

T H E M I N I S T R Y O F

*Directing a Children's  
Sabbath School*

You may be reading this because you have been asked to serve your local church as the leader of a children's Sabbath School division. Or perhaps you serve on a nominating committee and are wondering what a children's division leader is expected to do. In either case, if you understand the church as the body of Christ, and understand the call to ministry as experienced by each member, this will help you see the role this ministry fills within a local church.

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*God supplies each person  
in the church with the resources  
for ministry — scripture,  
spiritual power, God's character  
and spiritual gifts.*

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## **Bible Principles**

The children's division leader assists in the spiritual, physical, mental, and social development of the children of the church. In so doing the leader follows the example given by the Saviour when He said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:13, 14 NIV) One who follows this injunction becomes one of Jesus' modern disciples.

Jesus asks each of us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. (Eph. 4:1) That calling is dependent on the spiritual gifts that He has bestowed. Among the spiritual gifts necessary for a children's division leader are those of leadership (Romans 12:8) and teaching. (Ephesians 4:11)

If you have been asked to serve the children of your church in the capacity of Sabbath School Division Leader, you have been chosen for a special work. Approach your responsibilities with earnest prayer and God

will guide you. Consecrate your service to the Lord and you will be richly fulfilled.

## **The Role of a Children's Division Leader**

The role of the division leader is to coordinate and lead out in programs and lessons that acquaint children with the love and saving power of Jesus; to provide the opportunity for each child to accept Jesus as their Friend and Saviour; and to lead children to grow in the Adventist lifestyle. Activities outside of Sabbath School may also be planned to help the leader become better acquainted with the children.

You will report to the Sabbath School superintendent or children's ministries coordinator. You should attend meetings of the Sabbath School Committee or Church Ministries Council of which you are a member and recommend teachers for the division. The council can assist in problem solving, budgets and special programs.

In all programs and activities you should uphold the church and its teachings to the children, encouraging them to find answers for themselves.

## **Time Commitment**

Division leaders usually commit themselves to serve a one year term of service. The amount of time spent weekly in doing the work of the division leader will vary with the number of children in the group and the experience of the leader.

Generally, a leader should spend about two hours during the week and approximately one hour on Sabbath morning. Before the beginning of a new quarter, you should hold a one to two hour planning session with the entire division staff.

## **The Divisions**

**Cradle Roll** includes babies from birth through to the fourth birthday. These children are very young and require a lot of work.

**Kindergarten** includes children from their fourth birthday through first grade. Or they can move on at their seventh birthday.

**Primary** includes children in grades two through four. They are ages seven through nine.

**Junior** includes grades five and six. These youngsters are ten, eleven and twelve years of age.

**Earliteen** includes grades seven and eight. These early adolescents are 13 and 14 years of age.

In small churches with few children, the Cradle Roll, Kindergarten and Primary divisions can be combined, or the Junior and Earliteen divisions can be combined or both. *Special Helps* designed for the com-

bined division in a small church is available through your Adventist Book Center.

Children younger than their classmates should be promoted with the other children of their grade level.

Juniors not entering seventh grade but attaining age 13 may be promoted at the discretion of the parents, leaders and Sabbath School Committee.

The last Sabbath of the quarter when the school year closes is a good time for promotion from one division to another. The last Sabbath of the quarter following the beginning of the school year is also an option.

It is not recommended that a child be promoted on his or her birthday. Promotion at this time disrupts both the child's sequence of learning and the ordering of supplies and materials in the new division.

A special promotion may be needed on the rare occasion when a division experiences a sudden increase in membership that taxes the facilities. Consideration should then be given to dividing into two groups or, if necessary, having an early promotion for the older children.

## How To Plan

It is suggested that a planning meeting between leader, assistant leaders and teachers be held at least once a quarter. The agenda of the meeting should include program planning, problem solving and "in house" training. The children's ministries coordinator may provide resources for training. If possible, plan more frequent meetings with your division teachers. They need guidance in lesson planning and ideas for making Bible learning more active.

## Tools For Ministry

● *Program Helps* provide the division leader with ideas and suggestions for organizing the department and planning the weekly Sabbath School program. Each assistant leader should have a copy.

● *Combined Program Helps* contain ideas and suggestions for the division leader who must combine Cradle Roll and Kindergarten in small churches with few children.

● *The Sabbath School Workshop Video* comes with a *Teacher's Guide* that serves both as a viewer's guide and as a set of alternative, non-traditional programing options.

● *Teen Plus* is an earliteen resource provided by the North American Division that provides expanded lesson activities and Bible learning activities that will give zip to the preession and sometimes provide an alternative earliteen program.

● *Teaching Aids* are for the use of the Sabbath school teacher. Each teacher will need a copy. In the cradle roll and kindergarten, the *Teaching Aids* come in a separate magazine. The primary and junior *Teaching Aids*, however, are found in the teachers edition of the lesson quarterly. Each division has its own student quarterly containing the Bible lesson, memory verses, puzzles and helps for parents. A quarterly should be provided for each child in the division plus a few extra for new members or guests.

Each division has its own periodical: *Little Friend* for Cradle

Roll and Kindergarten children; *Primary Treasure* for Primary children; and *Guide* for Juniors and Earliteens. When planning your order allow a few extra for guests and new members. Left over issues can be used for community evangelism.

● *Memory Verse Booklets* and *Cards* are for the individual Cradle Roll, Kindergarten and Primary child to take home. They contain the memory verses for the quarter illustrated in color and are a useful aid to memory work.

● *Picture Rolls* provide large, four-color pictures that accompany the weekly memory verse. *Picture Rolls* are useful for reviewing the memory verse in the large group Sabbath School time.

● The Junior edition of *Mission* is a magazine provided free from your conference Church Ministries Department. It includes a mission story for each Sabbath. Order one for every leader and assistant leader in the Primary and Junior/Earliteen divisions.

● The *Children's Mission Discovery Kit* provides a wall mural to color, mission scene felts to illustrate the stories in the mission magazine, and a teacher's guide explaining how to put all together.

● The *Teen Mission Discovery Kit* is a set of overhead transparencies and activity sheets for Juniors and Earliteens that provide mission education and/or information about an unreached people group.

● *Celebration* magazine includes articles pertaining to children's division leaders and teachers on a regular basis.

Many felts and other types of visual aids are available from your Adventist Book Center. Suggestions of what to use and how to use it are

found in *Program Helps* each quarter. Order all of the above supplies through your local church Sabbath School or Church Ministries secretary. Plan carefully for your needs. Periodical orders may require as long as two quarters to be changed, but your ABC can supply additional quantities of these materials in the interim.

## Training

Leaders are strongly encouraged to attend all training classes sponsored by their conference and encourage their assistants and their teachers also to attend. Local conferences usually provide quarterly Sabbath School workshops, teacher training classes, conventions and retreats. Information concerning the location and time is mailed out by the children's ministries coordinator on your local conference Church Ministries staff. Be sure the conference is notified of your leadership role and has your address.

The *Sabbath School Workshop Video*, a two-tape set, dealing with materials, supplies, teaching and leadership principles, is prepared and distributed to the conferences by the North American Division. Borrow the set from your local conference or order copies for the tape resource library at your church.

## Resource Materials

*How To Teach Children in Sabbath School* explains the devel-

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opmental and learning levels of the various age groups and gives practical suggestions for teaching them. The module for the Primary division contains three filmstrips and cassettes with a teacher's guide and may be purchased from your Adventist Book Center.

*Building Little Christians* contains help for the worker in the Cradle Roll and Kindergarten divisions.

*Gently Lead Them* is a program book that works well with a combined division of five- to eight-year-olds in a small church with few children..

Many books, magazines, filmstrips and teaching aids produced by various Sunday School publishers contain excellent ideas and suggestions that can be used in Sabbath School. Look for materials that are:

- Christ-centered with the goal of leading a young person into a personal, saving relationship with Christ.
- Of a spiritual nature and not merely entertaining.
- Doctrinally sound.
- Appropriate to the age level for which it will be used.
- Illustrated with good quality art work.
- Reusable and economical.
- Designed for maximum child participation.

*Your  
Ministry  
Matters!*

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## *Duties of the Leader in a Children's Division of the Sabbath School*

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The leader of a children's division of the Sabbath School--the Cradle Roll, Kindergarten, Primary, Junior or Earliteen--has the following duties:

**1. Love of Children.** It is essential that you take the time to read, learn and understand the age level and physical and intellectual development of the children in your division. To give a sense of continuity and security to children, plan to be there regularly and always begin the program on time. Nurture the members of the Sabbath school in a way that will help them to grow spiritually and maintain appropriate discipline for their age level. Special effort

should be made to reach those who have not found a saving relationship with Christ.

**2. Program Management.** You are expected to take responsibility for the upkeep and organization of the division's supplies and decide with your assistants how to spend your budget for materials and visuals to equip your room. Work with your assistant leaders to establish goals and activities that are age appropriate and will apply to the daily lives of the children.

**3. Personal Ministry.** Arrange for one of your assistants to keep ongoing records of attendance of both members and visitors. Encourage your teachers to minister to absent children by phone or personal visit to make sure they receive the Sabbath school paper

and find out about other needs in the home. Also, offering totals need to be recorded and given to the Sabbath School secretary or Church Ministries secretary every week. You may want to invite someone to be secretary of your division.

**4. Special Events.** Plan for periodic social and outreach activities, and communicate with and enlist the parents to support the plans and goals of the division. You can assign an assistant to lead out in the special events. These are joyous occasions for your children when memories are made and opportunities for special ministry open up.

# The Caring Church Strategy

The ministry of directing a children's Sabbath School is vital to accomplish the mission of your local church.

A balanced church program is just as important as any of the individual offices or functions of the church. Your ministry is given meaning and effectiveness as you fit into the overall mission that Christ has for your congregation. The Holy Spirit calls you to teamwork and cooperation with the other leaders in your church, according to a united plan of action.

What are the essential elements of a healthy local church? There are at least four fundamental activities that must be present in any Adventist church for it to be successful:

**1. Reaching the community.** Healthy churches discover the kinds of people who live in their area and

understand the needs of the people, so that they can provide activities designed to meet these needs and create a strong public awareness of the church.

**2. Winning people to Christ.** Healthy churches cooperate with the Holy Spirit in establishing meaningful relationships with those attracted to Christ, provide opportunities for them to become acquainted with His Word and His fellowship, and challenge them to become His disciples.

**3. Nurturing the members.** Healthy churches provide for the continuing spiritual growth of all their members through enthusiastic worship, interesting Bible study,

supportive friendships, and opportunities for significant service.

**4. Inspiring leadership.** Healthy churches have pastoral and lay leaders that help the congregation to identify the needs in the church and the community, clarify goals, gather the necessary resources and implement effective action.

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'" (Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143.)