

Empowering Youth

Focusing on Salvation and Service



Prepared by the General Conference Youth Department

Layout by Ludi Leito

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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA

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“With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world!” (Education, p. 271).

It's probably Ellen White's best-known statement about young people--and an unforgettable image for anyone who works with youth. An army of dedicated Christian young people, deployed around the world to bring the message of Jesus' soon return to everyone. It's the vision that shapes our work as Adventist youth leaders.

We have never fully realized the potential of this army of youth. At various times in our history, at different places in the Adventist world, we've come close. We've tapped into that potential army with tremendous results. But in too many places, too much of the time, the "army of youth" remains an unrealized dream.

As youth leaders, we spend effort and energy trying to entertain our youth so they won't slip away from the church. We argue among ourselves about how to solve the "problem" of our youth. We worry about their dress, their music, their deportment, their games and movies and dates. It's time we actually put our effort towards mobilizing God's army!

Our twofold focus as Adventist youth leaders must always be: **Salvation and Service**. We work to introduce our young people to Jesus Christ so that they will choose a saving relationship with Him for themselves. The second part of this work, equally important, is to then train them to bring His message of love and hope to others.

This handbook will focus on four keys to achieving the twin goals of **Salvation and Service**:

- ❑ **DISCIPLESHIP**
- ❑ **LEADERSHIP**
- ❑ **MISSIONS**
- ❑ **EVANGELISM**

DISCIPLESHIP *is the process of learning to follow.*

Ultimately, the leader we want our youth to follow is, of course, Jesus. As leaders, we ourselves need to be Christ's disciples. Then we need to encourage young people to become *our* disciples, in order to teach them to follow Jesus. Paul said: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (*1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV*).

This is akin to the concept of *mentoring* that is so popular in the business world, but it goes much farther. Jesus' commission was to "go and make disciples of all nations." The process of making a disciple involves sharing the values, lifestyle, and priorities that we ourselves have learned from Jesus. Through this process, we lead young people into their own saving relationship with Jesus, and we model a life of service which they can take to the world.

"Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19)

LEADERSHIP *is what we as youth leaders, pastors, Sabbath school leaders and teachers need to show.*

It's also what we need to develop in our young people. Our task is to become effective leaders ourselves, and to train our youth to become leaders--leaders in their peer group and their community, so that they can lead others to Jesus.

MISSIONS *Following Jesus' example means doing the kind of loving service for others that He did.*

We can give our young people countless opportunities to serve others both in their own communities and around the world. Whether it's mowing the grass for a senior citizen, serving lunch at a soup kitchen, or building an orphanage in another country, mission and service projects will draw our young people closer to Jesus than any other activity we can plan for them.

EVANGELISM *Reaching the world with His message is the ultimate goal of our Adventist youth ministry.*

With our focus clearly on **Salvation and Service**, we need to provide evangelistic opportunities for our own young people to make a decision for Jesus, and then involve them in evangelism--both traditional and non-traditional--that will give them the opportunity to share His message with others.

There should be an earnest desire in the heart of every youth who has purposed to be a disciple of Jesus Christ to reach the highest Christian standard, to be a worker with Christ. (Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 284)

In a moment we'll look at practical ways to achieve these four goals of leadership, discipleship, mission/service, and evangelism. First, though, let's see what effect a focus on **Salvation and Service** for youth will have on the local church, on you as the youth leader, and on the youth themselves.



SALVATION AND SERVICE FOR ALL AGES

ADVENTURERS (AGES 6-9)

Adventurer-aged children are the very youngest of our “youth,” but they are not too young for **Salvation and Service**. Your Adventurer ministry should take advantage of the natural energy, enthusiasm and curiosity of children in this age group. Parents, church school teachers, and Sabbath School teachers all have an important role to play in introducing children of this age to Jesus and to the joy of serving Him. Children in this age group are old enough to understand the concepts of sin and salvation if they are explained simply and clearly, and are old enough to make a commitment to Jesus for themselves.

This is an ideal age to begin a lifetime of service activities. Children in this age group are usually eager to help others and will find service projects fun and interesting.

PATHFINDERS (AGES 10-15)

Young people enter the Pathfinder years with the wide-eyed eagerness and enthusiasm of elementary-school children; they leave those years as sophisticated high-school aged teenagers. During the Pathfinder years, children go through the tremendous physical and social changes of early adolescence. They begin to separate their own identity from that of their families, and begin to identify more with their peers than with their parents.

Early adolescents often become bored with church activities and may sometimes rebel against family and church standards. An active Pathfinder Club, supported by a good junior and earliteen Sabbath School program, can help to keep youth of this age involved and interested in the church.

During these years, most children raised in Adventist homes will face the decision of whether or not to be baptized. Baptism often occurs during the years between 10 and 15; in fact, the average of age of baptism in the Adventist church is about 10.8 years (*The ABZs of Adventist Youth Ministry*). Encourage young people to wait until they fully understand the significance of a commitment to Jesus and the responsibilities of church membership.

As you lead youth in this age group to make a commitment to Jesus through baptism, give them many opportunities to become involved in service. Effective service projects can pierce through adolescent apathy and help young people see that their faith is meaningful and relevant.

HIGH SCHOOL (AGES 14-18)

The high school age group overlaps with the Pathfinder age group by a few years, as some 14 and 15 year olds may begin to feel they are “too old” for Pathfinders and may identify themselves more as secondary school students. Teens in this age group are challenging to work with but also very rewarding.

Social development becomes a central concern during these years. Teenagers are eager to be identified with their peer group and many will do almost anything to be “involved.” Your youth ministry at this age must have a strong social component to provide positive peer associations. This can be a special challenge in small churches where many young people leave home to attend a Seventh-day Adventist academy.

Young people in this age group may have made a decision to follow Jesus, but they face new challenges in living up to that commitment as they are presented with the powerful temptations of youth culture. Peer pressure to engage in substance abuse, premarital sex, and illegal activity can be very strong. It’s important for youth to experience a positive, Christian peer influence, and to learn spiritual disciplines which can keep their relationship with Jesus alive.

As with younger adolescents, high-school aged teens may find special relevance in service opportunities, which give them the opportunity to see how faith can make a difference in the real world.

YOUNG ADULTS (AGES 18-35)

This can be a challenging age group, especially for those who don’t attend an Adventist college. Young adults generally consider themselves too old for “youth group” activities, yet they may not yet be comfortable taking an “adult” role in the church. Those at the beginning of this age bracket, particularly, may feel that there is no place for them in the church, unless the church actively works at making them part of its ministry.

Young-adult ministry must be young-adult led and driven. An older adult may play a role as a supporter and advisor, but young adults will feel most comfortable in a program where they have ownership.

Remember that this broad age group includes a very diverse group of people with differing needs. It will include students at public colleges and universities, students on Adventist campuses, young people beginning their working careers, single people, young married couples, couples with children, and single parents.

No “one-size-fits-all” ministry can possibly meet the needs of all the young adults in your church, but as you get to know them and build relationships with them, you can help the young adults and the church as a whole develop programs and ministries that will use their talents and meet their needs. During

these crucial years, young adults are making their major life decisions--which career to prepare for, whom to marry, where to live and work. Among those life decisions, the choice to accept salvation in Jesus should be the most important. If this choice was made earlier in the teen years, a young adult may now need to reaffirm that commitment with the added maturity and understanding he or she now has.

Help your young adults learn to use their unique gifts to reach out to others in service--especially to others of their own age. At this age "service" should become more than just an occasional outreach activity--it should be the basis for a lifestyle of servanthood. Young adults can be encouraged to find their own ministry, in the church or in the community, where they can make service to God as much a part of their lives as family and career.



OUTCOMES

If we keep the goals of **Salvation and Service** clearly in mind as we work with our youth, and organize our ministry around the four key elements of **discipleship, leadership, service** and **evangelism**, we can expect to see results. Here are some of the outcomes you will want your youth work to achieve.

OUTCOMES FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

With a **Salvation and Service** oriented youth ministry, the local church becomes a training ground. Youth ministry will be most effective when everyone in the congregation--pastor, parents, church school teachers, and even those members who have little direct contact with youth--shares the goal of **saving** our young people, and leading them into **service** for Christ. The outcomes of such an emphasis will affect all four areas: leadership, discipleship, missions, and evangelism.

DISCIPLESHIP OUTCOMES

A church whose emphasis is clearly on **Salvation and Service** for youth will disciple young people into a growing relationship with Jesus. In this church:

- ❑ **The pastor** will preach sermons that appeal to young people, and will spend time getting to know youth in the congregation.
- ❑ **The church school teachers** will be involved in the life of the church so that they interact with the young people not just at school, but in spiritual and social activities too.
- ❑ **The parents** will be faithful in bringing their children and young people to Sabbath School, church and related activities, and will have input into the activities that are planned for their young people.
- ❑ **The church members** will interact with youth in a positive, friendly way, greeting them enthusiastically, praying for them, giving positive reinforcement when youth are involved in a program or church activity, and restraining the urge to judge and criticize

LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

A church whose emphasis is clearly on **Salvation and Service** for youth will lead youth and train them for leadership. In this church:

- ❑ **The nominating committee** will choose youth and young adults to fill real and significant roles in church life--not just “token” positions.
- ❑ **The elders and platform co-ordinators** will invite children and youth to be up front participating in the service each Sabbath.
- ❑ **The church board** will encourage youth activities and include youth representation.
- ❑ **The finance committee** will make spending on youth activities and projects a priority
- ❑ **The youth leaders, Pathfinder/Adventurer leaders, and Sabbath School teachers** will know that their work is valued and appreciated by the whole congregation.

MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM OUTCOMES

- ❑ **The church board and finance committee** will support youth service projects, such as short-term mission trips, and youth evangelism initiatives.
- ❑ **The parents, church members, and pastor** will work alongside youth and their leaders in service projects.
- ❑ **The community services department, personal ministries department,** and other relevant ministries in the church will make use of the talents of young people in their outreach to the community.
- ❑ **The pastor and church members** will be warm and welcoming to all non-Adventist friends and visiting youth who attend church or church activities, regardless of their background, beliefs, style of dress or deportment.

A greater work than has ever been done must be done for the young. They must be won with sympathy and love; all barriers must be broken down between them and those who would help them. The most good is not accomplished by long speeches and many words of exhortation or reproof. The greatest tact must be manifested....Jesus is drawing the youth, and we must all work with him, putting no forbidding aspects upon our holy religion....We must seek to press the young, with all their fresh vigor and ability, into the ranks of Christ, enlisting them as valiant soldiers in the great fight for truth. We have sadly neglected our duty toward the young, for we have not gathered them in, and induced them to put out their talents to the exchanges. A different mold should be placed upon the work. There should be less sermonizing and more personal labor...A great work can be done by dropping a word privately to your young friends, to those you meet in your daily walks.

(Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 17, 1914)

OUTCOMES FOR THE YOUTH LEADERS

In the “Salvation and Service” model of youth ministry, the role of the youth leader is primarily that of a **trainer**. His or her goal is not primarily to provide a “program” for the youth, though program planning is essential. The youth leader’s main goal is to train the young people to take leadership and ownership of the youth ministry for themselves. This goal touches on all aspects of youth ministry: leadership, discipleship, service/missions, and evangelism.

In this document, we will use the term “youth leader” to apply to everyone who works with children, youth and young adults at the local church level. This can include all officers and leaders of Pathfinder and Adventurer Clubs, Sabbath School leaders and teachers at the junior, earliteen, and youth levels, and AY leaders and officers.

DISCIPLESHIP OUTCOMES

A youth leader whose emphasis is clearly on **Salvation and Service** for young people will be a disciple of Jesus who understands his or her role in making new disciples. This youth leader will:

❑ **Nurture his or her own spiritual growth**--you can’t share an experience you don’t have! Despite the fact that most local church youth leaders are volunteers who juggle this responsibility along with their own family and work commitments, time for the youth leader to maintain his or her own devotional life should always be a priority.

Prayer is not a preparation for work, it is work. Prayer is not a preparation for the battle, it is the battle. *Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest*

❑ **Form positive, mentoring relationships** with the young people under his or her care. This will involve getting to know the youth, spending time with them outside of planned church activities, counseling them when necessary, and making sure the youth program has enough adult leadership so that each young person can have a close relationship with at least one adult.

LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

A youth leader whose emphasis is clearly on **Salvation and Service** for young people will lead and train young people to be leaders as well. This youth leader will:

❑ **Develop his or her leadership skills** through the use of any and all resources possible--books, manual, handbooks, magazine articles, seminars, workshops, contact with other youth leaders. Have a clear sense of the **Salvation and Service** mission of this youth ministry, and a vision for what the youth under his or her care can become.

❑ **Plan ahead for youth activities.** When the focus is clearly on Salvation and Service, programs will not be planned simply for the sake of filling time or keeping youth entertained. Rather, all programs should be well-prepared and evaluated to make sure that they fit into the overall goals of the ministry.

❑ **Empower his or her young people for leadership.** Learn what spiritual gifts and natural abilities each of the young people has, then train them to employ those gifts in leadership. Provide young people with the necessary resources, skills, and support to do the job well, then step back and allow them to do it.

MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM OUTCOMES

A youth leader whose emphasis is clearly on **Salvation and Service** for young people will prepare them to serve others and to spread Jesus' message throughout their world. This youth leader will:

❑ **Mobilize young people for service** within the church, the community, and the world. Discover what needs exist and how the youth can help fill them, and, again, learn what gifts, interests, and skills the youth have that can be employed in service.

❑ **Communicate what's going on** in the youth program effectively with young people themselves, with parents, with church members, and with the larger community. Youth, parents, and church members will be far more supportive of the

program if they know what’s happening. Friends and community members can only become involved in outreach efforts if they are made aware of them.

(Adapted from *Seven Principles for Youth Ministry Excellence: Practical Strategies to Turn Yourself and Your Youth into Leaders*. Jim Feldbush and William Hurtado, North American Division Youth Ministries, 1999.)

OUTCOMES FOR THE YOUTH

When we focus clearly on **Salvation and Service**, our young people will have a different, and more positive, experience with the church. If we put our emphasis primarily on keeping the youth entertained, keeping them out of trouble, or keeping them in the church, their experience may be mainly a negative one. They may focus on everything they “can’t” do as Seventh-day Adventist young people. When our emphasis is on leading them to a saving relationship with Jesus and training them to serve others, they will begin to focus on all that they *can* do.

DISCIPLESHIP OUTCOMES

Youth who have been trained with a **Salvation and Service** outlook will have a growing relationship with Jesus--they will become disciples. These young people will:

- ❑ **Develop their own relationship with Jesus.** This is always first and foremost. Each young person must be clearly taught what it means to accept Jesus as Savior, and have the opportunity to do so. Then, the role of the youth leader and other significant adults within the church is to mentor them into a growing relationship with the Lord that includes an active devotional life.
- ❑ **Make life choices based on Christian values.** Young people are making life’s most crucial choices. If they are growing into a relationship with Jesus, then their love for Him and acceptance of His guidelines will inform their choices and lay the foundation for a successful life.

LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

Youth who have been trained with a **Salvation and Service** outlook will become leaders for Christ. These young people will:

- ❑ **Develop a positive view of the church and their role in it.** Our youth must come to see “the church”--both the local congregation and the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist movement--as an organization that is relevant to them and to their world, an organization in which they have a valued and important place and a role to fill.

❑ **Discover their own spiritual gifts.** Each person has gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit. These gifts, along with each person’s own natural talents, abilities, and interests, will allow each young person to have his or her own unique ministry for Jesus within the church and the world.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.
(1 Timothy 4:12, NIV)

MISSIONS OUTCOMES

Youth who have been trained with a **Salvation and Service** outlook will be able to move beyond the natural self-centeredness of youth and recognize the needs of others. These young people will:

❑ **Experience a desire to serve.** Countless youth leaders around the world have discovered that giving youth the opportunity to serve is a magic formula for keeping them interested and involved. When young people have had a taste of the joy of serving others through the opportunities given them in their church youth program, they will continue to seek out and create new windows for service.

EVANGELISM OUTCOMES

Youth who have been trained with a **Salvation and Service** outlook will have a genuine experience with Jesus that they will want to share. These young people will:

❑ **Share Jesus’ love with others.** Youth who are “on fire” for God will want to spread that love to their friends and their communities. A good church youth program will give them the training and opportunities they need to begin sharing. If their youth program creates a pleasant, welcoming atmosphere, young people will feel encouraged to bring their friends to church activities and so begin sharing the gospel with them.



DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGIES

We have established that we should focus on **Salvation and Service**, employing the four key elements of discipleship, leadership, missions and evangelism to reach our goals. But what does this mean in practical terms? When we as youth leaders look at our monthly or yearly calendars and plan activities for our young people, how do we fit those activities into a **Salvation and Service** strategy? What programming ideas do we use to achieve our outcomes?

DISCIPLESHIP

Our first and most important goal is always the salvation of our youth--leading each one to personally accept Jesus as Savior and grow in a relationship with Him. The programs and activities we do as part of our youth work should never be done just for their own sake, but always with the clear goal of discipleship in mind. We should use every event, every youth activity, to make disciples for Jesus.

COMMITMENT

We often use the word “commitment” in the context of encouraging youth to make a commitment to Jesus, for example in an altar call at the end of a Week of Prayer or a youth rally. We need to give youth these opportunities and invitations, but we also need to remember that commitment to Christ will not always come in a highly structured or emotional setting. Sometimes a one-on-one conversation with a young person can be a powerful means of inviting him or her to make a commitment.

We need to teach young people that “commitment” is not a one-time thing, but an ongoing experience. The best way to teach this is by modeling a day-by-day relationship with Jesus that we ourselves experience.

PRAYER

Prayer is something that we all too often leave as an afterthought in our youth ministry, sparing just a moment for “opening prayer” or “closing prayer” at the beginning or end of a meeting. In fact, prayer should be central. We do not unlock the incredible power of God’s Holy Spirit in our ministry because we do not ask for it.

Prayer should be at the heart of our work for youth. Here are a few suggestions as to how we can make it so.

Pray for your youth. Regularly, constantly, daily bring the names and needs of your young people before the Lord in prayer. Put them on your prayer list and make time to pray for them.

Pray with your youth--as a group. Schedule time for prayer circles in your youth meeting, your Sabbath School class, your Pathfinder class meeting. Encourage the young people to participate at whatever level they feel comfortable--whether that be adding a few words to a sentence prayer, or saying a brief prayer of their own, or just participating silently.

We do not enjoy the fullness of blessing which the Lord has prepared for us, because we do not ask in faith. Ellen G. White, Testimonies vol 6, p. 63

Pray with your youth--individually. When you have the opportunity to talk one-on-one with a young person about his or her personal needs or spiritual life, always offer to pray.

Encourage youth to pray together. Set up prayer teams or prayer partners within your youth group.

Give the youth opportunities to see how God answers prayer. In your prayer meetings with the youth, keep track of prayer requests and answers to prayer. Create a prayer journal or other device for tracking requests and answers within your group.

PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

Leading out in youth ministry is a time-consuming effort--especially since, for so many of us, it's combined with other ministries, or other full-time work and family commitments. Perhaps that's why we so often talk about the importance of having regular person devotions but do not practice this in our daily lives.

Make time for your own devotional life. Your ministry will not flourish unless you do; neither will your own spiritual life. You cannot quench the thirst of others if your own well is dry. Make personal devotions, with meaningful private prayer and Bible study, a part of your daily routine.

In doing this, you can model the devotional life for your young people. In private conversation or while preaching or teaching, say things like, "While I was reading the Bible the other day...", or, "in my personal devotional time I thought about...", or, "I'm praying about this in my private prayer time." Let your young people see that you have a daily, vital connection with God. This gives you the

opportunity to disciple them into having the same kind of connection.

Teach your young people to have devotional time. It's good for us to stress the importance of personal devotions, but that's not enough. Many young people have no idea how to go about daily prayer and Bible study. Share suggestions and ideas with them. Show them how they can use their daily Sabbath School lesson, the morning watch devotional books, or the Bible Year and Encounter plans to have a meaningful time with God each day.

The Bible Year is a Bible reading plan with suggested readings for each day, designed to help young people read through the entire Bible. Bible reading plan cards should be available from your conference or wherever you receive AY and Pathfinder materials. Encourage your young people, in every age group, to make daily Bible reading a part of their lives.

WORSHIP, MUSIC, AND WORSHIP STYLES

When most people think of “the church” they think immediately of the Sabbath worship service. This is our common denominator, the thing we all share--yet it is often not as meaningful as it could be for our youth. And because of disagreement over appropriate worship styles, the worship service often becomes a source of conflict between older and younger church members.

What you consider appropriate for worship depends on many factors, including cultural considerations--a worship service that is appropriate in one place or within one cultural group, might make a visitor feel very uncomfortable because the style of music, preaching, or congregational response is not what the visitor is familiar with.

It's impossible to dictate a single “right” way to worship. As we strive to remain true to Biblical ideals and to make our worship meaningful to as many people as possible, we can agree on a few generalizations:

- ❑ *Young people usually have different needs in worship than do their elders.*
- ❑ *The worship service must meet the needs of as many people as possible, both in the congregation and in the community.*
- ❑ *Worship is more meaningful to youth when they are involved in it rather than being spectators.*

Balancing the needs of your young people with those of the rest of the church family may not be easy, but it is important. Encourage your church to involve children, youth and young adults up front in the worship service as much as possible. Include elements in the program that will appeal to them. Have special Sabbaths on a regular basis during which the program is presented entirely by the children, the youth group, or the Pathfinder Club.

Some large churches have addressed the issue of differing worship styles by presenting two different worship services at different times on Sabbath--one for those who favor a traditional worship style and one for younger members and visitors who like a more contemporary approach. If your congregation has sharply differing worship needs and such an approach is not practical, do your best to encourage everyone to work together to find a worship style that will include and involve the youth. If your church has a worship committee, be sure it includes young people

SABBATH SCHOOL

The Sabbath morning study time provides a wonderful opportunity for discipling young Christians. In some churches the Sabbath morning study time is poorly attended and seen as irrelevant, but it can be a dynamic time for teaching and learning.

Depending on the size of your church and your youth group, your Sabbath School class may be an opportunity to divide into smaller groups, or your Sabbath School class may *be* a small group in itself. Take advantage of the well-known benefits of small groups. Build an atmosphere of trust and acceptance within your Sabbath School class. Get to know each young person well, and encourage other class members as well as adult leaders to look out for those who are not involved or attending. Your Sabbath School class can become much more than just a study group--it can be a prayer team, an outreach team, an evangelistic team.

The style of your Sabbath School program may vary greatly depending on the traditions and needs of your particular group of young people. You may make extensive use of the Sabbath School lesson and program helps provided for you, such as the *Cornerstone* youth curriculum which takes young people through all the major doctrines of our church over a period of four years. However, you can also make use of other materials and program ideas that you feel will be relevant and interesting to your young people. Bible study is always at the heart of the Sabbath School program, but your program can be adapted to meet your youth “where they are” and lead them closer to Jesus.

AY MEETINGS

AY meetings, like Sabbath School classes, are allowed to “fall by the wayside” in some churches because they are no longer seen as being relevant. If AY meetings are dead or dying in your congregation, you may need to change the approach and style of the meetings, but your youth can still benefit from a regular meeting time outside of Sabbath School and church.

AY meetings may be very formal or quite informal, again depending on the culture of your particular youth group. If your church has not had an active AY

program, you may wish to try different types of AY meetings to find out which work well with your youth. As with Sabbath School, you can find many useful resources to use in planning AY programs, including the Youth Ministry Handbook with guidelines to organize and keep alive a local church youth organization, and the Youth Ministry Accent Magazine which includes leadership and programming ideas for Adventist youth leaders. The AY meeting can be a time to bring in a special speaker, play a Bible game or quiz, allow youth to share testimonies, discuss a Bible-related topic, enjoy a musical or dramatic presentation--whatever you find gives your young people the opportunity to grow spiritually.

ADVENTIST LIFESTYLE

In many churches a discussion of “Adventist lifestyle” or “church standards” will lead to lively debate, especially if young people are involved. Issues such as appropriate clothing, jewelry, entertainment, dancing, diet, etc., can be quite controversial and depend heavily on cultural context. The General Conference Youth Department has published series of brochures with many topics that concern today’s youth entitled *Youth Lifestyle Brochures*. These may be helpful to you in discussing lifestyle issues with your youth.

In the book *The ABZs of Adventist Youth Ministry*, veteran youth worker Stuart Tyner suggests three separate categories of Adventist lifestyle standards:

I. Substance Abuse Standards

- A. Illegal drugs
- B. Tobacco
- C. Alcohol

II. Adventist Way of Life Standards

- A. Sabbath observance
- B. Exercise
- C. Unclean meat
- D. Sexuality
- E. Modesty

III. Adventist Popular Culture Standards

- A. Jewelry
- B. Caffeinated drinks
- C. Music
- D. Dancing
- E. Movies

Tyner suggests that discussing lifestyle standards in these separate categories, rather than lumping all Adventist “standards” together as one topic, may clarify some issues for youth.

Whatever the particular cultural issues affecting your young people, it is important that you help them identify our values as Seventh-day Adventists and relate lifestyle standards to those values (i.e.: healthful living is a value; abstaining from alcohol is a related standard). Help them to think critically about the choices the world offers them. Our young people live in a more diverse and challenging culture than has any previous generation. Create an atmosphere in which they can feel comfortable discussing our church's standards and the values that lie behind them.

Be consistent and transparent in your own adherence to those standards: don't teach a "rule" to young people and ignore it in your personal life. Young people are quick to spot hypocrites and generally have nothing but contempt for them. When they perceive hypocrisy in the church, it tends to make them discouraged and disillusioned.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God the Holy Spirit gives gifts to every believer. Your young people may not feel gifted, but your job is to help them discover and develop their gifts. Study the topic of spiritual gifts with them, using relevant Bible passages such as Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. If possible, use a spiritual gifts test or inventory to help your youth discover their gifts.

(Many good spiritual gifts inventories are available: for a good list, check with www.plusline.org. Their listings include some inventories specifically designed for Seventh-day Adventists, such as *Spiritual Gifts: Keys to Ministry* by James Zackrison, as well as many general Christian resources on the topic. A spiritual gifts inventory designed especially for young people is *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them*, by Ruth Vander Zee, published by CRC Publications).

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

FELLOWSHIP, SOCIALS AND RECREATION

Since Luther Warren and Harry Fenner began the very first Adventist Youth Society in 1879, young people and their adult leaders have recognized that social activities are an important part of any youth program. In that first AY Society in Hazelton Michigan, social activities consisted of sleigh rides, taffy pulls, and other nineteenth-century amusements. In the twenty-first century, our list of

attractive and interesting recreation activities has changed (and is dependent on the culture in which we live). What has not changed is the central fact that social relationships are tremendously important to young people, and that a large part of our responsibility as youth leaders is to create opportunities for Christian young people to fellowship together.

Sometimes we may feel that social activities are frivolous or irrelevant when our goal is the salvation of our youth and their training in service. While it's true that youth need far more than simply to be entertained, we cannot ignore their social needs. Young people form strong bonds of friendship with each other, and older teens begin the serious dating relationships that often lead to marriage. If recreational opportunities are not available within the church, young people will look elsewhere for enjoyable activities to share with their friends. If we do provide these kind of activities, we not only encourage them to be involved in healthy, positive activities, we also promote the kind of Christian friendships that will help our youth grow spiritually.

Social activities are not irrelevant, but central, to our twin goals of **Salvation and Service**.

YOUTH RALLIES/ YOUTH CONGRESSES

Another aspect of youth ministry that has been part of Adventist youth work almost since the beginning is the idea of the youth congress or youth rally—a gathering of young people from across a large geographical area for worship, Bible study, fellowship and/or outreach.

Youth rallies can be small-scale events planned within a specific group of churches, conference or region, or they can be large-scale congresses including youth from across an entire union or division of the world church. Youth rallies and congresses provide a valuable opportunity for Seventh-day Adventist youth to meet others who share their beliefs and outlook, and participate in activities that will build their faith and their connection to the church. This is particularly important for Adventist youth from small churches who may feel isolated and disconnected in a church with only a handful of young people.

Many youth rallies and congresses also include an element of community outreach, the idea being that the Adventist young people have something to offer to the community in which they meet. For example, the one-day youth congress that ran during the 2000 General Conference Session in Toronto, Canada, was preceded by the week-long "Impact Toronto 2000" youth ministry event in which young people participated in a variety of outreach ministries directed at the people of Toronto.

With the heightened atmosphere and excitement that youth rallies and congresses often provide, combined with the high-quality speakers and presenters usually found at these events, these can often be good opportunities for your

young people to make a commitment or re-commitment of their lives to Christ. However, it's important for you as a local youth leader to follow up on events like this with your youth, to make sure that these commitments are not one-time occurrences but are the foundation for a growing Christian experience.

PRAYER CONFERENCES

The prayer conference is a particularly type of youth rally that has been gaining popularity in recent years. Like a traditional youth rally, the prayer conference brings together Adventist young people across a geographical area. Unlike the traditional youth rally, the focus is not primarily on fellowship, recreation, or preaching, but on prayer. Young people have the opportunity to practice the power of prayer individually and in small groups.

While young people always enjoy attending “big” events, today’s youth can sometimes be cynical or distant about some of the large-scale activities at a youth rally or youth congress. It’s easy for them to distance themselves and remain uninvolved. A prayer conference, with its emphasis on small groups and individual involvement, can break through this barrier and make a larger impact on sophisticated, postmodern young people.

Youth who attend prayer conferences usually return eager to share the power of prayer with those “back home.” A prayer conferences can be the beginning of an exciting revival for the young people in your church.

Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence? Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, p. 94

PATHFINDER CAMPOUTS AND CAMPOREES

Pathfinder-age youth can receive many of the benefits of a youth rally by attending a Pathfinder Camporee or campout. As with rallies, camporees bring together Pathfinders from several different churches, but the camporee program centers on activities that tie in with the Pathfinder curriculum. Most take place in a “camping” environment and include outdoor skills, which can help Pathfinders learn responsibility, self-sufficiency, and teamwork.

Individual Pathfinder Clubs may hold a campout on a yearly basis, if not more often, and may also meet with other Clubs for an area-wide or conference-wide camporee. In the last two decades large-scale international camporees have taken place every five years, with the huge 1999 “Discover the Power” camporee in

Wisconsin, USA, being the largest so far. As with youth rallies and congresses, young people who attend such events have the privilege of seeing that they are truly part of a worldwide movement. Again, it is an excellent opportunity for young people to make a commitment to the Lord. Your work of discipling the youth begins in earnest once a “special event” like this ends, as you help them to learn about the day-to-day reality of living out that commitment.

WEEKS OF PRAYER / SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS

Another special even that often gives young people a chance to take a stand for Jesus is the Week of Prayer or Week of Spiritual Emphasis. These are usually yearly or twice-yearly events at Seventh-day Adventist schools or within church youth groups. Most schools or churches will bring in a special youth speaker for a week of daily meetings. These meetings can be good opportunities to challenge young people to accept Jesus or move to a higher level in their relationship with Him.

Some young people may be bored with a traditional Week of Prayer format in which a speaker preaches a sermon every day. There are many new and innovative approaches you can try to make a week of spiritual emphasis more meaningful. These might include having a speaker who uses a more hands-on, interactive approach with games and activities. Your Week of Spiritual Emphasis might center on small-group meetings, or include an outreach project.

Many schools and churches successfully turn the Week of Spiritual Emphasis over to the young people themselves, giving them the opportunity to speak and lead out. Week of Prayer sermons are provided for youth just as they are for adults in the church, and youth speakers may make use of these resources. The AY Week of Prayer sermons for the Junior Youth and Senior/Young Adults are published every year in the Youth Ministry Accent Magazine with enough time to allow the translation of the World Divisions into all major languages worldwide.

A youth-led Week of Prayer develops leadership talents and other spiritual gifts, though the quality of presentation may be more uneven than with a professional speaker. Hearing a young person speak may make more of an impact on other youth in the audience.

Preachers cannot have one - half the influence upon the young that the youth, devoted to God, can have upon their associates.

Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, p. 204



LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

A youth leader who is committed to the **Salvation and Service** model of youth ministry will be motivated to train young people for leadership in the youth group, in the church, and in the community. Here are some practical suggestions for developing leadership skills in your young people.

INVOLVEMENT

Young people are interested in programs and activities for which they feel a sense of ownership. They are generally not interested in having pre-packaged programs delivered to them by an adult leader. If we think back to the very foundations of the Adventist Youth movement, we'll remember that our movement began with teenage leadership. We have the opportunity to help train the Luther Warrens and Harry Fenners of this century.

At every level, involve young people in the planning of your youth program. Their level of involvement and responsibility will, of course, increase with age, and the tasks you assign them should always be age-appropriate. Younger Pathfinder-aged children may not be able to take on as much responsibility as older youth, but they can still be involved in planning for a campout, a social, or a service project. As a general guideline, it's usually safe to assume that a young person is ready to shoulder responsibility sooner than we assume he or she will be!

Give your young people a role in planning your worship, your social activities, your outreach activities. Provide them with the necessary support to ensure they can do the job, then stand back and allow them to do it. Youth will be much more motivated to participate in and support a program if they think it is theirs. Establish an AY Society executive, a youth council or youth leadership team, a spiritual life committee for your school, a student association, a campus Adventist Club--and encourage your young people to guide and direct the program themselves.

When young men and women are sober-minded and cultivate piety and devotion, they will let their light shine forth to others, and there will be vital power in the church. It would be well to have an hour appointed for Bible study, and let the youth, both converted and unconverted, gather together for prayer and for the relation of their experiences. The youth should have a chance to give expression to their feelings. It would be well to have a judicious leader chosen at first, one who will talk little and encourage a great deal, by dropping a word now and then to help and strengthen the youth in the beginning of their religious experiences. After they have had a little experience, let one of their number take the leadership, and then another, and in this way let workers be educated that will meet the approval of God.

(Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 69)

TRAINING

One mistake we sometimes make as youth leaders is to give young people the opportunity to be involved and carry responsibility without the proper support and training. If they have the ideas and enthusiasm to carry out a task but lack the skills and support to complete it, they will be frustrated and discouraged.

The authors of “Seven Principles for Youth Ministry Excellence” suggest the following six keys that empower youth for leadership:

- Vision:** Develop a definition of what you want your group to become
- Skills:** Give youth the skills they need to succeed by modeling those skills, mentoring the young people as they practice them, and monitoring their progress.
- Incentive:** Give affirmation and recognition of the good work they are doing.
- Resources:** Use the resources and talents of your church to help youth accomplish their goals.
- Action Plan:** Create a plan for specific actions to turn goals into reality.
- Results:** Help youth to see the fruit of their labor.

If any one of these six key elements is missing, young people may have a negative experience with leadership and be reluctant to try again.

LEADERSHIP STYLES

important to recognize that both you and your young people will lead in different ways depending on the kind of people you are. Different leadership styles may be appropriate in different situations.

Three major leadership styles are sometimes defined as: *autocratic* (maintains total control of every situation); *democratic* (allows everyone in the group to have input and work together towards goals); and *laissez-faire* (takes no control and allows everyone to do whatever they like). If we look only at these three styles, it should be obvious that a democratic style of leadership is most appropriate. Neither autocratic or laissez-faire leadership will lead to the salvation of our youth and their training for service.

It might be more helpful, however, to look at leadership styles as a continuum. While extreme autocratic leadership is usually damaging, there will be situations where you, as a leader, will need to take a more strongly authoritarian role, particularly when launching a new project or idea. The level of involvement of group members can vary depending on what goals you are trying to achieve. You will never want a completely laissez-faire leadership style in which everyone mills about with no purpose, but there will be situations--for example, some social activities--in which the need for strong leadership is minimal and the focus can simply be on everyone enjoying themselves.

You will find that as you train your youth to become leaders, their personal leadership styles will fall at different points along this continuum. Some youth have very strong ideas about how things should be done, and when put into leadership positions, they assume an autocratic style. Others are so timid and unsure of their own leadership skills that they give no leadership at all and produce a laissez-faire environment. Your job is to help them become strong, democratic leaders while using them in situations where their natural style is most appropriate. Your strong-willed, autocratic young woman could be put in charge of a challenging fund-raising campaign for your mission trip, while the quiet, unsure boy might be asked to plan a trip to the beach where the main responsibility is inviting everyone to show up and bring food.

DELEGATING

“If you want something done well, do it yourself,” the saying goes--and though we might not admit it, many of us agree with that! We find it frustrating to delegate tasks to others, knowing they may not be done well. It’s especially difficult to give up the reins of control to young people, since the results are often mixed when an inexperienced youth takes over.

Remember that training your youth to serve is a more important goal than producing a perfect result. Guide and support where you can, but don’t be afraid to take your hands off the steering wheel and delegate responsibility to your youth. They may surprise you with their results! Even when they are not successful, they

will learn from the process.

When you put youth in leadership roles, they, too will often be tempted to do everything themselves. Encourage them to delegate to others in the group--this will create even more potential leaders!

Remember the advice Moses received from his mentor, his father-in-law, Jethro:

“What you are doing is not good....The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone....Select capable men from all the people...and appoint them as officials....That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you.”

(Exodus 18: 17-22, NIV).

COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATION

Though not every young person will shine in an individual leadership role, anyone can develop their skills as part of a leadership team. If your church has an active Adventist Youth Society, the AY executive can provide this opportunity. In a large church with many youth, you can have many different young people fill the various roles on the AY executive committee. A young person who might not be an assertive “leader” type might use his musical gifts to fill the role of chorister, or use her gift of friendliness to serve as fellowship or social leader.

If the highly structured format of the AY Society executive does not meet the needs of your church, you may establish a more informal “youth council.” This, too, would involve young people as well as youth leaders, and would provide opportunities for youth to use many different gifts in planning and carrying out the youth work in your church.

YOUTH IN CHURCH OFFICES

It’s vital that youth be involved in the church’s youth program, but if that is their only involvement in church life, they may begin to feel like they are placed on the sidelines. Comments like, “This church doesn’t have any place for us,” or “We don’t feel we’re important to the church” are commonplace.

Encourage your church nominating committee to place young people in roles of real significance within the church. Of course it is important that the responsibilities given to youth be age-appropriate, but by the time a young person is in high school, and often sooner, he or she is well able to serve on church

committees such as social committee, personal ministries, health and temperance, and many others. Young people can assist in children's Sabbath School divisions, and senior youth can be leaders in the Pathfinder or Adventurer Clubs. Some churches like to assign youth to the roles of junior deacons and deaconesses, while other (often smaller) churches use young people as full-fledged deacons and deaconesses.

When youth have been assigned to offices in the church, you as a youth leader can offer to help and mentor them in filling those roles, especially if they are not already working with a competent adult leader. Make sure they understand what is expected of them and help them develop the skills to do the job well.



MISSION STRATEGIES

Nothing inspires youth as much as getting their hands dirty--literally or figuratively--in projects where they can make a difference in the lives of others. Obeying Jesus' command to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, and visit the sick, can transform even an apathetic group of young people into soldiers in God's army.

Youth in our postmodern culture need to do more than hear the Word preached. They need an opportunity to make Christianity real and practical. While they are very caught up in the materialist culture that surrounds them, young people are also more idealistic than adults and are quick to respond to the needs of others once their eyes are open to those needs. Training youth for service is an integral part of our **Salvation and Service** focus in youth ministry. Even those youth who have not yet experienced a saving relationship with Jesus may be attracted by a service project and through that avenue may come to know Jesus for themselves.

Here are a few practical strategies for getting your young people involved in missions at home and around the world.

VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY

Volunteers are the backbone of any community. Don't be afraid to take your youth outside the church environment to work with other churches and service organizations within your community. Whether it's serving lunch at a soup kitchen, singing to elderly people in a nursing home, shovelling snow-covered sidewalks or mowing lawns for shut-ins, visiting with children at an orphanage, visiting or volunteering in nursing homes, or helping build homes for low-income families, your youth can make a positive impact on the community. Furthermore, people in your community will learn that Seventh-day Adventist young people can be counted on to help.

Get in touch with groups and organizations in your community that need volunteers. Find projects that match the skills and interests of your young people, set up a volunteer opportunity, and be on hand to model enthusiastic participation.

The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40, NIV)

Under different names and in different divisions of the world church, Adventist youth are catching on to the idea of selecting one city or community and targeting it with a variety of service projects over a short period of time. Often combined with a youth congress or youth rally, a project of this type might involve the youth in activities such as feeding the homeless, helping street kids, cleaning the streets, donating blood, singing or performing drama on street corners, and holding evangelistic meetings. One of the largest-scale events of this type was Impact Toronto 2000, held in conjunction with the 2000 General Conference session. Impact 2000 involved Adventist young adults from all over the world in dozens of different ministries.

When a project like this is finished, the community is left in no doubt that Seventh-day Adventist youth have been there! Furthermore, they know that Adventist youth care about the community and its people. The youth themselves gain experience in a variety of different ministries and are able to use and develop their own spiritual gifts. When they go back home, they carry that enthusiasm back into the community where their church is located.

YOUTHNET

YouthNet is a network of service and volunteer opportunities for Adventist youth and young adults. In the North American division, YouthNet is the official volunteer agency of the church. Young people can participate in any of a number of different service opportunities. One of the best known of these is student missions, which are popular with Seventh-day Adventist college students worldwide. Student missionaries usually give a year of their lives to work in teaching, health care, or other areas where they may be needed in the mission field.

Similar programs that fall under the YouthNet “umbrella” are Task Force, Young Pioneers, and Youth Emergency Services. Students interested in YouthNet service opportunities can learn more through the chaplain’s office if they are on an Adventist campus, or they can contact YouthNet directly at 1-800-331-2767.

Go into all the world and
preach the good news to all
creation. (Mark 16:15, NIV)

SHORT TERM MISSION PROJECTS

These projects are probably the single most powerful tool for giving young people a vision of service and changing their perspective on their own spiritual lives and the needs of the world. Each year, thousands of Seventh-day Adventist young people travel to an area, usually outside their own country, where they can work for a week or two on a service project. These projects may involve building, repair work, evangelism or outreach. Youth groups and schools often work with organizations such as Maranatha or ADRA to plan short-term mission opportunities for their young people. If you have the opportunity to take a group of young people on a short-term mission trip, you will never regret the experience.



EVANGELISM STRATEGIES

When we speak of “evangelism” we are speaking of leading young people to a saving relationship with Jesus and to acceptance of our Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. As we train our young people to serve others in love, we train them also to become evangelists--to spread Jesus’ message of salvation. Here are a few practical ideas for doing this.

EVANGELISM BEGINS AT HOME

As a youth leader, your most fertile field for evangelism is right in your youth group. Young people within the group who have not yet accepted Jesus as their Savior, or who have not yet been baptized, need opportunities to make these commitments. The youth in your group who are already committed to Jesus can begin their evangelistic work by sharing their faith with their own friends within the group. The witness of another young person can be powerful and effective.

When we talk about “evangelism” with our youth we should, of course, look outside our church family to try to win others to Christ. But we should never neglect the unsaved youth within our own “fold.” Take time to talk to them about Jesus, about the doctrines of the church, about baptism. Provide opportunities, such as Weeks of Spiritual Emphasis and other events (discussed in more detail under “Discipleship strategies”) where they will have the chance to respond to an invitation for commitment.

CRUSADES AND SEMINARS

Although public evangelism, through large-scale crusades, satellite events, and Daniel and Revelation Seminars, has traditionally been a major part of the outreach program of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, evangelistic events of this type are seldom directed specifically at young people.

Children, youth, and young adults have different needs from adults. Large-scale evangelism directed at young people is certainly one possible avenue of outreach, but the approach may need to be different. Use contemporary music, drama, a comfortable setting; use any approach--within the boundaries of acceptable Adventist standards--that will appeal to the particular group of young people you hope to reach.

Young adults of college age and beyond may be less comfortable than older adults with a traditional evangelistic series of sermons. A more informal approach

that allows for discussion, debate, and small-group interaction may be more successful with this age group.

Most importantly, make sure that any evangelistic effort you spearhead with your youth is driven by the youth themselves. They need to take ownership of the program in order for it to work, and the unsaved youth whom you hope to win will only be attracted if they see young people like themselves actively involved and leading out.

Youth can also be active in evangelistic efforts directed at adults. Many churches and evangelists have had great success involving children and teenagers in traditional evangelistic crusades. Young people can greet, provide special music, lead in praise singing, and even preach. Their own relationship with Jesus will grow deeper as they have the opportunity to win others to Christ.

BIBLE STUDIES

All young people, especially those from unchurched backgrounds, need some in-depth Bible study, either one-on-one or in a small group setting, before they are ready for baptism. You should be prepared yourself to study the Bible with your young people, and you can also train them to lead other youth in Bible studies. If you have studied the concept of spiritual gifts with your youth you will know that some of them have a gift for teaching or explaining the Bible. Armed with a good Bible-study course and paired with an adult mentor with whom they can work closely, your young people can become skilled at sharing Jesus through Bible studies.

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

Friendship evangelism is important for everyone, from children to the elderly. It is perhaps the most important type of evangelism for youth. Young people relate to their peer group. They consistently rate their friends as the most important people in their lives.

Obviously, a Christian peer group can make a huge difference in the life of a young person. Many Christians came from a non-Christian background to know the Lord as a result of associating with Christian friends when they were younger.

Every social activity your youth group does is an evangelism opportunity. Many of these events will not be overtly evangelistic: you don't need to preach to children on a Pathfinder camping trip or start a Bible study with teenagers at a Saturday night social. But if you encourage your youth to invite non-Christian friends with them to these events, these non-Christian youth will get to know Christian young people, form close bonds with them, and be far more receptive to our message when a more obviously "evangelistic" situation arises.

Young people, especially teenagers, can be very "cliquish," associating only

with their group of close friends. If they all attend church and church school together, they can sometimes shut out outsiders and fail to project a friendly, welcoming attitude. Take every opportunity to teach your young people about Jesus' command to love everyone, and about the power of friendship evangelism.

He desires to see gathered out from the homes of our people a large company of youth who, because of the godly influences of their homes, have surrendered their hearts to Him and go forth to give Him the highest service of their lives....They have learned to submit to God as their teacher and leader, and they are prepared to render Him acceptable service....Such youth are prepared to represent to the world the grace and power of Christ.

Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 210

