

YOUTH SABBATH SCHOOL LEADER

A MINISTRY DESCRIPTION FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

Introduction

God asks the church to be a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship, continually growing in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul describes the church as Christ's "body" (Eph. 1:22).

God calls us into His body for the purpose of establishing a saving relationship with Him and community with one another. The Holy Spirit convicts our minds, leads us to repentance, and plants us within the church.

You experience the presence of Jesus Christ in the world within your church; the world experiences the living presence of Jesus Christ as it witnesses your church. When a local church serves the world it is an expression of the love of Christ to the world. Thus, the church is a servant body. Created for service, it serves the Lord in praise, serves one another in love, and serves the world in humility. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

God calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is "a kingdom of priests" (I Peter 2:9). Our priesthood is to each other within the church and to the world. A youth leader, like any other church officer, is a ministering servant of God.

As a youth ministry leader it is important that you see teens as an important part of the present church, not just the church to come.

Duties of the Youth Sabbath School Leader

Although the program varies from church to church, the ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes the leader of the youth division of the Sabbath School can best be described in the following ways:

1. *Planning.* You will provide leadership for the youth Sabbath School by bringing together a team of assistants and teenagers who will help plan and implement the group's activities. This includes overseeing the schedule of leadership, special programs, and teaching. It is vital that this group meet together at least once a quarter to brainstorm, make decisions, and create the calendar for the next few months. Learn to delegate.
2. *Spiritual helper.* Teenagers whose trust you have won will come to you with questions and personal problems. This may occasionally require that you act as bridge between troubled teenagers and their parents. If you really care, they will be able to see it. Often people at this age are very shy and you will want to preserve their dignity. Listening skills are important!
3. *Teaching.* Unless you are in a very large church, it will often be your job to teach the Sabbath School lesson. On occasion you should schedule others to teach so that there is more participation. Skills in group process and learning styles are essential to this task. It takes adequate preparation time. You cannot expect to minister effectively to the needs of teenagers if you simply glance over the teaching materials at the last minute. The North American Division Sabbath School curriculum for teens is quite demanding because it deals with the difficult issues of life: sexuality, occupations, the meaning of life, death and dying, ethics, etc. You cannot teach it with casual preparation. You cannot significantly touch the lives of your teens by finding an "easier" set of materials to use.
4. *Building a sense of community.* It will be your work to create an atmosphere that is friendly, comfortable and safe, where God is praised, but where no question need remain unasked. The goal of the youth Sabbath School leader is to bring together a cluster of awkward teenagers and help them become real friends. Relational skills are

key in this process. Smiles and expressions of caring are very important! Even the most shy person warms to a smile. Some of the more gregarious ones benefit from a hug. In most situations, a handshake or touch to the shoulder to accompany the warm smile shows you care. You must not be afraid to be vulnerable. Teenagers can be intimidating because of their directness and often rebellious behavior. Unless you are open and accepting in your manner, you will not be able to lead this age group.

5. *Commitment.* Next to your commitment to have God's presence in every aspect of your life, your commitment to serve your church is perhaps the most important one you will make. It is just as important as your vocational and relational commitments. Group members need to know that they can depend on you and that your attendance and participation will be regular.

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.

7 Principles for Youth Ministry Excellence, by Jim Feldbush and William Hurtado.

ABZ's of Adventist Youth Ministry, editor Stuart Tyner. Everything you need to know about youth ministry.

ChristWise Discipleship Guide for Youth and *ChristWise Leader's Guide*, by Troy Fitzgerald.

Do It Right, by D. C. Edmond. Answers to questions teens have about dating, love, sex, and relationships—from his popular advice column in *Insight* magazine.

Expect Great Things: How to Be a Happy, Growing Christian, by Richard O'Ffill. A template for successful Christian living, with the goal of being like Jesus.

Faith in the Balance, by Roger Dudley and Bailey Gillespie. Reports on the Valuegenesis survey.

Insight is the weekly magazine for Adventist teens packed with stories, features, creative youth outreach projects.

Step by Step: Praise Team System for Youth Groups by 2 FOR 1 Ministries, Inc. A comprehensive, participatory resource. Contains notebook, video, CD, computer disks.

Straight Talk: How Teens Can Make Wise Choices About Love and Sex, by Loretta Spivey.

Young Adventists share their testimonies about extramarital sex and resisting temptation.

The Family & Youth Ministry, by Fred Cornforth. 60 ideas on how to involve families in Youth Ministries.

The Sounds of Grace in Our Churches, by V. Bailey Gillespie provides 100 creative ideas to enrich your church.

Who Cares? A-Zillion Ways You Can Meet the Needs of People Around You by Linnea Torkelsen. A great collection of service ideas.

Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-Year Study, by Roger Dudley.

Find out why they leave and what keeps some of them in the church.

Youth Apprenticeship Packet. How to get youth involved in local church leadership.

Visit *AdventSource* On-Line at www.adventsource.org/youth 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.