

## The "Great Advent Movement"—Why so Frequently?

*David Branum, Principal, Kingsway College, Oshawa, ON*

As I pondered on what to write, I was in the middle of searching for and hiring new staff for Kingsway. I do this every year, usually 3-5 new staff annually. This year I am among those who will be part of the "Great Advent Movement" this summer.

Why is it that so many individuals who work for our educational system move after only a short time at their current position? I do not have the dollar figures on what we spend in North America alone on moving costs, but I know that here at Kingsway, we are budgeting \$16,000 for moving expenses in next year's budget. If you care to project that as an average, multiply that times 90+ high schools, factor in all the conferences with their moving costs of pastors and elementary teachers, throw in the occasional administrative personnel who move and the NAD will spend close to \$2 million this year on moving costs. Perhaps that money could be better spent encouraging individuals to stay where they are.

My own decision to move is not the result of job dissatisfaction; rather, as Americans, my family and I have chosen to return to the States. I committed five years to Kingsway College because I believe long-term commitments bring stability to the school program but I also knew I would want to move back to the States someday. Others leave Kingsway and other Seventh-day Adventist schools for various reasons, some of which are disturbing.

We recently conducted a job satisfaction survey at Kingsway and over 80% of the staff participated. I believe the results of the Kingsway staff survey are a microcosm of the perceptions of many Adventist educators. You be the judge as you read through them. There were two sections to the survey: (1) a ranking of different statements related to "What I like most about my job" and "What I would most like to change about my job" and (2) a list of statements that we were to agree with or disagree with.

The top three in the first two categories are below:

### **What I Like Most About My Job**

- Working with young people
- Satisfaction of helping others
- Doing something I am qualified to do

### **What I Would Most Like to Change About My Job**

- Weekend responsibilities
- Long hours
- Extracurricular responsibilities

Notice the dominating factors in each of these categories: Making a difference in people's lives and the heavy workload. You might wonder where salary and benefits came into the picture. Although Kingsway staff ranked salary 8 out of 9 factors as what we liked most, it only pulled a 6 out of 9 ranking as what we

would like to change.

As for the statements, 100% of us stated that we agree with the statement that "Overall, I am committed to seeing Seventh-day Adventist education succeed"! That statement was closely followed by the following statements:

	<b>Agree</b>
· I believe that God called me to work in an SDA educational institution	97%
· I enjoy working with today's teenagers.	97%
· I am a member of a departmental unit that works well together.	97%
· I am doing something satisfying and worthwhile	93%
· I believe I am a valued member of the team.	81%
· I still have fun at work.	81%

We are committed, as I believe all teachers and staff are, to Adventist education.

Unfortunately, that commitment could be deteriorating because of the following realities:

	<b>Agree</b>
· I spend more than 40 hours per week working for Kingsway.	94%
· I find it difficult to balance my work life and personal life.	87%
· I often spend summer and vacation time working on school-related work.	77%
· I believe my work is appreciated by my students' parents.	65%
· I believe my work is appreciated by my students.	61%
· I believe my work is appreciated by my employer.	52%
· I believe my work is appreciated by the board.	27%

As a result, Kingsway personnel are divided as to what they will do with their futures:

	<b>Agree</b>
· I plan to be working in SDA education 5 years from now.	58%
· I have considered leaving a boarding SDA school for a day SDA school	48%
· I plan to be working in SDA education 10 years from now.	48%
· I have considered/would consider leaving SDA education for public education	43%
· I have considered/would consider leaving education for a different career	43%

The numbers speak for themselves. As the largest Protestant school system in the world, we are obviously committed to our young people. What can we do to keep our quality educators, those that we value, that we remember as being great teachers years after our school experience? We have to address the workloads and the lack of appreciation. And while we're at it, throw a little icing on the cake and bring their salaries a bit more in line with the public system.

As an administrator, I am blessed to be able to work with such a committed staff at Kingsway. At the

same time, I am frustrated because I do not have the resources I need to make life easier for my staff.

As a church, I believe we are at a crossroads with our educational system. I visit churches with and without schools and I see many more school age children sitting in the pews than I see in the school that the church is trying to support. Are we committed at the grass roots level to seeing our educational system succeed, or is public school meeting our students' needs?

And how committed are we at the administrative level? Do we support Adventist education through hiring policies and financial resources, or are there more important agenda items?

There are committed teachers waiting for these answers. The time has come to answer them positively, or shut the doors!