

General Conference Commission on Youth

R E P O R T

*A Summary
Report of
Division Sub-
Commissions
on Youth to
the Annual
Council 1993*





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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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At the request of Youth Ministries personnel within the General Conference Department of Church Ministries, delegates to the 1990 Spring Meeting of the General Conference voted to establish a Commission on Youth to study the status of Adventist youth and youth ministry throughout the world church. As a part of that action, it was determined that each division would form its own subcommission to do the research necessary to perform a self-study of youth and youth ministry within its field, and to prepare a written report discussing

findings and recommendations. The resulting studies and recommendations were to be completed and forwarded to the General Conference Commission on Youth for review within a maximum period of two years. The action also

called for a world summary report to be prepared for presentation to the 1993 Annual Council.

Introduction

Subcommission Reports Indicate Need for Consultation

As reports arrived at the offices of Youth Ministry personnel at the General Conference, it became apparent that the data presented should be studied thoroughly. Thus it was that world youth leaders from every division except the newly formed Euro-Asia Division met at Newbold College in England July 8-16, 1993. Each of the division youth personnel had served as secretary of his division subcommission, and approximately half of the group were also members of the General Conference Commission on Youth. Their task was to review the division subcommission reports and prepare a summary document. This study led to a process of visioning the future of Adventist youth ministry.

Israel Leito, director of the General Conference Department of Church Ministries, and Bob Jacobs, personal assistant to General Conference President Robert Folkenberg, chaired the eight-day meeting. Division delegates included the following:

Carlyle Bayne, Africa-Indian Ocean Division
Barry Gane, South Pacific Division
Alfredo Garcia-Marenko, Inter-American Division
John Graz, Euro-Africa Division
Ole Kendel, Trans-European Division
Baraka Muganda, East Africa Division
Chris Nathaniel, Southern Asia Division
Jose Maria B. Silva, South American Division
Ted Wick, North American Division
David Wong, Far Eastern Division

General Conference representatives included Malcolm Allen, Richard Barron, and Patricia Habada of the Department of Church Ministries, and Eugene Hsu of the Eastern Asia Committee. Jim Huzzey, Director of Church Ministries for the host division (TED), also participated. David Wong, newly elected to the General Conference Department of

Church Ministries had not yet assumed that position, but at the invitation of the chair acted as General Conference youth personnel in helping to coordinate the meetings.

This was the first such meeting since A. G. Daniells chaired a commission in 1907 that gave direction to Adventist youth work for much of the twentieth century.

From this meeting came two major documents, a summary report of division subcommission studies and a paper setting forth the recommendations of world youth leaders for guiding youth ministry into the twenty-first century. This is the first of the two documents and should be carefully studied before considering the recommendations outlined in the second paper.

Methods of Study

As noted earlier, each division was free to pursue its own self-study. The General Conference Commission on Youth, while giving guidelines, did not specify how that study should be conducted; no single format or design was prescribed. Divisions were free to select the type of study, how to proceed, what population should be studied, and whether the study should be a formal scientific study, an informal survey, or a combination of both.

Not all divisions have completed their studies. In some divisions the subcommissions will continue to function as long as necessary to receive and review additional reports and to evaluate progress on implementation of recommendations. Also, the new Euro-Asia Division has not yet fully developed a youth ministries program and has no commission. Therefore, no data from that division has been included in this report.

Three divisions based major portions of their reports on a Valuegenesis study, using similar instruments in a highly scientific procedure. However, within those divisions, the instrument and populations varied. For example, one division used the "long" form and involved a population of students aged 12-18, most of whom attend Adventist schools throughout the entire division, while another division used the "short" form and surveyed Adventist students aged 12-18 in both Adventist and public schools in three unions only. Neither of these divisions studied youth beyond the age of 18. Still another division used three survey instruments and surveyed every baptized youth aged 15-30 within its field, which brought responses from about 7,000 youth, including those of college age and beyond. At the other end of the spectrum, some divisions used informal, verbal surveys at town meetings held for youth within each union in their field, while others relied on the General Conference Department of Church Ministries Youth Ministry Survey of 1500 youth aged 15-30 years which was completed in 1990.

Because of this diversity it becomes difficult to quantify or extrapolate data that can be applied to the entire world field. However, it is possible to draw many significant conclusions. *As one reviews the individual reports, certain similarities and commonalities appear as major strengths or weaknesses, concerns or needs.* It is these that will be emphasized in this report.

Each division was free to pursue its own self-study.

What about the youth themselves? How many are there in the world church? How do they see themselves relating to the church? Are they loyal? Do they expect to stay in the church? What about apostasies? Most of these questions can be answered from the information revealed in the division subcommission reports. Let's look first at numbers.

Church Membership

Most of the reports deal with percentages of membership as youth, that is members up to and including age 30. These figures vary, but *indications are that in the world church approximately 60 percent of the membership is age 30 or under.* (It should be noted that these figures are percentages of *baptized* membership. If youth who are attending church but are not baptized were included, the number of youth in the world church would be approximately 70 percent of church

Status of Youth in Adventism

membership.) Of the 10 divisions reporting, eight have a clear majority of youth members, ranging from 60-80 percent of baptized membership. Two divisions report a low percentage of youth membership, 20 and 22 percent. This raises questions about the future of the church in those divisions.

Dedication and Loyalty to Church

In most divisions youth dedication to the church is rated high. According to the reports the majority of youth demonstrate their dedication through regular church attendance and involvement in church leadership and youth activities, including evangelism. In one division 86 percent of youth attend church regularly. In another youth occupy 60-70 percent of Sabbath School leadership positions and teach 50 percent of all Sabbath School classes. In still another division 91 percent of teens say they will still be active church members by age 40. Four divisions report a high love for the Lord. Among indicators expressed are involvement in youth evangelism and a strong desire to aid the poor and victims of war.

Unfortunately that picture does not apply worldwide. Some divisions report a high degree of loyalty to the church in the early teen years, but a gradual decline after that age. Two divisions report low or moderate involvement of youth. Reasons vary, but indications are that many youth in those divisions do not have access to Adventist schools, or they have an identification problem and see the church as a "foreign" organization and have little knowledge of Adventist pioneers or heritage within their own division.

Youth exhibit a high degree of loyalty to the church in the early teen years, but a gradual decline after that age.

Adventist Youth and Church Doctrine

A majority of Adventist youth (75-87 percent) indicate a high degree of agreement with and commitment to most major church doctrines and say they want to understand Adventism better. They see themselves as religious and believe they have or want to have a meaningful relationship with Christ, or that they have committed their lives to Jesus. Most see religious faith as very important and many want to know how to understand the Bible better. However, two of the three divisions using the Valuegenesis study report similar results in the area of belief in the assurance of salvation. In these divisions youth indicate a lack of understanding of or belief in the concept of grace. They appear to believe that they must do something to be accepted by God, to gain entrance into heaven. In other words, they do not accept or understand the unconditional love and salvation God offers to all who will accept it. In some places youth question the church's position on Ellen White, the investigative judgment, and the concept of Adventism as the remnant church.

Involvement in Witnessing

Eight divisions reported on youth involvement in evangelism or personal witnessing activities. Four of these indicate that youth exhibit high participation in evangelism. (It is interesting to note that these divisions have high rates of church growth.) Three divisions say youth have a high desire to be involved in evangelism but do not always have opportunities to do so. One division acknowledges low participation in personal witnessing activities.

Several statements from one report seem to express the situation best. "Three principal factors appeared to correlate with youth witnessing. They are spirituality, *perception of the local church by the youth*, and youth representation in church. . . . Churches that had adequate youth representation on church boards tended to have more youth witnessing."

Attitudes Toward Church Standards

The studies make it clear that *most Adventist young people agree with church standards concerning at-risk behaviors* such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Most also agree that sexual relations outside of marriage are inappropriate and unacceptable.

However, when it comes to qualities that are not considered life-threatening, such as jewelry, movies, dancing, music, and caffeinated drinks, a much lower percentage agree with the standards. In some divisions this figure is as low as 19 percent, while others say there is a strong degree of ambivalence in these areas and consider them "cultural" factors rather than matters of religion. Comments from youth appear to indicate that these "cultural" standards are those that lead youth to consider Adventism to be legalistic.

Behavior and Standards

It is important to compare what youth *say* with what they *do*. Their behavior appears to negate their words. *While youth say they believe the church is right in its stand on the*

use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and premarital sex, according to those divisions using the Valuegenesis study a *significant number have some problems conforming to those standards*. Those studies register concern about the number of youth who are involved in drinking alcohol, binge drinking, marijuana use, smoking tobacco products, and premarital sex. Divisions not using Valuegenesis also indicate concern about these factors.

Apostasies

Although no one wants it to happen, the figures clearly indicate that youth do choose to withdraw from Adventism. Figures reported from eight divisions indicate that from *20 to 40 percent of Adventist youth leave the church*. One division reports that as many as 50 percent of youth in the more prosperous parts of its division choose to leave the church. From the data given, it appears that youth who live in metropolitan areas are more likely to leave the church than those who live a rural lifestyle. The data also indicates that where the influence of the home and family is positive, fewer youth apostatize. Also, where there is a healthy local church youth ministry program that is valued by the youth, there is a greater chance that the youth will exhibit strong Christian commitment. Where there is no local church youth ministry or where it is not accepted by the youth, the chances of youth developing strong Christian commitment is lower.

Four divisions looked at reasons for apostasy and say that contributing factors are unemployment, materialism, and secularism. Whatever the reasons, the figures are too high! The church must not turn its back on these young people.

Youth and the Local Church

In studying the status of youth, *heavy emphasis was placed on the relationship of youth to the local church*. Areas of study included perceived church climate toward youth, youth-adult member relationships, youth leadership opportunities, youth and pastor relationship, youth and the worship service, church fellowship opportunities, and youth's perceptions of program and financial support from the local church for youth activities. Perhaps this emphasis exists because youth have little contact with the church in any other arena. For youth, especially those who do not attend Adventist boarding schools or colleges, the local church is "the church" since they rarely have occasion to be involved at any other level.

It may also be possible that those who produced the studies believe that the influence of the local church is of major importance in the lives of youth.

It should be noted here that the studies asked for youth's *perceptions* of the local church. Some may believe that perceptions are not valid measures. However, for most of us, as one researcher states, "perception is reality" and definitely affects the way we involve ourselves. Let us now review some of these perceptions.

Youth have high expectations. Generally, *youth have high ideals and expectations for the church*. The church "is right" and "is important" to them. However, youth also

Among the "at risk" categories all were considered morally wrong yet their practice was still extensive.

recognize that the church is not a perfect place. They say that negative influences within the church include internal conflicts, legalism, loss of identification with the world church, lack of positive role models, and few "heroes" to emulate. Some youth say that the church does not help them solve personal problems, particularly those associated with life style, values, and sexuality.

Youth-adult member relationships need improvement. Every division reported concern in this area. Youth perceive that adult church members are critical of them, ignore them, give them little credit for spirituality, and use them to do "donkey work" while adults lead. Two divisions composed largely of so-called developing nations report that a growing gap between educational levels of youth and older members leads to tension. A third division reports the same concern, but states that the perception of youth as second-class members is *decreasing* although there are still vestiges of separation between adults and youth. Another division states that "in churches where youth are accepted, a very good attitude of youth exists." Only one division reports a high degree (72 percent) of youth acceptance by local church members, and that figure is not outstanding.

Church climate is warm, but not for youth. Many study respondents indicate that their home church is warm, friendly, accepting, welcoming, and supportive, but those attributes are not necessarily extended to the youth within the church. Apparently, many youth perceive themselves as unknown, not a high priority, and largely ignored. They believe that people in the local church look down on them, have no confidence in them, and that the local church does not care about them. Four divisions report that few youth perceive the local church as being open to new ideas or willing to listen to the ideas of young members. Perhaps this sentence quoted from one report summarizes it best: "While there is evidence that many young people feel a sense of warmth and belonging in their churches, these data reveal that a significant proportion feel unknown, unloved, unwanted, and unaccepted."

Youth want to be involved. Even though they sometimes perceive themselves as being ignored, youth still want to participate in their home churches. But only one division reports that opportunities are increasing for youth to become more involved in local church leadership, particularly as deacons and elders. Most divisions report that **youth are seldom entrusted with positions of responsibility or leadership** and have little opportunity to participate in making decisions that affect the local church. Three divisions say that "youth show contentment" (they are not complaining), but are looking for more opportunities for input into the local church.

The relationship between youth and the local pastor needs more study. Only two divisions report information on this. One says, "where the pastor enables youth, we see growth and enthusiasm." The other reports that 51 percent of youth say "the pastor is interested in me," and 56 percent say the pastor has helped them develop their religious faith. This does not appear to indicate a high level of involvement with youth on the part

Data reveals that a significant proportion of youth feel unknown, unloved, unwanted, and unaccepted.

of the local church pastor. Perhaps this is a matter for all divisions to examine as they determine plans for the future.

Youth do attend church regularly, but would like to see changes. Although many youth attend church regularly (as high as 81 percent in one division), *too many youth perceive church services as irrelevant, dull and boring*, with sermons being addressed to older members and few programs that "make me think." One division reports, "In formal, traditional churches youth attend without enthusiasm and many leave at age 18." Another division reports that youth seek change in the local church, especially in worship style. Two divisions report ("on the average" and 61 percent respectively) that youth say the church service helps them grow spiritually. A third division reports that 63 percent of youth say the local church services have helped them develop their religious faith, however, more youth within that division (78 percent) say they are influenced by Sabbath School.

Youth see the local church as offering few fellowship opportunities. Of those divisions reporting on this feature of youth interest, three say that the local church is weak in making youth fellowship activities available. One division reports that 59 percent of youth believe local fellowship meetings have helped them develop their religious faith, but 60 percent say that teen or youth camps have also been important in their faith development.

Youth have opinions about program and financial support. Three divisions reported direct comments on this aspect. Among the statements recorded, youth say that "the AY meeting does not receive the same support as other church meetings," however, they recognize that there is good support for Pathfinders. Two divisions report that youth say that the budget for youth activities is inadequate. This appears to be another area that requires more study.

The following quotation from one of the reports summarizes rather well this section dealing with youth and the local church. "*Churches that were supportive of their youth were enriched by the youth supporting and participating* in Sabbath School, Adventist Youth meetings, and prayer meetings." (Emphasis supplied.)

There appears to be little involvement with youth by the local church pastors.

How does the church today endeavor to meet the needs of youth? Who are the people involved and what is their background? What programs and resources are available and which need revision or replacement? What works and what doesn't? These are some of the questions for which we will seek answers as we proceed to look at the status of youth ministry in the world church.

For the purpose of this study, the term *youth ministry personnel* is assigned to those

paid denominational workers at the conference, union, and division level who are specifically elected or assigned to work directly with and for Adventist youth. At the local church, those who work with youth programs are usually lay members, volunteers who serve without

The Status of Youth Ministry

remuneration, and are designated *youth leaders* in this study. In addition, the local church pastor has a responsibility for the youth in his/her congregation but is not usually designated as a youth worker even though much of traditional youth work occurs at the local church level. Let us now turn our thoughts to those people and programs that work for and with youth.

A Brief Look at Youth Ministry Personnel

It is generally agreed that a high turnover rate of personnel impacts negatively on youth ministry. Yet five divisions report high turnover rates at the union and conference levels. One division indicates average turnover, and only two report low turnover. Currently, the average length of service in youth ministry worldwide is only two years. Why do some people stay in youth ministry for only short periods of time? Where do they go when they leave? Is burnout a factor? And more importantly, what can be done to change the situation? The subcommission reports do not answer these questions. Clearly this area needs more study.

Staffing appears to be a major concern. Only two divisions report that they have trained, capable, and dedicated full-time youth directors at all levels. One division reports having youth directors at every level, but many are young and inexperienced, often new to youth ministry with no background to draw from. Five divisions report the need for full-time youth directors and more staff at every level.

Some say the high turnover rate means they have inexperienced youth directors. Other reports suggest youth work sometimes takes second place because the youth director

has multiple assignments. One division reports 1/3 full time directors, 1/3 shared department ministry, and 1/3 of conferences have no youth ministry personnel at all.

Full time youth directors usually demonstrate ability. Of the divisions reporting on this, four said youth ministry personnel demonstrate average ability, and three said they are well trained at every level. One said that most leaders spend time as assistants before becoming directors, so they get experience.

Continuing education, training, and staff development appears to have been neglected. Only one division reports a good systematic training program for youth ministry personnel, but also says that too many of its youth directors have multiple assignments.

Youth Ministry in the Local Church

The quality of youth ministry in the local church varies considerably. In some places, the weekly youth meeting is the "catalyst that draws youth" and provides fellowship. Other parts of the world report low percentages of churches that have youth organizations or "anything for youth."

Most divisions report active Pathfinder clubs. However, local church youth leadership is often inexperienced or untrained. Some youth leaders believe they do not need *Accent* (a General Conference publication for local church youth leaders), while others "receive it gladly."

Turnover in local church youth leadership, local church youth leaders who are new converts without training for Adventist leadership, and the low level of fellowship activities appear to be factors contributing to the impairment of youth work.

Adventist Youth and Volunteerism

Adventist youth still volunteer for service. Four divisions report that they strongly support and participate in the AY volunteer service. In some other places interest is moderate or high, but many youth are unable to participate because of financial constraints. Most youth volunteers are college students and participate in programs under the direction of a campus chaplain. Terms of service may be as long as a year or as short as a few weeks participation in a specific building project.

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Every subcommission report indicated needs and concerns, and every one looked at ways to improve the status of youth and youth ministry within Adventism.

A clear call to revive and strengthen the senior youth program is evident in all reports. Divisions also want further development of the Adventurer program for children aged 6-9 and a study of the Pathfinder program (for ages 10-15) with intent to revise and update it. New youth ministry resources are sought, as are expanded volunteer programs and campus ministry for non-Adventist schools and colleges.

Seeking Solutions

As one examines the status of youth in the church, certain universal needs become apparent. Certainly, as most divisions say, the church must seek ways to give youth an understanding of the biblical concept of grace and salvation, to instill a biblical value system, and to nurture youth of all ages. As one report states, "Converts may master the church's unique beliefs, but the Author and Finisher of their faith is hardly known."

Obvious needs also include finding ways to strengthen the Adventist Youth Society in the local church, and to develop positive relationships between and among older church members and youth. Also, further study should be given to the role of pastor-youth relationships.

Youth need help in understanding and adhering to church standards. Not only must the church find ways to help youth face the future, that help must deal with specifics such as instruction in courtship, music awareness, instilling a biblical value system, and recognizing and living with the pressures of the secular world. There must be a deliberate effort to transmit Adventist values and standards. As one report says, "Fine-tuning of the interpretations of certain Adventist standards may be required from time to time but the uniqueness of what it means to be an Adventist should be upheld, promoted, and propagated."

These are some of the general areas of need. Let us now become more specific. What can the church do in an effort to improve the status of youth and youth ministry? First let us consider youth ministry in the local church.

The Local Church and Youth Ministry

If local church youth ministry is to survive, change must occur. Subcommission reports say that traditional modes of worship must be exchanged for new ideas and methods that include praise, prayer, music, testimony, Bible study, and Adventist heritage. Approaches to Friday night or Sabbath afternoon youth programs must be varied to include seminars, forums, agape suppers, and other means that involve new ways of presenting messages, such as youth theater, mime, drama, radio programming, puppetry, etc. Spiritual weekends, campouts, and outreach activities could bring new life to the local church youth program. All of these offer opportunities for more fellowship—something that youth and youth leaders agree is needed.

Every division calls for a change in the local church climate. How can this be done? The following are suggested ways. "Have programs that bridge adults and youth." "Provide common participation, integrating youth and adults in church activities." "Listen to youth, be open to their voices." "Regard youth with respect as any other church member with needs and spiritual gifts." "Address youth in a language they can understand." "Make youth and adults aware that the church has a place for everyone."

Youth programs are still important. Youth in every division asked for a strong, effective youth organization in every local church. They want programs that will offer religious instruction, help them share and communicate their faith, lead them to identify with their church, and help them know the function of departments within their church. They recognize a need for more nurturing and discipling programs, Campus Ministries programs on non-Adventist campuses, and a reassessment of the Pathfinder program with changes made to meet current needs.

Youth ask for more recreation and fellowship opportunities within the setting of the local church. Five of the divisions treat this as a major need and call for recreation centers, camping activities, social gatherings, interaction between and among youth groups from churches within a specified geographical area, and fellowship opportunities for youth in small churches.

The church must entrust youth with responsibilities. The key word is *involvement*. "Give youth opportunities to be heard; listen to them and take them seriously," is a typical report statement. According to the reports, both within and beyond the local church youth should be involved in planning, leading, and evaluation, and should be systematically integrated into the life of the church.

Youth should participate in decision-making activities of the church at all levels. This need becomes more evident in small churches. At the local church, youth should serve on the church board and committees, including the nominating committee. They should be elders, deacons and deaconesses, and Sabbath School leaders. There must be "planned efforts to include youth in worship and evangelistic services, church boards, delegates to constituency meetings, [and as] members of conference and union committees."

One division even suggests that the offices of elder and deacon trainee should be incorporated into the *Church Manual*.

Youth evangelism is seen as one way to involve youth. Five divisions call for such youth involvement. The approach may be different—youth theater, drama, puppetry, small groups, revival meetings, Bible camps, branch Sabbath School, or youth-for-youth meetings—but the message is the same: get the youth involved. Develop a talent bank of youth and their skills, interests, and abilities, suggests one report; then invite their participation.

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“Involve youth in mission” is suggested as one way to keep youth active in the church. First, the church must have a mission that is “relevant to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.” Within that mission, we must seek ways to recover and reclaim lost youth, involving the youth in these efforts. Make mission important, stimulating, exciting, and challenging with “more major projects such as recent building projects in Nepal” or other “social evangelism projects planned and implemented by youth.” At the same time, provide more regular witnessing activities and “consider family life work a central specific concern in evangelism.”

Those involved with youth work need to know how to communicate with youth. Youth workers both at the local church and in professional youth ministry must “listen before endeavoring to transmit,” “answer youth’s questions with more than mere assertions,” and “transmit Adventist values in a framework of reality.” A youth council or cabinet at all levels is seen as a means to develop positive communication.

Youth in small churches deserve attention. Efforts must be made to involve them. One way suggested to accomplish this is to “integrate youth from small churches into regional activities, to build a regional structure to provide . . . at least quarterly meetings.” Small churches should “set aside special appropriations to send youth to camps and special meetings.”

Small numbers of youth could lead to small group ministry as a form of inreach and outreach, and to provide more nurturing and discipling efforts. All of these will offer more of the fellowship opportunities for which youth are pleading.

Emphasize a positive image of youth ministry. “To improve the image of youth with local church members, inform the church about its youth through *Adventist Review* articles, worship services, special meetings, and reports of youth activities.” At the same time, says one report, work to “upgrade the image of the church in the eyes of the youth.”

Local church youth leadership must be developed. Youth leaders “should be young,” but well trained, and present positive role models. (At least four division reports call for better adult role models.) Reports indicate the need for intensive, ongoing leadership training programs for those who are elected to work with the youth in the local church. Well-planned and executed workshops, seminars, and leadership courses are seen as a major need. One division calls for leadership courses for Pathfinder and youth leaders to be available in every language and territory within its field.

Young leaders should have an adult as counselor or mentor. One division proposes that each youth leader should train a young person for leadership. Those who are being trained for youth leadership “should commit themselves to two years of service.” If money is a problem, the “local church should create a fund to help youth leaders take part in training sessions” offered by the conference or union. New converts can offer much to youth, but they also need training.

The local pastor must become involved. Four divisions say that the church should offer “youth awareness training” to local church pastors. Others call for college and

seminary pastoral training to include courses that will develop an understanding of youth ministry. According to the data it is evident that pastors and other workers "need help in valuing youth ministries."

Positive pastor-youth relationships will make a difference. First, the pastor and the local church must seek ways to make the worship services "more appealing and relevant to youth's needs." This includes both the form of worship, the music, and the sermon. Since only about half of the youth say pastors show interest in them, the pastor needs to become aware of and reach out to all youth in his/her congregation. Moral support from the pastor is seen as the pastor's attendance at youth meetings, help in getting financial support for youth activities, and holding no other meetings that would compete with attendance at youth meetings. Finally, several divisions say that every local church pastor should experience pastoral training that includes how to relate to youth and youth ministry.

In summary, whatever happens for youth at the local church, youth should be involved in the planning and decision-making, and they need to work with adults who are positive role models, nurturing and caring.

Some Other Considerations

Develop stronger family life. How does family life relate to Youth Ministry? Those divisions using the Valuegenesis design find that home and family life is important to youth. They call for "priority to family matters in all [church] departments concerned with youth," for making "family life training a priority at union and conference levels" and a strong training program to prepare family life instructors. It is necessary to "find ways to teach the most effective parenting style," which has been determined by the Valuegenesis study to be "one in which there is emotional warmth and affection and in which young people are free from an over-protective environment."

Three divisions identified unemployment as a major concern. Because they are unable to find work, many youth become discouraged, and that discouragement often leads to a loss of faith that leads to apostasy. To change this, these divisions propose a need for church-sponsored vocational/trades education programs in areas such as agriculture, cottage industries, cooperatives and workshops, etc., that will develop into income generating projects. They would also encourage church businessmen and women to hire unemployed Adventist youth, and would have the church set up an office for job placement.

Youth and church administrators are called upon to communicate with one another. Pastors and presidents are asked to find ways to exchange thoughts with youth. The most common suggestion is a youth cabinet or council of some sort that meets at frequent, regular intervals with administrators at all levels of the church "so youth can express needs and concerns" to them. Listening without implementation is of little value, however, and both groups must be willing to accept and act upon reasonable suggestions. This needs to be made clear, whatever the format.

Reports indicate an increasing need for new resources to be provided in the world's major languages.

Resources Are a Major Concern

Reports indicate an increasing need or a great need for new and revised resources to be provided in the world's major languages. Resource and material production “needs to keep pace with the rapid growth of the church.” Divisions call for more program and devotional materials for use in the local church; resources such as videos, seminars, and manuals for training local youth leadership; and a new series of evangelistic tracts and sermons. One division identified 15 specific areas where new or revised resources are needed.

In some divisions youth have no Sabbath School quarterlies. These people are pleading for young adult Sabbath School materials. Other divisions call for AY program materials, Junior Youth Week of Prayer readings, more resource materials that speak to youth issues, literature to teach youth how to give Bible studies and share their faith, and leaflets giving guidance concerning the more common problems of contemporary Christian youth.

Several divisions called for improved and upgraded training materials for conference/mission youth directors. Although many of these materials are available, some divisions, for various reasons, are slow to translate or promote them, perhaps because of the high cost of translation and printing. Divisions with numerous language groups need to have resource materials and manuals translated into their major languages.

Among the more unique suggestions were those that asked publishing houses to promote and publish more books for parents and more literature that will teach identification with the church.

The Greatest Need Is for Qualified Personnel

“The greatest need is to find personnel who are well qualified.” Every division expresses needs for well trained and experienced youth ministry workers who will demonstrate professionalism. To make this happen, divisions are asking for full-time youth directors at all levels of church administration, directors who have no other assignments. The reports also call for trained workers who have made a long-term commitment to working with Adventist youth, who demonstrate competency and vision, who are visible, strong, and effective, and who are young or youthful. Reports also say that youth ministry professionals should “be more present in schools, meet with teachers,” and serve on commissions or boards involved in training of pastors and youth pastors.

Competent professionals are seen as a means to enhance youth ministry. To increase competency, youth ministry professionals should receive continuing education through departmentally sponsored workshops and meetings, and other training courses for youth ministry directors. “Every [youth] department should have a young person as associate,” presumably in training for future leadership.

Education for youth professionals is important. Several divisions call for the development of courses or a youth ministry track at both graduate and undergraduate levels for guiding interested persons into youth ministry, while others say that every seminary

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student should have at least one class that will help the youth worker understand and work with youth. One division has already acted to change this situation by working with its college to develop an M.A. program in youth ministry which is scheduled to begin in 1994.

Administrators and youth ministries personnel must work together. "Presidents should cooperate with youth personnel as closely as possible." "Presidents should attend and evaluate youth programs." Church leaders should be involved in sharing with youth the official position of our church on issues. Administrators should be Christ-like role models for youth, and should use youth on all committees at all levels of the church.

Successful youth ministry requires adequate funding. Every division calls upon administration to "provide regular and substantial" funds for youth activities at all levels. Budget studies indicate a need for increased funding in most divisions. One division reports that "only 7 percent of the overall budget" is apportioned to youth ministries and recommends "that we investigate and apportion more to meet the needs of this majority of church members." This seems to be the plea of all divisions.

Resources, Programs, and Leadership Are Keys to the Future

To summarize, division reports all express concern for the present status, but all have hope for the future of Adventist youth. Reports call for strengthening the impact of Youth Ministries by developing or improving the necessary resources and programs, and preparing leadership that will work together and with young church members to meet the real needs of Adventist youth today. If this is done, it is believed that the trends can be reversed, that the status of youth in Adventism can be greatly enhanced.

A Work Yet to Be Done

From the reports, it is clear that youth ministries is effective. In many places youth workers are reaching and teaching young people. Still, the needs are many and varied. Clearly, more personnel is needed and well trained persons are called for. An ongoing, continuing education program, carefully planned and implemented should help with the training, as will the experience received when a worker commits to longer terms of service thereby improving turnover rates.

Programs and resources need revision, and in some instances new ones must be developed.

Finances must be available to meet all these needs. Administrators and youth personnel must support one another.

Additionally, study of the effectiveness and impact of youth ministries should be an ongoing process. Continuing self-evaluation will lead to self-improvement. As each division continues to examine its own situation, it will be able to plan and implement changes to improve the quality of its efforts on behalf of youth, efforts that will lead them to Christ, and that will nurture and guide them into service for Him. And is that not the real goal?

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