elevate their voice.

At the same time, a pressing priority is finding ways to re-engage and reconnect with disaffected young people in SEC. To achieve this, we propose launching a bold new initiative to revitalize Adventist Youth Societies across our churches. The initiative would establish AYS "hubs" to pilot dynamic youth programming.

After refining the model in hubs, we would expand conference-wide to reignite AYS in every congregation. This starts with understanding that innovative ideas are required to draw youth back into church life. By relaunching AYS groups rooted in youth perspectives, we take steps toward reintegrating those who feel disconnected from church. Given the urgency, this initiative has full support to reignite youth participation critical for our future vibrancy.

AYS Hubs that engage youth across growing hearts for Christ, strengthening families, reinvigorating churches, and reaching communities. But we invite your further input on initiatives that address the pressing needs of this key demographic within our strategic aims.

FACILITIES REVOLVING FUND



To address capital needs for acquiring, renovating and optimizing SEC church buildings, we propose establishing a facilities revolving fund. This fund would pool financial resources across the conference to facilitate peer-based lending for local church building projects.

Rather than sitting idle, this collaborative fund would leverage our collective reserves to uplift and enhance SEC church infrastructure. Churches would pay into and borrow from the communal fund as needed for projects.

The fund's governance would establish equitable policies and procedures for loans and repayments. Documentation would provide transparency around use.

This model allows recycling of dollars for maximum stewardship of our financial assets. By synergizing funds, we gain capacity to complete more facilities projects in service of our mission.

The fund can help churches like [Example] make vital repairs and needed upgrades to utilize their properties fully. It also incentivizes innovations like community partnerships and repurposing unused spaces.

We aim to optimize what we already have for each other's benefit. By coordinating capital centrally but sharing it locally, our fund becomes a symbol of mutual support. It transforms how we finance and care for our collective SEC homes.

We aim to launch efforts like

Similarly, while the Facilities Fund addresses upgrading physical spaces for vibrant ministry centers and compassionate outreach, we ask you to imagine wider possibilities for maximizing our bricks-and-mortar infrastructure across churches.

Just as Model Churches showcase discipleship and evangelistic engagement, what other examples of excellence within our congregations could be amplified across sister churches?

MODEL CHURCHES



Based on the context provided, it seems the SEC leader is proposing the idea of identifying "model churches" that exemplify best practices, which other churches can visit and learn from.

The key points I gathered are:

- Model churches allow peer learning and sharing of ideas between congregations.
- Rather than expensive centralized training, visiting model churches allows hands-on learning.
- Some examples given are Croydon, London Gardens, Central London, Stanborough Park - churches doing well in certain areas.
- People can see the strategies and programs in action rather than just hear about them.
- This facilitates cross-learning and collaboration across churches.
- Aligns with the goal of integrating operations and sharing knowledge..

In summary, the proposal is to identify model churches that demonstrate success in areas like communication, community service etc. and facilitate peer learning and knowledge

sharing by having other churches visit and observe their programs. This enables hands-on training and integration. Feedback is being sought on this concept.

We want to hear your suggestions for joint projects that spur connectivity and teamwork across all levels of SEC. Imagine initiatives that catalyze collaboration between different churches, departments, schools, youth groups - any segment of our organisation.

JOINT PROJECTS SUMMARY

We aim to break down silos and foster integration through on-the-ground cooperation.

The AYS Hubs, Facilities Fund, and Model Church initiatives provide starting points for collaborative efforts that align with areas of our larger mission. However, we want to have an open ongoing dialogue with our constituents about additional ideas for conference-wide projects that unite our talents and resources. Share your creative ideas for enhancing cross-working and teamwork. No idea is too big or too small! The most inspiring will be considered for implementation.

CLOSING REMARKS

This document represents the start of a sacred journey. We have articulated a renewed vision, mission and values for our Conference.

We invite every SEC member to prayerfully reflect on how you can join us as we can collectively bring this strategy to life. Allow Him to expand your imagination of what is possible when we unite. While the conference leadership will be working to formulate specific objectives and initiatives, the success of the strategy relies on the engagement and ownership of all of us.

As you reflect on the strategic plan, consider the following:

- What specific ways could you or your local church help advance these strategic aims?
- Do you have ideas for programs, events or partnerships that could drive any of the priorities forward in your context?
- How can you personally contribute your skills and passions to growing our presence, serving our communities, deepening, relationships, or listening to understand?
- Who will you have conversations with to determine how your sphere of influence can activate elements of the strategy?

This is OUR collective strategy as a conference family. We encourage you to prayerfully reflect on how God may be calling you to support bringing this vision to reality.

While SEC leadership take ownership of the overall framework, it is designed to be adapted locally. Please reach out to provide your insights on contextualizing the strategy, resources needed for implementation, and opportunities for collaboration.

We were emboldened by the spirit of unity, openness and care that characterized our gathering for formulating the strategy. As one body with many members, we shared candidly, listened compassionately, and dreamed of an even brighter future. Furthermore,

we remain excited to see how the Lord will lead as we write this next SEC chapter guided by our strategic aims yet tailored creatively across churches. May Christ be at the centre as we carry inspiration into action.

Strengthened by many prayers, we step forward, trusting in God's presence. We pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we carry this momentum into the collaborative work of strategy development, resource allocation, and implementation. By God's grace, we will live into our calling as a healthy community offering hope and wholeness to all we encounter.
GO SEC -Inspired for Mission!!!

APPENDIX 1

SEC CHALLENGES

The Challenges raised through our strategy development process are outlined below. Please note that the issues are not laid out in any particular order

#DEMENTIA IN AN AGING CHURCH

The church faces a growing problem as dementia becomes more prevalent among its aging congregants. This issue is compounded by a lack of open discussion and preparation, resulting in financial, emotional, and spiritual challenges for affected individuals and their families and the church. The church's role in providing support, awareness, and appropriate care for those with dementia is pivotal, and addressing this problem is vital to ensure the well-being of its members and communities.

#SEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH

Cultural shifts in the UK regarding sexuality, compel the church to grapple with maintaining its doctrinal position while demonstrating compassion and respect. Balancing theological convictions with the imperative of treating all individuals empathetically presents a pressing dilemma.

#FROM ADVENTISM TO ISLAM

SDA youth converting to Islam, driven by reasons such as marriage or disconnection from Christianity, presents distinct challenges, including marital breakdown and difficulties upon leaving Islam. With approximately 5000 new converts from the UK, this could develop into a growing challenge for our church.

#SDA CULTURE CLASHES

In mainly traditional SEC churches, a conflict arises as more women adopt jewellery in the last 25 years, contrary to the historical practice. This challenge intensifies during new converts' baptisms, where cultural jewellery is accepted, leading to tensions over the shift in SDA values in difficult settings.

MORE PRAYER MORE POWER

Data shows declining prayer engagement amongst our members, notably in mid-week prayer meetings, with limited participation by young members and low emphasis on family and individual prayer. Data shows that only 15% of members involved in family prayer time. This poses a significant challenge to the church's spiritual vitality and future.

MENTAL HEALTH POST COVID

Mental health issues are prevalent with middle-aged men facing a particularly high suicide rate. This crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 and if not addressed promptly, it leads to dire consequences affecting Society and the impact of our church's mission. Urgent action is imperative to address this pressing issue that impacts 1 in 4 individuals in the UK.

#WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Uncivil behaviours directed to women in ministry in some church settings is a significant problem, endangering the health and well-being of our women leaders. Discrimination against female leaders is often brushed under the carpet or not taken seriously, creating a toxic environment, and risking breaching anti-discrimination laws. This practice hinders the full potential of female pastors and other female church leaders.

#ESTATE ISSUES

Roughly 50% of church buildings are being rented and accommodate congregations ranging from 30 to 200 members. A significant proportion of the remain 50% need repairs. SEC could face substantial CAPEX funding deficit. Questions about jurisdiction for both rented and owned properties need clarification, while the role of the conference in providing assistance requires definition. Additionally, concerns about strategic building use, allowing external tenants, and mismanagement of refurbishment projects are evident. If left unaddressed, this problem may strain church finances, lead to inefficiency and confusion, hinder community outreach, and risk the loss of control over church facilities. It affects congregations, leaders, and communities and varies in extent but requires immediate attention.

#BRING BACK THE MEN

A significant shortage of young men in the local church, leading to an imbalance where roughly 80% of members are female. This issue hinders gender balance, diversity, leadership development, and community engagement within the church. It's a persistent concern affecting the church's overall health and effectiveness.

#DIVERSITY & MONOCULTURAL CHURCHES

The SEC is a diverse community of churches but it faces a challenge over its unity. The SEC's Multicultural churches feel disconnected from the purpose of the monocultural churches and the SEC's monocultural churches feel misunderstood and unappreciated by the multicultural churches.. This issue hampers effective collaboration and inclusivity. If unaddressed, it may lead to missed opportunities for cooperation, strained relationships, and hindered mission work. It's an ongoing concern affecting the SEC as a whole, particularly ethnic churches seeking recognition and understanding. The problem is pervasive across

SEC, demanding concerted efforts for improved understanding, representation, and integration.

#GUNS & KNIFES

The problem at hand is the concerning rise in gun and knife crime, especially involving youth violence. London alone reported a staggering 12,786 incidents in 2022/23, with an annual increase in knife-related crimes. Contributing factors include the influence of county lines drug gangs and the grooming and abuse of girls for material gain. This crisis particularly affects areas with young parents, absentee fathers, domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health concerns, impacting deprived communities, single-parent households, Afro/Black families, and society at large.

HEALTHY CHURCH CULTURE

Unresolved conflict & toxic church culture are significant contributing factors to people deciding to leave the church. If unaddressed, it will hinder growth and unity. Bad behaviour within church contexts can cause trauma and diminish spiritual well-being, affecting the entire church community and its mission. Immediate action is needed to cultivate a healthier, more inclusive church culture.