

INNER CITY COORDINATOR

A MINISTRY DESCRIPTION FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

Introduction

God created the church to be a fellowship of people growing in faith and with a common purpose. The New Testament describes it as the “body” of Christ (Eph. 1:22).

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and a bond of common life with one another. Water baptism is a symbol that marks our entrance into the body and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives (John 3:5). The Holy Spirit is the vital force of the church.

The church is a servant body. God created it for service. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). When the church serves the world it is the expression of Christ’s love to the world, being used by the Spirit as an agency of salvation.

God calls every member of the church into ministry. Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world (I Peter 2:9). Every believer is a minister, called by God and ordained in baptism (Eph. 4:11-12).

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry—scripture, spiritual power, God’s character and spiritual gifts. Some church members are called to a special ministry in the inner city and equipped to fulfill that special calling by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Duties of the Inner City Coordinator

The ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes an inner city coordinator or urban ministries coordinator can best be described in the following ways:

1. *Planning.* A primary task of the inner city coordinator is that of a guide and facilitator who helps the church and the community establish and find ways to achieve their goals. He or she helps the church move effectively in the direction it chooses to go. The choice of direction and methods of implementation must be that of the congregation and the community, with the coordinator assisting. The coordinator is not without opinions, but his or her goal is always to help the church become aware of the needs in the city and find the means of working cooperatively toward meeting these needs. The coordinator encourages discussion, invites participation in fact finding, and maintains a process of planning and program development.
2. *Identifying needs.* The inner city coordinator tries to be aware of conditions in the community and the metro area. He or she is interested in the social problems, public attitudes and values of the various segments of urban society. He or she does not place blame or criticize, but seeks understanding and ways to be helpful. Plans for urban ministry will be effective only to the extent that they are based on objective fact and a sensitivity to the self-identity and perceptions of each ethnic, socioeconomic and lifestyle group. This means learning to conduct surveys, interview civic leaders, make use of census data and social science information, and seek out opportunities for the church to meet needs in the community.
3. *Community relations.* The urban church must relate to a complex community situation where there are many diverse groupings instead of one culture. The inner city coordinator helps the church to find ways to establish a caring, healing relationship with each group. He or she must maintain open lines of communication with the specific groups within the community and at the same time resist being “captured” or used by any group or class. He will seek to establish good relations with community groups even when they may be suspicious or resistant. A coordinator cannot function effectively in community relations for the church if he speaks as a partisan for one group, project or point of view over another. Instead he is an advocate for a process of inter-group cooperation and effective methods of community work.

4. *Advocacy.* There are times when the inner city coordinator must take initiative. The most difficult task is to stimulate a sense of need with churches or communities which appear apathetic or actively disinterested. Many churches and communities are content with the status quo. The inner city coordinator has the responsibility of communicating the needs of hurting people and stimulating discontent about painful conditions in the community. He or she speaks for the poor, the oppressed, the victims, the discouraged and shut-out.
5. *Program development.* Special programs of urban ministry have been set up by Adventist churches in many large cities in the United States and Canada. Sometimes these are directed by the Community Services leader, personal ministries leader, health-temperance leader, Adventist Youth Society or a Community Services Center. At times they are managed by the inner city coordinator. This responsibility includes the recruitment and training of volunteers, learning to delegate, providing operational supervision and overall project leadership. These programs vary greatly in their exact nature and each requires specific technical skills of its own. Before you agree to be inner city coordinator in your local church, you will want to clarify with your pastor precisely what details of program management are included among the expectations.

Resource Materials

The following resources are recommended for your ministry. You can purchase these by calling AdventSource (800-328-0525), the Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or your local Christian bookstore.

Adventist Mission in the 21st Century, ed. by Jon Dybdahl. Subtitled "Presenting Jesus to a Diverse World," this book asks some serious questions: What have we accomplished? What challenges remain? What are we doing to finish the work? What works and what doesn't? *Effective Urban Ministry* by Monte Sahlin is based on a study of urban churches in the North American Division, and outlines the keys to urban church growth, as well as describing a complete strategy for a city church and a cooperative program for a partnership of Adventist churches in a metropolitan area. A copy can be obtained from Center for Creative Ministry at 1-800-272-4664.

Ministries of Compassion, is a handbook for inner city programs and social action projects.

Power Witnessing: How to Witness to Different Personalities, by David Farmer. Explains temperament theory and how to tailor one's witness to individual personalities so as to appeal to their unique world view.

S.T.O.P. Program Manual by Charles Cheatham is a practical handbook for initiating a ministry with troubled teenagers in the inner city. It is published by the Allegheny East Conference, Box 266, Pine Forge Rd., Pine Forge, PA 10548.

Who Are the Seventh-day Adventists? by John Seaman. This sharing booklet gives a brief sketch of Adventist history, beliefs, people, church, and mission.

Who Cares? A-Zillion Ways You Can Meet the Needs of People Around You by Linnea Torkelsen (1996).

Visit AdventSource On-Line at www.adventsource.org for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can place an order or request a catalog by calling 1-800-328-0525.

For information about additional resources and answers to your questions call the Adventist Plusline at 1-800-732-7587 or visit them on-line at www.plusline.org.