

# ***The Children's Ministries Coordinator***

**A Step by Step Guide for Organizing  
Children's Ministries in the Local Church**

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## INTRODUCTION

Rick Chromey in his book, *Children's Ministries Guide for Smaller Churches*, reiterated the important fact that, "Churches are exciting places for ministry. I believe that a dynamic children's ministry is often what makes a church successful. Successes or failures in children's ministry will determine who is in the congregation a generation from now."



Therefore, the leaders and members of the church begin with children of today. We need to use our resources to instill an exciting faith in children now. Many teens have grown disinterested in faith because of their church experiences as children. If we spend more time and money creating exciting children's ministries, perhaps the excitement would carry over into the teen years.

As the Children's Ministries Coordinator, you have the opportunity to impact the kids in your church and help them develop into strong, spiritual leaders of the future. But remember, growing an exciting faith doesn't come by chance or apathy. There need to be passion and good organization.

The *Children's Ministries Coordinator* is a guidebook for children's leaders in organizing and running efficient Children's Ministries programs in the local church. It offers dozens of ideas for organizing vibrant children's ministries that will provide opportunities for children to develop a relationship with Jesus, lead and participate in the faith community, and use their gifts and talents in service to others.

## Chapter 1

### PHILOSOPHY OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

#### What is Children's Ministries?

Many who have been elected to serve as Children's Ministries coordinators have often asked this question. They have wondered how this ministry is different from the children's Sabbath School. Children's Ministries aims to develop the faith of children ages birth to 14. While Sabbath School provides children with religious education once a week on Sabbath, Children's Ministries strives to provide multiple ministries at other times that will lead children to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him.



Such multiple ministries include programs and activities organized throughout the year to nurture the spirituality of the children, train them for leadership, and help them reach out in service to others in the community. For example, the Children's Ministries coordinator of the local church can organize children's prayer groups on Wednesday evening, a children's retreat once a year, or a community project on the first Sunday of each month.

#### Our Philosophy

The Bible makes it very clear that children are very special to God. If you examine what the Bible says about children, you will notice a great number of perspectives:<sup>1</sup>

- *Children are a gift from God.* He gives children to parents as a special sign of love and personal fulfillment (Deut. 7:13; Ps. 127:3).
- *Children are desirable.* From Creation, God has instructed us to bear children (Gen. 9:7; Deut. 6:3).
- *Children bring joy and blessings to adults.* God provides many benefits to parents through parenting their children (Num. 5:28; Deut. 28:4, 11).
- *Children need to be taught how to develop a relationship with God.* One of our greatest challenges is to pass on our beliefs and understanding of God to our children (Exod. 12:26, 37; Deut. 6:1-7; Prov. 22:6).
- *Children are so valuable to God that He commands us to protect them.* Parents are to ensure the spiritual and physical security of their children (1 Sam. 20:42; Ezra 8:21).

- *God loves children enough to ensure that they receive discipline.* (Prov. 3:11, 12; 13:24; 19:18; Eph. 6:4).
- *God enjoys the nature and personality of children and asks adults to learn from them.* Scripture identifies attributes such as sincerity, humility, simplicity, and trusting as qualities found in children, and God treasures these characteristics (Matt. 18:3; 19:14; Phil. 2:15).

If children matter this much to God, then they should matter as much to us, too. It is vital that we take children seriously as the heritage of the Lord.

Jesus' great commission is: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (*Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV*). Surely, this includes making disciples of children and leading them to make a personal commitment to Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>Barna, George. *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003.

## Chapter 2

### MISSION OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

The mission of the Children's Ministries Department is to nurture children into a loving, serving relationship with Jesus. We seek to fulfill this mission by developing:



**Grace-oriented ministries**, in which all children will experience the unconditional love of Jesus, find assurance of acceptance and forgiveness, and make a commitment to Him.

**Inclusive ministries**, in which the volunteers who minister and the children to whom they minister will be valued and involved regardless of race, color, language, gender, age, abilities, or socio-economic circumstances.

**Leadership ministries**, in which volunteers are empowered, trained, and equipped for effective ministry to children.

**Service-oriented ministries**, in which children are given opportunity for hands-on service to people in their neighborhood or city, thus, establish a pattern of outreach to others that may well continue through life.

**Cooperative ministries**, in which the department work with other ministries, such as family ministries, Sabbath School, stewardship, and others to further our shared goals.

**Safe ministries**, whereby our churches: a.) choose volunteers with high spiritual and moral backgrounds; and, b.) adopt safeguards to protect children from physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse and the church from liability.

**Evangelistic ministries**, in which children who are not enfolded in the church will be introduced to the love of Jesus through outreach programs such as: Vacation Bible Schools, children's Branch Sabbath Schools, Neighborhood Bible Clubs, and Story Hours.

## Chapter 3

### JESUS' MINISTRY TO CHILDREN



Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus took time to minister to the children. Both the Scripture and the pen of inspiration indicated very clearly the value He placed on children. His ministry to them included:

**1. He blessed and prayed for the children.** When mothers brought their little ones to Jesus, the disciples tried to drive them away. However, Jesus rebuked them instead. Then He placed His hands on the children, blessed them, and prayed for them (Matthew 19:14).

**2. He affirmed the children.** Jesus declared affirmatively that the kingdom of heaven belongs to children, too. In fact, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it (Mark 10:15). Here He identifies an important criterion for entering God's kingdom as being trusting and humble as a child.

On another occasion when Jesus was asked by His disciples who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, He placed a little child in their midst, "And He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3, NIV). Here again, Jesus underscores the importance of learning from a child. He mentions one of the characteristics in Matt. 18:4: "Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

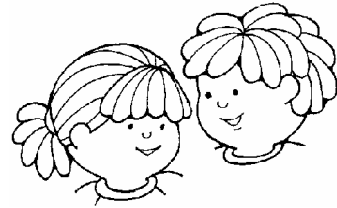
**3. He befriended the children.** He enjoyed the little things they did and even the flowers they brought Him. E. G. White writes: "As the children gathered the wildflowers so abundantly around them, and crowded up to present to Him their offerings, He received them gladly, smiled upon them, and expressed His joy at seeing so many varieties of flowers."—*Upward Look*, p. 57.

**4. He participated with the children.** Jesus not only watched the children at play, but He got involved with them in their activities. Again, E. G. White writes: "Christ watched children at their play, and often expressed His approval when they gained an innocent victory over something they were determined to do. He sang to children in sweet and blessed words. They knew that He loved them. He never frowned on them. He shared their childish joys and sorrows. Often He would gather flowers, and after pointing out their beauties to the children, would leave them with them as a gift. He had made the flowers and He delighted to point out their beauties."—*Upward Look*, p. 57.



## Chapter 4

### ELLEN G. WHITE'S COUNSELS ON MINISTRY TO CHILDREN



Ellen G. White has received much inspiration from God regarding the importance of children and the early training of them to accept Jesus as their Savior. She advocates a ministry to children. Here are some of her counsels:

“Too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his character than all that it learns in future years.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 193

“It is still true that children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received. The little children may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years. They need to be educated in spiritual things, and parents should give them every advantage, that they may form characters after the similitude of the character of Christ.”—*Desire of Ages*, p. 515.

“Children of eight, ten or twelve years, are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ.”—*Testimonies*, Vol. 1, p. 400.

“In the children who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw the men and women who should be heirs of His grace and subjects of His kingdom, and some of whom would become martyrs for His sake. He knew that these children would listen to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer far more readily than would grownup people, many of whom were the worldly-wise and hardhearted. In teaching, He came down to their level. He, the majesty of heaven, answered their questions and simplified His important lessons to meet their childish understanding.”—*Evangelism*, p. 579.

“In the closing scenes of earth’s history, many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power. They have been taught the fear of the Lord, and their hearts have been softened by a careful and prayerful study of the Bible. In the near future, many children will be endued with the Spirit of God, and will do a work in proclaiming the truth to the world, that at that time cannot well be done by the older members of the church.”--*Counsels to Teachers*, pp. 166,167.

“Those who love God should feel deeply interested in the children and youth. To them God can reveal His truth and salvation. Jesus calls the little ones that believe on Him, the lambs of His flock. He has a special love for and interest in the children. . . . The most precious offering that the children can give to Jesus, is the freshness of their childhood.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 373.

“When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages,—to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, Suffer them to come; as if He would say, They will come if you do not hinder them.”—*Desire of Ages*, p. 517.



## Chapter 5

### JOB DESCRIPTION OF THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES COORDINATOR

The *Church Manual* outlines the responsibilities of the Children's Ministries Coordinator as follows:



1. To chair the Children's Ministries Committee.
2. To implement the GraceLink curriculum and provide training for leaders and teachers in using this curriculum.
3. To plan and implement a yearly calendar of programs for children that will draw them to Christ and provide for their participation in all church activities.
4. To develop a budget for implementing all programs and activities for children.
5. To serve as an advocate for the interests and needs of children to the:
  - a. Church Board—by keep the board members informed of concerns and successes, by reporting the results of the children's needs assessment, and by encouraging funding for children's program.
  - b. Pastor—by working together to make the various aspects of church life and worship more child-friendly and meaningful to children.
  - c. Leaders of children's activities—by supporting and encouraging them.
6. To take reasonable steps to maintain a high moral and ethical quality of leadership for the children by screening volunteer leaders and teachers.
7. To maintain communication with parents and leaders of children's activities, informing them about workshops, conventions, camp meetings, and other resources, and encouraging their growth in understanding children.
8. To seek opportunities to spend time with children in order to stay in touch with their thinking and their needs.
9. To work with the pastor in events involving children, such as,
  - a. Baby dedication
  - b. Baptism
  - c. Children's Story during worship hour
  - d. Junior deacons
10. To prepare statistical reports for the conference Children's Ministries director.

## Chapter 6

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

You have been elected as the Children's Ministries Coordinator in your local church and you sincerely want to accomplish something for the Lord, for the children, and for your church. You want to succeed in this ministry and God wants you to succeed too. So at the outset make Him your partner and seek His guidance.

It is important that the Children's Ministries Coordinator knows where he or she is going. Don't be too hasty in launching straight into programs and activities.

#### CREATING A VISION

The Children's Ministries Coordinator must envision what the ministry can accomplish through God's power. Vision is crucial to effective ministry. It allows you to look ahead and plan with a purpose. But it is never an easy task.



Every ministry should focus on the Great Commission. We are called to fulfill: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20, NIV).

So, your ministry vision should be a picture of how you will fulfill the Great Commission in children's ministries. Such a vision will have 4 parts, according to Steve Alley, author of *Growing a Healthy Children's Ministry*:<sup>2</sup>

**"Go"**: How will you become aware and involved in today's child's world? How will you go to them? What is your plan of evangelism?

**"Make disciples"**: How will you attract the children and interest them in Jesus?

**"Baptizing them"**: How will you lead children to make a personal commitment to Jesus?

**"Teaching them"**: How will you teach today's children in a way that interests and motivates them to learn more on their own? How will you help them grow in faith?

**"To obey"**: How will you disciple the children and lead them to obedience and service? How will they be inspired to teach others?

George Barna, in *The Power of Vision*, describes deadly traps that can ambush visionaries in the ministry, five of which are tradition, fear, fatigue, complacency, and

short-term thinking.<sup>3</sup> Tradition can snare us (“We’ve always done it this way!”), and so can fear (“How can I run this program when so few parents support us?”). Complacency can lead to non-action (“I don’t really care, my kids are all grown up”), and fatigue (“I am giving up! I’ve been at this for ten years and nothing has changed”). And finally, short-term thinking (“Let’s do something now; we don’t have time to worry about next year!”) can snuff out effective ministry.

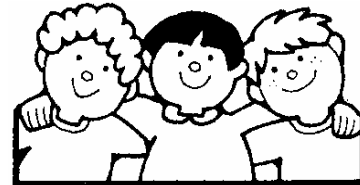
## CONSIDERING NEEDS

Part of developing a vision for children’s ministries is to consider the needs of the children in your church so that you can tailor your programs to meet them. Don’t rush too quickly into programming just to have something to show to the church. Children are our prime consideration.

Children are individuals with emotional, social, physical, spiritual and mental needs. They are not miniature adults. They all need love and care. They need to be free to play, explore, create and express themselves. They need to be instructed with the right values and be challenged to learn and master new skills and knowledge. When they are in our care, we need to offer a safe environment where children feel welcomed, valued and accepted.

## DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

It is essential for the Children’s Ministries Coordinator to know the people in the church so that they can catch your vision and provide support for your programs. It is often who you know that help make your programs fly.



- Talk to the pastor about your mission for the church and your vision for Children’s Ministries.
- Find out who the key people are and share your concerns with them. Listen to their advice.
- Get to know the members of the church board and learn how things get done in your church.
- Get acquainted with parents who have children in the Sabbath School divisions.

<sup>2</sup> Barna, George, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1992), 122-129.

<sup>3</sup> Alley, Steve, *Growing a Healthy Children’s Ministry* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing, 2002), 31.

## Chapter 7

# ORGANIZING THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Select names for the Children's Ministries Committee. The committee will be comprised of:
  - \* Children's Ministries Coordinator (Chair)
  - \* Leaders of all the other children's entities
  - \* Others keenly interested and passionate for children's ministry
- The optimal number of committee members is between 5 and 10.
- Take the names of selected committee members to the church board for approval.



### RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMITTEE

The committee will work to:

- Adopt a short mission statement.
- Conduct a needs assessment of children in the church and community .
- Develop an overall plan.
- Plan a yearly calendar of programs for children.
- Coordinate the CHM calendar with other church departments.
- Develop a budget for planned programs.
- Share your plans and budget with the Board and request funding.
- Keep up-to-date records of children who participated in church-sponsored activities; file them with the church secretary.
- Resource and support program leaders.

### CONDUCTING NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

It is extremely important to conduct a needs assessment survey of the families and their children in your church and community. The results will be used to assist the Children's Ministries Coordinator and the Committee in developing curriculum, organizing activities, training teachers, and setting goals. Develop a short survey form that church members and parents in your community can fill out in 3-5 minutes. The following sample can be used.

## ***Children's Ministries Needs Assessment Survey***

In order to better serve you and your children, we have designed this survey. Please take a few moments to answer the following questions. The results of this survey will be used to assist us in organizing programs, developing resources, and setting goals for our overall ministry to children.

1. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are the ages of your children? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you have a child with special needs? YES NO Age: \_\_\_\_\_

4. What type of programs do you like us to organize for your children?  
Check (  ) as many as they apply.

(  ) retreat

(  ) crafts day/weekend

(  ) service project

(  ) choir

(  ) prayer group

(  ) puppet ministry

(  ) cooking

(  ) Bible quiz/game

(  ) health fair

(  ) picnic

(  ) conducting

(  ) preaching club

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What type of programs would you like us to organize for parents?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. If you had to choose 3 most needed programs, what would they be?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 8

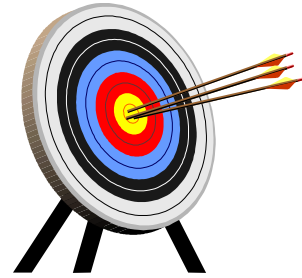
### DEVELOPING A BALANCED PLAN

#### WRITING EFFECTIVE GOALS

It is very important to write out your goals for Children's Ministries. Without goals you can be busily organizing programs without accomplishing your mission of nurturing children into a closer relationship with Jesus.

In setting your goals, ask yourself some questions:

- What is our primary goal?
- Is this program Christ centered?
- How many children do you want to reach?
- What programs will nurture the children cognitively, socially and spiritually in our church?
- What programs will reach out to the community children and attract them to church?



To be successful, goals must be **Specific, Attainable, and Measurable (SAM)**.

- Are our goals specific?
- Are they realistic that our personnel and resources can handle?
- Are they attainable?
- Can we measure the success of our goals?

#### PLANNING PROGRAMS

Every Children's Ministry should consist of four main areas of programming. The key to strong spiritual growth in children is a balance of these four areas similar to the balance of nutrition in meals.<sup>4</sup>

- Appetizers (non-threatening, just-for-fun activities that reach out to all children),
- Breads (opportunities for children to use their talents and interests in a low-level commitment to Jesus and to the church),
- Vegetables (Bible studies that help children learn the basics of faith, and
- Meats (service opportunities that help children mature and develop leadership skills).

Identify 3-5 most needed programs that you will run for the year—those for children and teachers. Do not over plan or else you may find yourself completely burnt



out. It is a good idea to develop a philosophy for programming. Here are a few pointers to help you.

- People come first—meet the needs of children today.
- If it doesn't work, try something else.
- Make it affordable.

## ***CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES CALENDAR OF EVENTS***

### **First Quarter**

January 6	Training seminar for teachers of GraceLink
February 5	Children's Church (1 <sup>st</sup> Sabbath of each month)
February 13	Crafts weekend
March 4	Children's Prayer group (Wednesday)

### **Second Quarter**

April 7	Easter drama
	Children's prayer group (cont.)
May 15	Teachers' training seminar
June 10	Community project

### **Third Quarter**

July 8	Children's nature camp
	Children's prayer group
August 3	Crafts Day
September 11	Teachers'/volunteers picnic

### **Fourth Quarter**

October 8	Parenting seminar
October 20	Children's Bible class
	Children's prayer group
November 24	Thanksgiving outreach
December 24	Christmas play

## PROMOTING YOUR PROGRAMS

Advertising is crucial to the success of every program. The Children's Ministries Coordinator needs to talk about the program and be excited about it. Be sure to promote and advertise your program for three to four weeks. Try these:

- Use church bulletin, newsletter, announcements, and bulletin boards to make your program known to others.
- Make posters and put them in the church foyer.
- Get children up front to advertise the program in the church.
- Print flyers and pass them to children and parents in the church.
- Use public service radio and TV announcements, newspaper ads to invite community children to attend.
- Have children make attractive invitation cards invite their friends.

## PUBLICIZING YOUR IMAGE

Much of what we do in Children's Ministries goes unnoticed by the average member in the church. It is important that we let the church know what we are doing for our children in terms of spiritual growth and nurture. Creating an image is not about looking good; it is about displaying what is going on inside our Sabbath School rooms, craft corner, and prayer rooms. Be visible, Children's Ministries Coordinator! Let the world know that you and your staff care about children!

### *5 Steps for Image Building*

1. Show off your children in various programs:
  - a. Children's choirs
  - b. Children's drama
  - c. Children in adult worship
  - d. Seasonal performances
2. Have your pastor preach about the importance of Children's Ministries.
3. Develop an inspirational 5-10 min. video to show and update the church on Children's Ministries.
4. Develop excellent printed material that reflect your vision as well as programs.
  - a. pamphlet
  - b. brochure
  - c. newsletter
5. Use the Children's Ministries logo in all activities.

## Chapter 9

### PLANNING YOUR BUDGET

The budget is your ministry vision expressed in money. A budget is, at best, simply an estimate as to the amount of money you think you will spend during a specific time. **It is better to estimate too high than too low.**

#### STEPS TO CREATING YOUR BUDGET

1. Consider the needs.
  - Look at department's goals
  - What worked or did not work last year?
  - Consider the financial conditions of the department
  - Can you afford "new ideas"?
  - When possible, set figures high
2. Identify your categories.
  - Books and other resources
  - Printing and photocopying
  - Supplies and other materials
    - a.) Equipment
    - b.) Programs
3. Evaluate the past budgets of the department.
  - Did you accomplish all the plans as budgeted?
  - Were there areas that require a carry-over into the New Year?
4. Set your figures.
  - Prioritize the department's needs and programs.
  - Be a visionary and set bigger budgets for your programs.
5. Itemize and justify your figures.
6. Discuss the budget with the appropriate person/committee.
7. If the Budget Committee returns the budget to you with the recommendation to reduce the bottom line, then you need to put each category and figure through a rigorous examination. For every figure, ask yourself these questions:
  - Can we accomplish the same goal less expensively?
  - Is this purchase vital to our ministry vision?
  - Is the timing right for this purchase or expense?
  - Have we done all we can to justify this expense?



- Does past experience support such a purchase?
- Are we willing to bend on this purchase?
- How might we raise the money needed elsewhere to accomplish our vision?

8. Evaluate and adjust your budget on a regular basis.

<b><i>Budget for Children's Ministries</i></b>	
<b>Sabbath School:</b>	
Publishing house materials	_____
Division operation	_____
Beginner	_____
Kindergarten	_____
Primary	_____
Juniors	_____
Earliteens	_____
<b>Nurture Activities</b>	
Retreat	_____
Small groups	_____
Easter drama	_____
Christmas play	_____
Teacher training seminars	_____
<b>Outreach Activities</b>	
Crafts day	_____
Community project	_____
Neighborhood Bible clubs	_____
<b>Equipment</b>	_____
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	_____
<b>Total Children's Ministries Budget:</b>	
Sabbath School	_____
Nurture Activities	_____
Outreach Activities	_____
Equipment	_____
Miscellaneous	_____
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	_____

## RAISING FUNDS

Fund-raising in Children's Ministries can be tiring, and it's especially challenging in smaller churches where there are fewer people to contribute. But even small churches will be successful when they incorporate creative, innovative ideas to raise awareness of their ministry and to raise cash. Rick Chromey shares the following success secrets of fund-raising.<sup>5</sup>

### ***10 Fund-Raising Success Secrets***

***F***ocus on God's provision through each fund-raiser.

***U***nderline money making with fun!

***N***urture kids' growth. Teach kids how to be responsible and to work hard.

***D***on't limit giving. Suggest a donation, and adults may give more.

***R***emember to clear all fund-raisers with your pastor.

***A***rrange for everyone to benefit: the givers and the receivers.

***I***nvolve kids.

***S***chedule fund-raisers around holidays when people are in a giving mood.

***E***mbrace natural opportunities, sponsoring events such as mealtime fundraisers.

***R***esist overkill. Sporadic fund-raisers are more effective than monthly ones.

<sup>5</sup> Chromey, Rick, *Children's Ministries Guide for Smaller Churches* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1995), 82.

## Chapter 10

### RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

The primary frustrations of many Children's Ministries Coordinators are finding, training, and motivating volunteers. Finding the right volunteers can be tough. Those who are willing aren't always skilled. And those who are outstanding often times say no. How do we find the help we need?

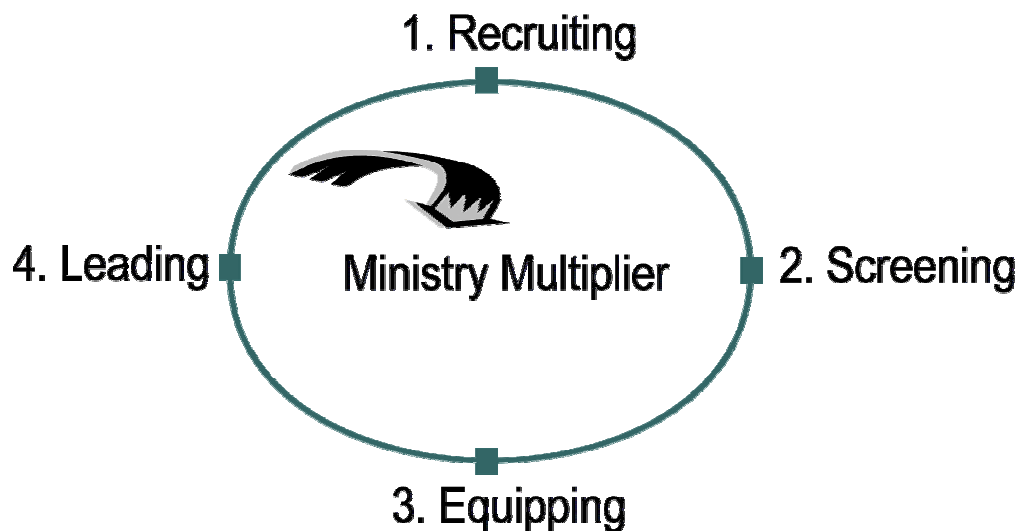
#### WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER?

- Someone who does not have to do it, but does it anyway!
  - You can't fire them.
  - But they can quit whenever they want to.

#### THE HIGH IMPACT MODEL OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

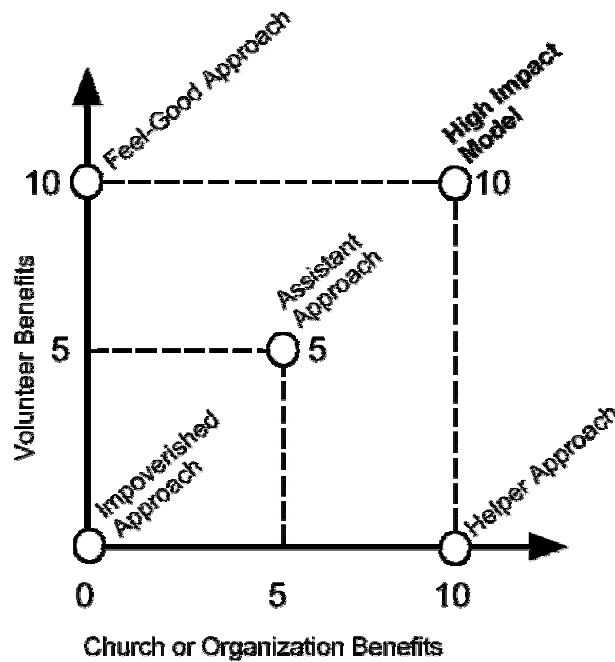
Composed of four tasks:

1. Recruiting
2. Screening
3. Equipping
4. Leading



## VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT MODELS

We use different approaches in managing volunteers. But using the high impact approach model in managing volunteers is more effective in the success of Children's Ministries if we want to groom future leaders. Let's take a look at five models of management as shown in the diagram below. The vertical grid represents volunteer benefits and the horizontal grid represents the church's benefits.



### Types of Models:

- Impoverished Approach**      Pastors do everything.      Score: Volunteer 0; Church 0
- Helper Approach**      Volunteers asked to help; They're used and abused.      Score: Volunteer 0; Church 10
- Feel Good Approach**      Volunteers tell where they want to serve.      Score: Volunteer 10; Church 0
- Assistant Approach**      Class distinction between leaders and volunteers; no effort to mentor and train for leadership.      Score: Volunteer 5; Church 5
- High Impact Approach**      Church-wide commitment to select and disciple volunteers; team building to reach kingdom goals.      Score: Volunteer 10; Church 10

## 1. RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

- Start early
- Pray for guidance in finding the right people to serve in this ministry
- Have a clear description of each job to be filled
- Create a list of prospects. Don't forget youth, parents, college students and senior citizens!
- Share further recruiting responsibilities with the leaders you recruit first
- Regularly share information with the congregation about the need for volunteers. Distribute volunteer recruitment flyers in personal mailings to your prospect list.
- Keep a supply of ministry application forms



## 2. SCREENING VOLUNTEERS

“Like an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.” Proverbs 26:10

- Why screen volunteers?
  - to find out whom God has called to ministry
  - to match a person's gifts to ministry
  - to gauge their interest
  - to protect children
  - to protect the church from liability
  - to establish agenda harmony
- Who does the screening?
  - the Children's Ministries Coordinator
  - the leader of the ministry
  - the church screening committee
- The roles of screeners
  - the Children's Ministries Coordinator
    - accepts applications
    - consults with ministry leader
  - the ministry leader
    - casts a vision
    - shares a mission
    - applies the 7 C's
  - the screening committee
    - does background checks and interviews



- The Seven C's
  - calling to ministry
  - character—God's screening
  - chemistry—attitude, willingness
  - competency—training, experience
  - consistency/congruence
  - commitment
  - condition—mental, physical, spiritual
- Committed volunteers say with David: "I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." II Samuel 24:24.
- "The best predictor of future performance is past performance."
- "When volunteers fail, the fault lies with the recruiter/screener not with the volunteer."

### 3. EQUIPPING VOLUNTEERS



- We equip volunteers by providing:
  - ministry descriptions
  - essential equipment
  - resources: human, financial, paper
  - training: seminars, demonstration, role model/mentor
  - support, evaluate, affirm
- A Ministry Description tells:
  - title of position/ministry
  - a list of ideal/essential functions
  - a list of essential training required
  - additional skills essential to the job
  - additional ministry training

**God will give it TO you  
if he can get it THROUGH you!**

- Why training fails?
  - we neglect to provide an application form and get a commitment to attend training.
  - training is not relational
  - information only

- lack of communication
- no feedback—either direction
- irrelevant
- speaker not outstanding
- How to make training relational?
  - call everyone by name; work the room and have a good time
  - take an interest in each other; share joys and concerns
  - be a support group; pray together
  - go out to eat once in a while and talk around the table
  - use humor; plan surprises
- Attracting people to training
  - call it a leadership team meeting
  - require attendance
  - take up issues
  - listen to experiences volunteers relate
  - let everyone give input
  - reinforce and give feedback
  - don't talk a lot
  - don't waste their time
- Jehoshaphat's training
  - consider carefully what you do
  - your work is for God
  - God is with you
  - fear of the Lord be upon you
  - no injustice, favoritism, bribery
  - serve faithfully, wholeheartedly

#### **4. LEADING VOLUNTEERS**

- Basic requirements
  - cast a vision
  - define the mission
  - mentor (personally advise/supervise)
  - disciple (offer spiritual leadership)
- Effective leaders ...
  - apply the Gospel—pour out love

- listen to God's voice
- take the Bible as authority
- depend on prayer
- balance their whole life

## **5. MULTIPLYING MINISTRY**

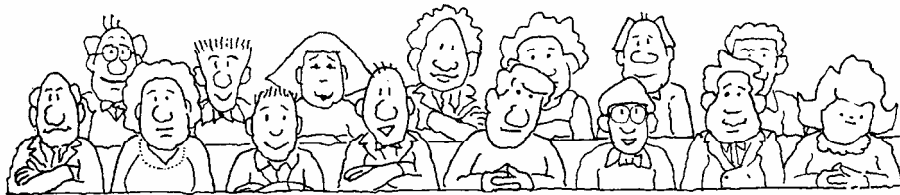
- Always be mentoring leaders
- Increase responsibilities incrementally
- Mentor someone to take your place
  - encourage their personal growth
  - ask them to team up with you
  - gradually turn responsibility over

## **HIGH IMPACT PRINCIPLES**

- A volunteer is a child of God
- Church leadership needs to practice human stewardship too
- Recognize a volunteer's enhanced value
- Serving is a privilege
- Volunteers are capable partners
- The essential functions of a leader are to recruit, screen train and disciple

## **ADVENTIST RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SCREENING VOLUNTEERS.**

Sample guidelines from various churches are provided by Adventist Risk Management for Children's Ministries coordinators and other children's leaders. You can use them when screening volunteers, and in some places you may want to adapt them to suit your needs.



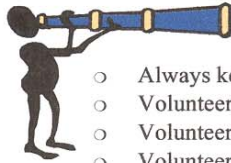


# Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

*The risk management service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide*

- Children will be supervised by adult(s) at times
- Children’s programming will be conducted on an abuse free no-harassment tolerated basis at all times

## *Safeguarding Children’s Ministries Volunteer Management - Best Practices*



### Focus On Mission

- Always keep your MISSION the primary focus
- Volunteer orientation is Mission driven
- Volunteer practices and policies are Mission focused
- Volunteer dismissal is in support of your Mission

### Opportunity for Best Practices in Children’s Ministries

*The local church should take reasonable steps to safeguard children engaged in church-sponsored activities by choosing individuals with high spiritual and moral backgrounds as leaders and participants in programs for children.*

*Church Manual Revision — 2000*

*Page 120*

### Churches Are Vulnerable

- Community of Trust
- Ignorance of Facts concerning Child Abuse
- Lack of Safeguards to protect children
- Numerous Opportunities to work with children
- Easy Access to children without screening requirements
- Constant Need for Volunteers to work in Children and Youth ministries



### Organizational Responsibilities

- Duty to Protect all Children from Harm
- Safe Participation in Church or School Activities
- That all Activities are properly supervised by trained employees or volunteers
- Proper Maintenance of Facilities to limit opportunities for Harm
- Duty to Exercise Reasonable Care in Staffing that will include:
  - Careful Selection of Employees and Volunteers
  - Appropriate Training of staff members and volunteers
  - Proper Supervision of staff members and volunteers
  - Appropriate Action when it is necessary to remove staff members
  - Duty to Report all incidents of suspected child abuse in accordance with the law

## Responsibility to Children & Adults

- Adults with known prior acts of child abuse or other inappropriate conduct will not be allowed to participate in church-sponsored children's ministry programs
- Appropriate steps will be taken to avoid the suspicion of adults involved in supervision through the use of the following protective measures:
  - The Six month rule will be used to get acquainted with new volunteers
  - Two Adult rule will be practiced at all church sponsored activities
  - Require all adult volunteers to participate in an annual child abuse awareness program
  - All allegations of inappropriate conduct will be promptly investigated by the church and appropriate corrective measures taken
- If allegations are made against an adult for inappropriate conduct with a child we will respect the individuals rights and treat all matters involving the situation on a confidential basis
- We have a duty to conduct all activities in harmony with the counsel of Matthew 7:12



### Six Month Rule & Volunteer Selection

- Adopt the practice that no adult will be considered for a volunteer leadership role in a church sponsored children's ministry program until they have been a member of the congregation for a minimum of six (6) months
- Require all adult volunteers to complete a Volunteer Service Information Form in order to be considered as a candidate for volunteer service at your church
- Appoint a small committee (3-5 members) Volunteer Service Review Committee to conduct the evaluation of all volunteer applicants for children's ministry programs.
- Determine the appropriate level of volunteer screening required for all volunteer positions involving children's ministry programs
- Conduct a basic level of screening for all adult volunteers that would include the following elements:
  - Personal interview of the volunteer applicant by the leader of the children's ministry department i.e. Sabbath School department leader, Pathfinder Director, Adventurer's Director etc...
  - Completion of the required Volunteer Service Information Form in full and signed by the adult volunteer
  - Personal reference checks by the Volunteer Service Review Committee
- If additional level of screening is warranted for the volunteer position it should be completed before the adult is allowed to work in the program
- The Volunteer Service Review Committee will notify the appropriate leader and the adult volunteer when their application for volunteer service has been approved
- All information received and the Volunteer Service Information Form will be kept at the local church on a confidential basis and kept in a locked file
- **Levels of Screening for Volunteer Service**

#### **Basic – All Volunteers**

- Personal interview of volunteer applicant



- Resist becoming involved in a prolonged discussion of why screening of volunteers is a mandatory requirement at your church. Handle these types of questions in a private meeting with the individual who is raising the objection to the screening process
- Carefully review all Volunteer Service Information Forms to be sure that they are completely filled out including a the signature of the applicant
- Personally invite a volunteer applicant to complete any missing information and resubmit their form for consideration. Any objections to specific questions on the form should be addressed and the applicant encouraged to participate in the screening process in order to maintain the integrity of your program. Keep the FOCUS on your mission.
- Don't short cut the screening process. All volunteers need to complete a minimum basic level of screening
- If the applicant continues to refuse to cooperate with your established screening process they should not be allowed to serve in a volunteer position involving children.



### **Key Elements for Volunteer Training**

- Education on the Mission of your Children's Ministry program
- Understanding of the expectations, code of conduct and rules that will be followed in your program in relating to and interacting with children
- Awareness education on child abuse (physical and sexual) and what steps your church has taken to prevent the occurrence of child abuse incidents in your program
- Good Touch – Bad Touch education and training on how to affirm children in an appropriate manner
- Education on how to determine the appropriate level of supervision to conduct your program in a safe manner at all times
- Make it clear that failure to comply with the established code of conduct and rules may result in the volunteer being asked to no longer participate in your program
- Use professional members (teachers, physicians, attorneys, social workers etc...) of your church family and invite them to help you conduct the training of volunteers in order to bring credibility and support for your child protection efforts

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*Providing Solutions To Minimize Risks*

June 2001

## **Children's Ministries Volunteer Purpose and Policy Statement**

### **(Purpose Statement)**

The congregation and staff of the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church are committed to providing a safe environment to help children learn to love and follow Jesus Christ. At this time, the disturbing and traumatic rise and recognition of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation, our society and this church. Churches with programs for children are not insulated from those who abuse kids.

Therefore, the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that it is vitally important to take decisive steps to ensure that the church and its programs, to the best of its ability, are safe and provide a joyful experience for children and youth.

The following policies have been established and reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children when they are attending any church sponsored programs or activities at the \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

### **(Policy Statement)**

- I. Volunteers who work with children and youth are required to:
  - a) Be an active member of this congregation for a minimum of six (6) months, unless an exception is granted by the Volunteer Services Review Committee and approved by the Church Board.
  - b) Complete and sign a Volunteer Service Information Form and submit it to Volunteer Services Review Committee for screening and approval.
  - c) Provide personal references that will be reviewed by the Volunteer Services Review Committee.
  - d) Support and comply with the rules of conduct established for volunteer service at the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church.
  
- II. All workers interacting with children must observe the "two person" rule, which means that workers must avoid one-on-one situations with children at all times.
  
- III. All children and youth programs must provide no less than two adults to supervise the activities of children and youth.

- IV. Adult survivors of childhood physical or sexual abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. Individuals with such a history must discuss their desire to work with children and youth with one of the pastoral staff, in a confidential interview, prior to receiving approval to work in these areas.
- V. Individuals who have committed physical or sexual abuse and those under investigation, whether or not convicted, may not work in any church sponsored activity or program involving preschoolers, children or youth.
- VI. Opportunities for training in the prevention and recognition of abuse of children will be provided by various ministry areas of our church. Workers in these areas will be expected to participate in such training.
- VII. Workers must immediately report to the pastor or church administration any behaviors or other incidents, which seem abusive or inappropriate. Upon notification, appropriate actions will be taken. These actions may include following the guidelines and policies of the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference office, the operating protocols established by this Church and the applicable compliance with state and federal laws.
- VIII. Guidelines for volunteers who work with children and youth will be provided to each volunteer.

Voted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Board \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Southeastern California Conference

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June 2001



## *Seventh-day Adventist Church*

### *Child Protection Policy and Procedures*

**(A Best Practices Model)**

#### **MISSION:**

Our mission is to provide a safe, spiritual and abuse-free environment for every child who attends programs and activities of the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church.

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

It is our objective to prevent any form of child abuse, physical, emotional or sexual and to protect employees and volunteers from false allegations of such acts.

**DEFINITIONS:**      **Child – Nursery through Primary**  
                                 **Older Child – Junior through Earliteen**

**Child Abuse** – is any treatment of a child that threatens the child's safety or leaves the child's life with physical or emotional scars. It constitutes any inappropriate physical contact, sexual contact or communication by any adult through the use of their authority over a child. Abuse can also occur between two children. Even if a child out of ignorance, innocence or fear may cooperate, it is still abuse.

**Physical Abuse** – is any injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury that appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.

**Emotional Abuse** – is any verbal communication that harms a child, such as degrading, belittling, disparaging name-calling, demeaning terminology, violent or obscene language, etc.

**Sexual Abuse** – violates a child's sexual privacy whether by fondling, visual stimulation or by verbal remarks. It includes fondling of any intimate parts of a child's body, oral, genital and/or anal penetration by any foreign object, and oral, genital or anal intercourse, telling or asking a child to masturbate, exhibiting or showing any genital parts to a child, allowing a child to witness or watch any forms of sexual activity, showing any pornographic materials, etc...

## **PROCEDURES:**

- All employees and volunteers, who work with children, must complete a Children's Ministries Staff Information Form. No changes are allowed on this form without the consent of the Church Board and legal counsel.
- All employees and volunteers agree to comply with the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- New members who desire to work with children and youth must have been an active member of the local church for a minimum of six (6) months before they are allowed to work with children.
- Adults shall supervise children's programming and activities at all times.
- All workers shall observe the two person rule in children's programming. This means there will always be a minimum of two (2) adults supervising any function in order to avoid the following situations:
  - Workers will avoid being alone with a child at all times. This protects both the child and the adult from possible harm and allegations.
  - A child shall not be assisted in using the restroom unless there is a second adult near the area who understands the reason for the assistance.
  - No child shall be disciplined unless in visual contact with another adult who is aware of the situation that requires discipline. Any form of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden.
- No "child" (see definitions) shall be released to go to the restroom unless a parent, guardian or two adults accompany them.
- No child will be released to any adult other than his/her parents or legally appointed guardians without the expressed written permission of the parent or guardian.
- It is recommended that all children's activities be conducted in classrooms or offices that have windows for easy supervision. All other rooms should be kept locked at all times.
- Any church sponsored activity or program involving minor age children conducted off-premises must have the approval of church leadership.
- The church board must approve all overnight activities or trips in advance. All minor age children participating in these activities must have a signed parental

permission slip for each trip as well as an emergency medical treatment release. Parents and /or guardians will be informed of the adults who will be responsible for the supervision of the activity or trip.

- Any behavior which seems to be abusive or inappropriate, shall be reported to the church administrator or pastor for investigation.
- Members who know of any individual who has been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest, or admitted to committing physical or sexual abuse and regularly attends services should advise the pastoral staff of this information. Church leadership will be responsible to carefully monitor said individual's involvement at church functions.
- Individuals who have been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest, or admitted to committing physical or sexual abuse may not work or volunteer in any church sponsored children's ministry, earliteen, youth or senior citizen program or activity.

Voted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Board \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Potomac Conference

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## Sample Volunteer Application Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's license number: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of children and ages, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Desired position: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's program: \_\_\_\_\_

Age level: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous ministry experience (program, age level, position):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Church membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of your church: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been attending this church?

---

Membership date:

---

Write a brief statement of your Christian beliefs:

Please provide two non-family personal character references (these people must be from outside our church):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been arrested, convicted, or pleaded guilty to a criminal act? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, please explain:

---

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---

I affirm to the best of my knowledge that the information provided on this application is correct. I authorize any reference or church listed on this application to supply any information that may pertain to my character and fitness to work with children. I hereby release any organization or individual from any liability from any damages that I may incur.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample Reference Check Form

Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity?

How well do you know the applicant?

Comment on the applicant's family background.

Comment on the applicant's personality and character.

Comment on the applicant's spiritual journey.

From your assessment, how well is the applicant suitable for working with children?

Would you recommend this applicant?

\_\_\_\_\_ with no reservation    \_\_\_\_\_ with some reservation    \_\_\_\_\_ not at all

Name of reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Position or Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Referee's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 11

### CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATION

Coordinating children's ministries for the local church involves leadership and training for teachers and leaders. The Children's Ministries coordinator can contact the conference director to assist with training volunteers on a regular basis. Each coordinator is free to use any training programs of his or her choice. The General Conference Children's Ministries Department offers nine courses for the basic level of the Leadership Certification program. These courses can be taught as seminars during teachers' conventions, leadership training, or certification weekends. It may take several months to a year to complete all nine courses, after which a certificate from the General Conference Children's Ministries Department will be given to each participant.



For those leaders who wish to have advanced training, the North American Division Children's Ministries Leaders' Certification is another valuable program to use.

#### BASIC LEVEL

##### 1. Understanding GraceLink

A walk through the GraceLink curriculum, learning about how the four dynamics of grace, worship, community, and service are incorporated into the Bible lessons, and understanding the new approach to teaching it.

##### 2. Active Learning

Discover the interesting and best method of teaching children of any age by involving them in activities rather than through lectures.

##### 3. Faith Development of Children

Find out how children develop their faith and learn to lead them through the stages of faith development to a committed relationship with Jesus Christ.

##### 4. Positive Class Discipline

Learn some ideas of managing a class with grace and firmness as you facilitate active learning in your lessons.

##### 5. Raising Kids to Adore God

Help parents learn the most effective ways to raise children to adore God by making worship as a lifestyle.

##### 6. Protecting Children from Abuse (Screening Volunteers)

Protect the children in your church by implementing an effective procedure for volunteer screening. Learn how to introduce volunteer application forms without insulting long-time leaders.

### **7. Safety and Emergency Procedures for Children**

Provide safety for children in church-sponsored activities by implementing procedures that protect them from physical harm, danger, accidents, and other unforeseen hazards.

### **8. Understanding Child Development: Birth Through Early Teen**

Discover the developmental characteristics of children ages 0-14, how they learn, and how best to teach them. Understand the needs, the strengths, and the challenges of pre-adolescents. Learn practical tips for keeping them connected to the group and to Jesus.

### **9. Understanding How Children Learn**

Understand how children learn through their different learning styles and try to meet the needs of each type of learner. Discover the secrets for developing a successful lesson plan.

For more details on the courses, please refer to the following sources:

- *The Children's Ministries Handbook*, by The General Conference Department of Children's Ministries, 2005.
- The General Conference Children's Ministries website at [www.childrensministries.gc.adventist.org](http://www.childrensministries.gc.adventist.org)



## Chapter 12

### BAPTISMAL GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN



What response do we give children when they ask to be baptized? How do we go about preparing them to accept God's grace and to walk fully in His light? What resources do we use to get our primaries and juniors ready for baptism? What do they need to know before baptism? What is the best age for baptism? We should not hesitate too long, for the child's decision will fade away. If we don't respond to their exciting decision to follow Jesus and be baptized, we may lose the golden opportunity to do so later.

Making a decision to follow Jesus is a serious step toward spiritual growth. *The Church Manual*, p. 29 concurs that:

*“Baptism is a spiritual relationship. It can be entered into only by those who are converted. Only in this way can the purity and spiritual caliber of the church be maintained. It is the duty of every minister to instruct those who accept the principles of the truth, that they may enter the church on a sound, spiritual basis. While there is no stated age for baptism, it is recommended that very young children who express a desire to be baptized should be encouraged and entered into an instruction program that may lead to baptism.”*

Ellen G. White also recognizes that children do make serious decisions for baptism. She counsels the church in *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 169 that:

*“Children of eight, ten or twelve years, are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion. Do not teach your children with reference to some future period when they shall be old enough to repent and believe the truth. If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners, and of the way of salvation through Christ.”*

#### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

When a child makes a decision to become a follower of Christ, the Children's Ministries coordinator should encourage the church leadership to arrange a service of Affirmation of Faith for that child. Such a ceremony helps to affirm the child's decision and to let him know that the congregation rejoices with him/her for making such a commitment.

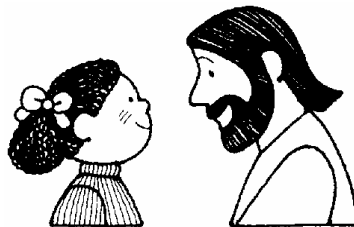
## BAPTISMAL BIBLE STUDY

Select and use a child's baptismal study guide or any other appropriate Bible study material for children that is approved by the Seventh-day Adventist church. The following study guides are recommended for use with children:

- *Bible Treasures*, edited by Aileen Sox. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2004.
- *ChristWise: Discipleship Guide for Juniors*, by Troy Fitzgerald. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002.
- *ChristWise: Discipleship Guide for Teens*, by Troy Fitzgerald. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002.
- *It's My Choice*, by Steve Case. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996.

## BAPTISMAL VOWS

After the child has completed the Bible study and is ready to become a church member, his/her request for baptism should be presented to the church board. On the day of baptism when the child will be examined publicly, ask the pastor to use the "Simplified Baptismal Vows" by Steve Case. This is easier for the child to understand the vows as he makes a commitment.





## Affirmation of Faith (A Sample Ceremony)

**Song:**

\* allow the child to choose a song that is familiar to him/her.

\* it does not have to be song from the hymnal; it could be a song from Sabbath School.

**Introduction:**

\* have the child sit in the front row before the ceremony.

\* the Pastor or a Faith-Friend who knows the child best can introduce him/her to the congregation.

\* give a brief history of when, where, and what prompted the decision.

\* focus of remarks is about the child. You could say:

“I would like to introduce you to Bryan Nelson. Many of you have seen Bryan here at church. Last month at our Children’s Retreat Bryan made a decision. He decided to make Jesus his friend, and wants to be one of His children.”

**Affirmation:**

\* to be read or recited by the child to the congregation.

For example:

“Because I know that God loves me  
I choose to live my life as one of His children,  
Because Jesus died for me  
I want to please Him through the way I live.

**Faith Friend:  
Introduced:**

\* explain their role.

For example:

“Having a friend to support you can mean the difference

between success or failure. The Bible says that, "If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (Eccl. 4:10).

Bryan has chosen his Sabbath School teacher, Mr. Jerry Page, as his faith friend. A faith friend is someone who will encourage him in all aspects of his life, but most importantly, on his spiritual walk with Jesus.

\* Faith friend recites commitment to the child.

For example:

"As your faith friend, I promise to support and care for you. Like you, I may make mistakes, but I know that God forgives me. I want you to know you can come and talk to me any time. I want to be your friend."

**Congregation  
Response:**

\* get congregation to participate in the ceremony by raising their hands or standing as support.

For example:

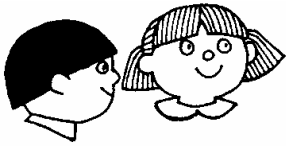
"Bryan, there are many other people here who I know would also like to be your faith friend. Would those of you in the congregation who would like to be a "friend" to Bryan please stand? Would those who are willing to encourage and support him with love; those who want to make a commitment to be positive and not criticize or condemn, but be a friend, please stand now."

**Prayer:**

\* the pastor offers a short prayer.

**Shake Hands:**

\* give the Affirmation of Faith card to the child.



## **SIMPLIFIED BAPTISMAL VOWS**

### **Baptismal Vows**

- 1. I believe in God the Father; in His Son, Jesus Christ; and in the Holy Spirit.**
- 2. I accept the death of Jesus to pay for my sins.**
- 3. I accept the new heart Jesus gives me in place of my sinful heart.**
- 4. I believe that Jesus is in heaven as my best friend and that He gives me the Holy Spirit so I can obey Him.**
- 5. I believe God gave me the Bible as my most important guidebook.**
- 6. By God living in me, I want to obey the Ten Commandments, which include the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.**
- 7. I want to help as many people as possible to be ready for the soon coming of Jesus.**
- 8. I believe God gives special abilities to His people, and that the Spirit of Prophecy is given to His chosen people.**
- 9. I want to help God's church with my influence, effort, and money.**
- 10. I want to take good care of my body because the Holy Spirit lives there now.**
- 11. With God's power, I want to obey the basic principles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.**
- 12. I want to be baptized to show people I am a Christian.**
- 13. I want to be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and I believe this church has a special message to give to the world.**

Taken from *It's My Choice*, by Steve Case. Hagerstown, MD.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996.

## Chapter 13



### CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

It is essential that we plan effective programs for children. However, we need to remember that programs are tools for building the body of Christ. We must never lose sight of our mission in Children's Ministries: to nurture children into a loving, serving relationship with Jesus. Every program we offer needs to lead children along on the journey of faith.

Do not over plan! Start out slowly and meaningfully instead of beginning with many mediocre ones. It is better to strengthen existing programs and add new ones as the need arises, keeping in mind the availability of funds and volunteer help.

We do not necessarily need *all* of the programs other churches have. Choose only those programs that you can resource, remembering that the more Children's Ministries programs a church provides and advertises, the more the church attracts families, and the congregation will grow. This chapter examines some programs that reach kids. It provides ideas and encouragement for specific ministries. But, pick and choose carefully.

#### PROGRAMS THAT REACH CHILDREN WITHIN THE CHURCH

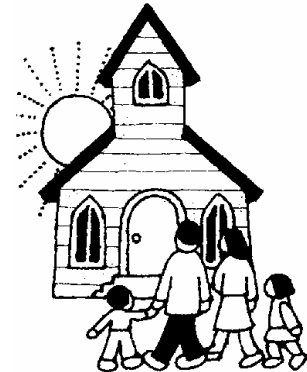
##### Children's Sabbath School

**Purpose:** To provide religious education for children that helps them build a relationship with Jesus. This is the time when children study the Scriptures, fellowship together, and are involved in service to become faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

**Description:** A total hour Sabbath School program based on a weekly Bible lesson. Children are involved in active learning and participate in a variety of activities that meet their learning styles.

**Unique features:** This is the only ministry that reaches all Adventist children. It provides a great opportunity to study the Bible with the children and help them relate these truths to everyday life. Children's Ministries Directors need to make sure that in all churches where there are children Sabbath Schools should be provided for the children according to their appropriate ages.

**Resources:** *Children's Ministries; Ideas and Techniques that Work* (AdventSource); *GraceLink Curriculum Resource for Teachers* (Review and Herald).



## Children's Church

**Purpose:** To provide children with the opportunity to worship in an age-appropriate setting, learning at their level of understanding, and participating in worship.

**Description:** Children's church is a church service just for children. It begins when the adult church begins. Children's church is scheduled according to the needs of each church, varying from once a month to twice a month. It is most needed by children ages 2-8, who find it difficult to sit for any length of time. Junior-age children need their own junior church, or they can attend the regular service. Children's church incorporate all the elements of regular worship such as praise, prayer, sharing or testimony, studying the Word, a children's sermon, and drama or skits that apply the Word to everyday life.

**Unique features:** Children are given opportunities to participate in worship and to understand the elements of worship.

**Resources:** *101 Ideas for Children's Church* by Jolene Roehlkepartain (AdventSource); *Children's Church: Responding to God's Love* (AdventSource); *Children's Sermons: Using the 5 Senses to Tell God's Story*, by Philip D. Schroeder (Abingdon Press).

## Children's Prayer Meeting

**Purpose:** To involve children in a meaningful prayer experience.

**Description:** It involves a short talk based on scripture to strengthen the children's belief in and understanding of prayer. It includes songs, prayers, and an activity or craft. Children can also meet in a home instead of the church.

**Unique features:** It offers children a special opportunity for spiritual growth and fellowship with other peers.

**Resources:** *Forever Stories Funpack* (Review and Herald); *52 Ways to Teach Children to Pray* (Rainbow Books); *100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids* by Karen Holford (Pacific Press); children's devotional books; *Week of Prayer children's devotionals* (Adventist Review).



## Children's Baptismal Class

**Purpose:** To prepare children who have expressed a desire to be baptized.

**Description:** The children study the fundamental beliefs of Christianity and the Seventh-day Adventist Church to understand their relationship and responsibilities to God and to the community of believers.

**Unique features:** Children's baptismal lessons are presented on a child's level of understanding. They can take as long as they need in preparation for baptism.

**Resources:** *"It's My Choice" Baptismal Guide* by Steve Case (Review and Herald); *ChristWise: Discipleship Guide for Juniors* by Troy Fitzgerald (Review and Herald); *ChristWise: Discipleship for Teens* by Troy Fitzgerald (Review and Herald).

## Children's Choir



**Purpose:** To give children an experience of worship through music and to train them in singing and in understanding music as a ministry outreach.

**Description:** A musical group for kids that performs mainly in church as well as in the community. It can be a long-term or a short-term project in preparation for Easter, Christmas, or Children's Sabbath. Community children can be invited to join the choir and their parents invited to the performance. Choir devotionals, the music itself, the performance, and the relationships formed can all be a great witness.

**Unique features:** This ministry brings together church school, public school, and community children. It provides a great opportunity to teach children good music and influence their musical tastes.

## Children's Sabbath

**Purpose:** To provide children with the opportunity to use their gifts and talents by participating in the worship service.

**Description:** This is a special yearly program on the third Sabbath in October, to promote awareness of children's needs and our responsibility to meeting their needs as a church. Children participate in the worship service, taking on functions such as praying, Scripture reading, leading song service, preaching, collecting offering, and special music.

**Unique features:** This special program provides a great opportunity to train children as leaders in the church. Children feel included as members of the church by being involved.

**Resources:** *Open Heart, Open Hands, 2003* (North American Division Children's Ministries); *Stand Up! Stand Out! 2004* (NAD Children's Ministries).

## Children's Retreat

**Purpose:** To provide spiritual evangelism and nurture for children in a camp setting.

**Description:** Children get together for 2-3 days on a campsite or a retreat center for interactive activities that encourage spiritual, physical, social, and mental growth. A specific theme is chosen and the program is then planned around this theme. Programs can include stewardship, Adventist heritage, Bible-time-experiences, and Bible heroes.

**Unique features:** Offers weekday programming as well as Sabbath programs. Children are also given opportunities to develop their leadership as well as their spiritual, physical, and social skills.

**Resources:** *My Place in Space* (GC Children's Ministries Department); *Jesus, Then and Now* (AdventSource).





## Children's Evangelistic Meeting

**Purpose:** To help children make a commitment to Jesus, and to understand the plan of salvation and the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.

**Description:** A series of meetings for children that present age-appropriate truths while the parents are attending the adult evangelistic meeting. The programs include Bible stories and doctrine, memory verses, songs, prayers, activities, and crafts.

**Unique features:** Presents a concentrated study of the plan of salvation and the distinctive beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists on the level of the children.

**Resources:** *Bible Treasures* by Aileen Sox (Pacific Press); *Forever Stories Funpack*—ages 4-11 (Review and Herald); *Come Meet Jesus*—ages 8-11 (Review and Herald); *The Underground Adventure* (South Pacific Division).

## Young Preachers' Club

**Purpose:** To train children who have the gift of preaching to preach God's Word.

**Description:** Children, who have an interest in preaching, join this club, which meets 1-2 times a week. They receive training in sermon preparation, delivery, and other public speaking skills. After several months of training, the child preachers get to practice these skills in real settings such as worship service, evangelistic meetings, children's church, and others.

**Unique features:** Children get to be trained as young preachers when they have an interest and the gifts of preaching. There is also the opportunity to fellowship and work with their peers in a great spiritual experience.

**Resources:** *Young Preacher's Club* by Children's Ministries Department, Inter-American Division.

## Children's Music Festival

**Purpose:** To give children the opportunity to use their musical talents in areas of singing, playing instruments, musical mimes, etc.

**Description:** Children gather for a day of music extravaganza. Programs include exhibitions and short demonstrations of musical instruments, mimes, choral works, etc. followed by musical performances of the children. Community children can be invited to join the festival.

**Unique features:** This ministry brings together children with various musical talents and abilities as they use these gifts for praise and appreciation. It provides a great opportunity for children to learn good music and how they can reach out through music ministry.





## Children's Nature Camp

**Purpose:** To inspire and lead children into energized, enjoyable appreciation of the natural world.

**Description:** A get-away to a camp or place out in nature for a couple of days where children participate in nature activities that will uplift, motivate and inspire them to appreciate the Creator God.

**Unique features:** Children get the opportunity to explore the natural world through fun activities, games, video presentations, and nature study. This is a great time for group dynamics and bonding.

**Resources:** *Sharing Nature with Children I and II* by Joseph Cornell (Dawn Publications); *A Family Guide to Sabbath Nature Activities* by Eileen Lantry (Pacific Press); *Four Seasons...Five Senses; 52 Weeks with Nature* by Thais Randall Baer (Pacific Press).

**Other Programs:** Children's health fair; stewardship camp; children's Bible camp; weekly Bible classes for children not attending Adventist schools; week of prayer; children's story at worship; children's small group.

## PROGRAMS THAT REACH NEW CHILDREN

### Vacation Bible School

**Purpose:** To reach out to children in the community and lead them to Jesus.

**Description:** Vacation Bible School (VBS) is the most popular community outreach program. It is generally held during the vacation time, lasting 5-10 days. It can start in the morning from 9:00 to 12:00 or any other time suitable to the needs of the community. The program involves a general session, Bible stories, crafts, and games. Teens can be great helpers here.

**Unique features:** Children in the church are given the opportunity to meet with children in the community, and they learn how to be friends to these visitors.

**Resources:** *Friends Forever* (AdventSource); *Jesus' Kids in the Kitchen* (AdventSource); *Creation Station* (Review and Herald); *Lava Lava Island* (Group Publishers)



### Neighborhood Bible Club

**Purpose:** To continue as a follow-up from Vacation Bible School.

**Description:** This is a 1-2 hour program of Bible stories, songs, crafts, and games that could be conducted in a home, car porch, or backyard. A family of the church can

volunteer to host the Bible club and invite the children who have attended the Vacation Bible School as well those who have not.

**Unique features:** It's a wonderful family outreach project for children who have attended Vacation Bible School. Invite them to that home for the club and encourage them to invite their friends in the community to join too.

**Resources:** *Forever Stories* Funpack (Review and Herald); *My Bible Friends* by Donna Williams (Florida Conference).

## Play Groups

**Purpose:** To reach out to young mothers in the community and introduce them to God.

**Description:** Mothers with small children are invited to bring their children to the church for fun and play and socialization. They will get to meet with other young mothers of the church, thus giving them an opportunity to form friendships and network with each other. This program can be conducted twice a week in a large room where there is space for toy cars, jungle gym, and other activities. Provide refreshments for mothers and children.

After some time, these mothers can be invited to parenting classes, small groups, etc.

**Unique features:** It offers young mothers some time to get away from the house to meet other mothers in the community. There is time to chat over food as they share parenting tips and issues.

**Resources:** *Mothers of Preschoolers* (MOPS) (Group Publishers).



## Craft Weekend

**Purpose:** To involve kids in fun activities by learning and making a variety of crafts.

**Description:** Children in the community are invited to participate in a fun-pack activity of creative craft making. This program can be conducted on a Sunday morning from 9:00 to 12:00 or at a time most convenient for parents to bring their children. Getting acquainted with the children and their parents is essential for building better relationships.

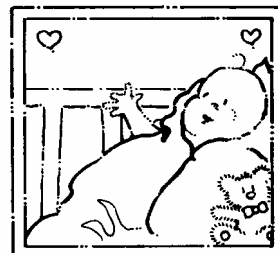
**Unique features:** Children are given opportunities to learn new crafts and make new friends. It is another opportunity to know parents in the community.

**Resources:** *Encyclopedia of Bible Crafts for Children* (Group Publishing); *Bible Story Crafts and Projects Children Love* (Group Publishing); *Creative Can-do Crafts* by Lois Keffer (Group Publishing).

## Welcome Baby

**Purpose:** To get acquainted with new mothers in the neighborhood and to support them in their early months of motherhood.

**Description:** Women of the church get together to visit mothers who have just delivered their babies. They could



be friends, relatives, or neighbors of the church women. They bring food, gifts for the baby, and materials on childcare for the new mother to read.

**Unique features:** This is an excellent outreach program for new mothers who need encouragement and support in the early months. Good friendships established can lead to further witnessing opportunities.

**Resources:** *Welcome Baby Program* by Kay Kuzma (AdventSource).

## **Mobile Library Ministry**

**Purpose:** To reach out to the children in the community and introduce them to Jesus through books and stories.

**Description:** Each week the mobile van library travels to specific rural towns to provide the children there with books and other Bible stories materials. Each child can borrow one or two books for a week and will return them for other books when the van returns the following week. The mobile library also offers a puppet show, a Bible story and songs for children for about 45 minutes.

**Unique features:** This is an appealing outreach program for children in the outlying towns and villages where they have little access to books and materials. It opens up avenues of meeting the children's needs as well as giving them an opportunity to learn about the Bible and the gospel. In many cases, parents are also attracted to this mobile library.

**Resources:** Children's stories published by Pacific Press and Review and Herald.

## **Summer Bible Studies**

**Purpose:** To provide an opportunity for children for specific Bible lessons.

**Description:** The focus is on active learning in special locations according to the Bible topics. Bible stories come to life in real life experiences as the Bible lesson unfolds.

**Unique features:** Children experience the Bible lessons in real life situations. They sit at the beach and review the Red Sea experience; tour a courtroom and study God's justice; walk in a wheat field and explore the parable of the wheat and the weeds. Children create project-oriented Bible study programs, such as developing a Creation museum after a study of Genesis. The museum featured fossils, bones, and dinosaur replicas.



**Other Programs:** Puppet ministry; community story hour; radio programs.

## Chapter 14

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



#### 1. Why is Adventurers not under the care of Children's Ministries?

Adventurers is a program of the Pathfinders for younger children. Pathfinders started out as a youth program; hence it came under the care of the Youth Department. Then, Pathfinders began to conduct similar programs for children in the lower primary level, and in recent years programs for the kindergarten level. Since the Youth Department has always handled Pathfinders, it continues to be under their jurisdiction even though the participants are children.

#### 2. Why do we need to create a new Sabbath School curriculum?

The decision to undertake the creation of a new curriculum was made by the General Conference. The General Conference Sabbath School department, in consultation with all world divisions, has been the moving force behind the writing, editing, and publishing of all the GraceLink materials.

Studies conducted across North America showed that parents, pastors, and children's leaders were asking for change. They wanted lessons that are:

- more appropriate to the age levels
- more interesting to hold the child's attention
- not too abstract too soon
- told and taught the way children learn best--according to their learning styles
- based on a Bible story, even for junior teens
- focused on Jesus and His grace

#### 3. Why don't the GraceLink lessons teach Bible stories in chronological order?

Imagine for a moment that they did--that the lessons in each series began with Genesis and progressed straight through to Revelation. This would mean that primary and junior children, who have a four-year series, would experience stories of Jesus only *once every four years*. Even in beginner and kindergarten, which are two-year series, the section on the life of Christ would be proportionally tiny if those two years were supposed to cover the entire Bible in order. The primary reason for departing from chronological order is to make sure that children have frequent opportunities to make friends with Jesus Christ.

A second reason for departing from chronological order in teaching Bible stories is because of the calendar. While many Adventists choose not to make a big deal of celebrating Christmas or Easter, these seasons present a "teachable moment" when much of society is focused on spiritual things. Choosing not to follow chronological order means that Jesus' birth can be taught in December, and His death and resurrection in the spring. It means that each year, parents and Sabbath School teachers can take advantage of these times to focus children's attention on what the Bible says about these all-important events.

The planners of GraceLink have followed an overall [Scope & Sequence](#) which makes sure that all of the major Bible stories are taught (some of them more than once) throughout the

curriculum. In general, each division alternates from quarter to quarter between Old Testament and New Testament. And where possible within the monthly units, stories are taught in sequence.

#### **4. Why do we introduce the lesson first at church? What incentive will kids have to study now?**

Teachers used to complain that one child in a whole class would know the Bible story very well and others not at all. It was difficult to teach so that everyone was involved. But when we teach the lesson first at church, everyone is at the same place; nobody has studied it yet. As you teach the lesson, you can encourage kids to study more about it during the week and to share the things they learn with the whole family.

Challenge them to personal prayer and Bible study as a way to stay close to Jesus--which is the true purpose of Bible study. Keep asking how many times they studied and record their responses, not in order to reward them, but to chart their progress. After a while they will begin to study for themselves. Encourage them to increase their study.

Children take their cues from adults. When teachers understand the added benefits of the new curriculum and methods, they can model a positive viewpoint.

#### **5. Why do the GraceLink lessons miss the point of some Bible stories?**

One of the best ways to keep the Bible fresh and alive throughout a lifetime of study is to allow the Holy Spirit to bring out aspects of familiar passages that we've never thought of before. The GraceLink curriculum develops four of the most important concepts of Christian life to use as lenses for Bible study--Grace, Worship, Community, and Service. Each lesson is approached through one of these viewpoints:

- \*\* How can this story show God's saving love for me? ([Grace](#))
- \*\* What can this story teach me about my response to God? ([Worship](#))
- \*\* What does this passage have to say about my relationship with others? ([Community](#))
- \*\* How does this lesson make a point about reaching out to others? ([Service](#))

A GraceLink lesson may have a focus completely different from the "point" that you might expect. This does not mean that the GraceLink message isn't valid. As children come to realize that the same story can make many different points when studied from a different emphasis, they will learn to appreciate the breadth of God's Word and the infinite possibilities for learning that it contains.

Each GraceLink lesson focuses on only one message, or "point," of the MANY that are possible in a given Bible story. Research has shown that the most effective way of teaching children--or adults either, for that matter--is to make **one** point in a lesson, to thoroughly explore its applications to everyday life, and to repeat that point (message) at various times throughout the class time. After all, one message can be experienced in many different ways.

This also gives the teacher the best possible strategy for organization: how does this activity or presentation contribute to the main point of the lesson? In a GraceLink lesson, the entire Sabbath School time is focused around the message.

#### **6. Why don't the new materials use the traditional style of art that we're used to from the old Sabbath School lessons?**

Traditional Seventh-day Adventist art is not known for being culturally inclusive. These lessons are used around the world, and it is not appropriate for them to depict only Caucasian children. The non-realistic style of artwork allows race/ethnicity to be ambiguous. When you look at one of the characters, you can't always say, "This person is African," or "This person is

European."

Another issue connected with artwork is time-sensitivity. Many of the pictures we grew up with, while still beautiful, look dated to the current generation. Clothes, hairstyles, etc. have changed since they were painted. A non-realistic style is a lot less subject to fashion detail.

Different artists have been selected to create illustrations for each level of the curriculum that will appeal to children. Child-friendly artwork is relatively simple, emphasizing primary colors and devoting less attention to background and detail. A conscious effort has been made to avoid the appearance of any characters directly identifiable from the media.

## **7. Is the Children's Ministries coordinator responsible for training teachers to use the GraceLink curriculum?**

The Children's Ministries coordinator works together with the Sabbath School leaders to provide training for teachers in using GraceLink. The coordinator may invite the conference Children's Ministries director to conduct the training for the teachers in the local churches.

## Chapter 15

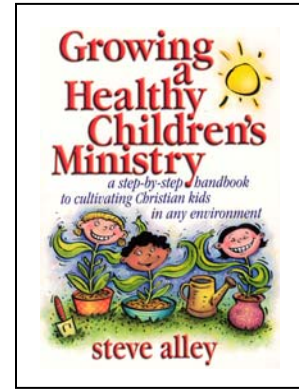
### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

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*Children's Ministries; Ideas and Techniques That Work*, North American Division, Church Resource Consortium. Lincoln, Nebraska: AdventSource, 1997.

Chromey, Rick. *Children's Ministry Guide for Smaller Churches*. Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing, Inc., 1995.

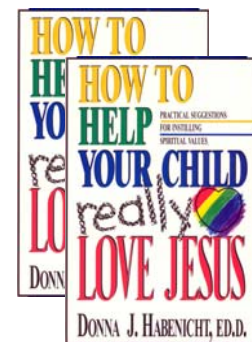
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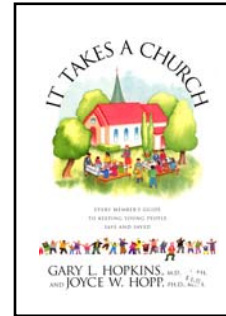


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## MAGAZINES

*Children's Ministry*. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, Inc.

*Kids' Ministry Ideas*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



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## GC CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES RESOURCES

### *Michael Asks Why*

The Great Controversy adapted for children with a Kids Activity book designed to be used with each chapter of the book.

### *My Place in Space*

Uses active learning to teach the importance of being good stewards. It includes 12 programs covering a broad concept of being a steward in the Biblical sense—at home, in the community & country, and especially in God's cosmic plan, each of us has a role to play.

### *God's Treasure Chest*

These are two-minute radio spots of children asking questions and a person answering.

Sample questions:

- Why does God let parents divorce?
- If you want to go to heaven, and you don't think you're going to make it, what will happen?
- Why does it seem that sometimes when you pray, God doesn't hear you?
- Should we love our step parents the same as our own parents?
- Do you think Jesus will come in our lifetime?
- What should you do if a friend is doing drugs?

### *Bible Lessons*

These lessons give a basic introduction to God & Jesus as our friends; an introduction to reading the Bible; draw students to read God's Word more; and invitations to accept God's gift of friendship, forgiveness and eternal life.

Set #1: God Sent His Son to be My Friend

Set #2: God's Young Friends in the Old Testament

Set #3: God Wants to be My Very Best Friend

\* These materials are available from the GC Children's Ministries Department, 12501, Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

## WEBSITES

[www.childrenministries.gc.adventist.org](http://www.childrenministries.gc.adventist.org): This is the website of the Children's Ministries Department of the General Conference. Its goal is to serve those who work with children by providing ideas, resources, and information that are helpful to children's leaders and teachers. There is also a section Just for Kids with devotionals, activities, and craft ideas for children.



[www.childmin.com](http://www.childmin.com): This is a website of the Children's Ministries Department of the North American Division. Its mission is to encourage and support those working with children in the congregation.

[www.KidsBibleinfo.com](http://www.KidsBibleinfo.com): This is a website specifically for children, ages 6 to 12, so they can learn in an easy-to-read and attractive format the wonderful truths of Scripture. The web components are Bible Topics, Stories, Games, and a Bible Lesson Series.

[www.hikidz.org](http://www.hikidz.org); This is a fascinating website for children, ages 6-12. It contains stories, Bible search, nature, computer, games, knowing about God and many more. Its goal is to provide a safe world for children where they can have fun, discover lots of new and interesting information about the world, life, important values, etc, as well as Christianity. The site also aims to be dynamic, contemporary, biblically accurate, denominationally unspecific, culturally accessible and appropriate to children regardless of background.

[www.4kids.ag.org](http://www.4kids.ag.org): This is the website of the National Children's Ministries Agency, which exists to serve the local church, its pastors, and laity in their pursuit of excellent ministry to the children of their church and their communities. It endeavors to unify the many facets of a local church's children's ministry and strives to help the local church grow by attracting, reaching, and discipling children and their families

[www.kidology.org](http://www.kidology.org): This website aims to equip and encourage those who minister to children by providing practical training, creative teaching resources, and personal consultation.

[www.rainbows.com](http://www.rainbows.com): This website provides excellent resources, tips, articles, and ideas on helping children deal with grief and hurt.