

## Chapter 8

# EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS of a HEALTHY CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES *in* *the local* CHURCH



In his book, *Natural Church Development*, Christian Schwarz indicates that every healthy, growing church has eight characteristics. These characteristics can also be factored into Children's Ministries so that it can maintain a healthy and growing department in the local church. These eight characteristics are:

- Empowering Leadership
- Gift-oriented Ministry
- Passionate Spirituality
- Functional Structures
- Inspiring Worship Services
- Wholistic Small Groups
- Needs-oriented Evangelism
- Loving Relationships

## 1. EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

Effective leaders concentrate on empowering other Christians for ministry. They equip, support, motivate and mentor individuals to become all that God wants them to be. So how can Children's Ministries help the local church in empowering leadership among its members? This can be done through regular leadership certification programs to equip potential individuals with leadership skills to become children's leaders and teachers.

Furthermore, implementing an effective mentoring program also helps to empower potential individuals who want to work for children.

## **A. LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATION**

Coordinating children's ministries for the local church involves leading and training teachers and assistants. The GC or NAD Children's Ministries Certification program can be used for such training on a regular basis. A total of nine courses constitute the basic level of the GC leadership training. These courses can be taught by the conference Children's Ministries director or other qualified leaders in seminars during teachers' conventions, leadership training, or certification weekends. It may take several months to a year to complete all nine courses, after which a certificate from the General Conference Children's Ministries Department will be given to each participant. Following is a brief description of the certification courses. Detailed course outlines and lecture notes can be obtained from the GC Children's Ministries Department.

### **Understanding GraceLink**

A walk through the GraceLink curriculum, learning about how the four dynamics of grace, worship, community, and service are incorporated into the Bible lessons, and understanding the new approach to teaching it.

### **Active Learning**

Discover the interesting and best method of teaching children of any age by involving them in activities rather than through lectures.

### **Faith Development of Children**

Find out how children develop their faith and learn to lead them through the stages of faith development to a committed relationship with Jesus Christ.

### **Positive Class Discipline**

Learn some ideas of managing a class with grace and firmness as you facilitate active learning in your lessons.

### **Raising Kids to Adore God**

Help parents learn the most effective ways to raise children to adore God by making worship as a lifestyle.

### **Protecting Children from Abuse (Screening Volunteers)**

Protect the children in your church by implementing an effective procedure for volunteer screening. Learn how to introduce volunteer application forms without insulting long-time leaders.

### **Safety and Emergency Procedures for Children**

Provide safety for children in church-sponsored activities by implementing procedures that protect them from physical harm, danger, accidents, and other unforeseen hazards.

### **Understanding Child Development: Birth Through Early Teen**

Discover the developmental characteristics of children ages 0-14, how they learn, and how best to teach them. Understand the needs, the strengths, and the challenges of pre-adolescents. Learn practical tips for keeping them connected to the group and to Jesus.

### **Understanding How Children Learn**

Understand how children learn through their different learning styles and try to meet the needs of each type of learner. Discover the secrets for developing a successful lesson plan.

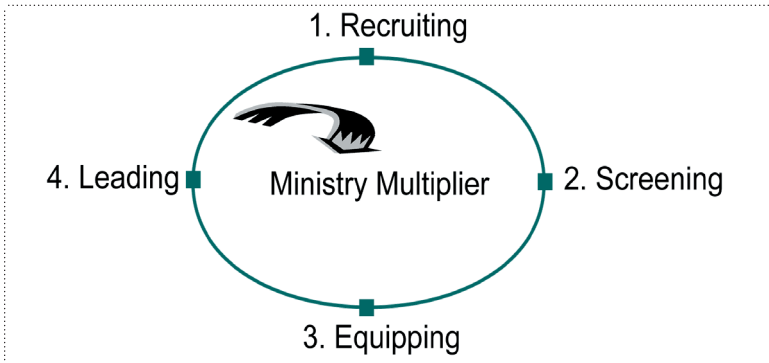
## **B. VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT**

The primary frustrations of many Children's Ministries Coordinators are finding, training, and motivating volunteers. Finding the right volunteers can be tough. Those who are willing aren't always skilled. And those who are outstanding often times say no. How do we find the help we need so that we can train individuals for future leadership?

### **What Is A Volunteer?**

- Someone who does not have to do it, but does it anyway!
- You can't fire them.
- But they can quit whenever they want to.

## The High Impact Model of Volunteer Management



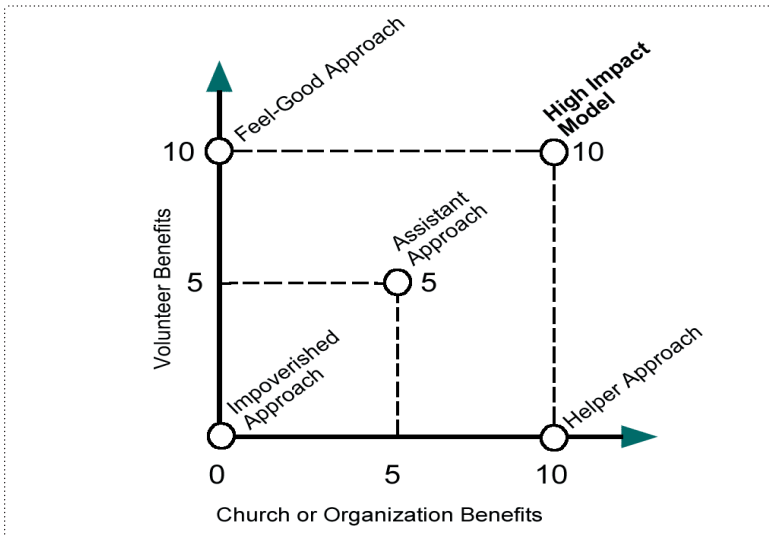
This model is composed of four tasks:

1. Recruiting
2. Screening
3. Equipping
4. Leading

When all the four tasks are followed through carefully, your ministry multiplies greatly. There will be more volunteers becoming leaders and are being groomed for future leadership.

## Volunteer Management Models

There are different approaches in managing volunteers. But using the high impact approach model is more effective for the success of Children's Ministries if we want to groom future leaders. Let's take a look at five models of management as shown in the diagram below. The vertical grid represents volunteer benefits and the horizontal grid represents the church's benefits.



## Types of Models:

- **Imoverished Approach**      Pastors do everything.  
Score: Volunteer 0; Church 0
- **Helper Approach**      Volunteers asked to help;  
They're used and abused  
Score: Volunteer 0; Church 10
- **Feel Good Approach**      Volunteers tell where they want to serve.  
Score: Volunteer 10; Church 0
- **Assistant Approach**      Class distinction between leaders and  
volunteers; no effort to mentor and train  
for leadership.  
Score: Volunteer 5; Church 5
- **High Impact Approach**      Church-wide commitment to select and  
disciple volunteers; team building to  
reach kingdom goals.  
Score: Volunteer 10; Church 10

## Equipping Volunteers

- We equip volunteers by providing:
  - ministry descriptions
  - essential equipment
  - resources: human, financial, paper
  - training: seminars, demonstration, role model/mentor
  - support, evaluate, affirm
  
- A Ministry Description tells:
  - title of position/ministry
  - a list of ideal/essential functions
  - a list of essential training required
  - additional skills essential to the job
  - additional ministry training
  
- Why training fails?
  - we neglect to provide an application form and get a commitment to attend training.
  - training is not relational
  - information only
  - lack of communication
  - no feedback—either direction
  - irrelevant
  - speaker not outstanding
  
- How to make training relational?
  - call everyone by name; work the room and have a good time
  - take an interest in each other; share joys and concerns
  - be a support group; pray together
  - go out to eat once in a while and talk around the table
  - use humor; plan surprises
  
- Attracting people to training
  - call it a leadership team meeting
  - require attendance
  - take up issues
  - listen to experiences volunteers relate

*God will give it*  
**TO YOU**  
*If he can get it*  
**THROUGH YOU.**

- let everyone give input
  - reinforce and give feedback
  - don't talk a lot
  - don't waste their time
- Jehoshaphat's training
    - consider carefully what you do
    - your work is for God
    - God is with you
    - fear of the Lord be upon you
    - No injustice, favoritism, bribery
    - serve faithfully, wholeheartedly

## Leading Volunteers

- Basic requirements
  - cast a vision
  - define the mission
  - Mentor (personally advise/supervise)
  - Disciple (offer spiritual leadership)
- Effective leaders ...
  - apply the Gospel—pour out love
  - listen to God's voice
  - take the Bible as authority
  - depend on prayer
  - balance their whole life

## Multiplying Ministry

- Always be mentoring leaders
- Increase responsibilities incrementally
- Mentor someone to take your place
  - encourage their personal growth
  - ask them to team up with you
  - gradually turn responsibility over

## High Impact Principles

- A volunteer is a child of God
- Church leadership needs to practice human stewardship too
- Recognize a volunteer's enhanced value
- Serving is a privilege
- Volunteers are capable partners
- The essential functions of a leader are to recruit, screen, train and disciple

### **C. HOW PASTORS AND ELDERS CAN EMPOWER CHILDREN'S LEADERS**

- Provide opportunities for children's leaders to organize children's worships on special days.
- Include children's leaders in planning committees where they can learn leadership skills.
- Support Children's Ministries programs by helping out in areas of presentations, transportation, promoting of the events.
- Encourage them to try new ideas.
- Provide budgets for them to organize children's program.
- Appoint capable people to the Children's Ministries Committee.

## **2. GIFT-ORIENTED MINISTRY**

God has given to each of us different gifts and talents. While not everyone has the gift of teaching and working with children, but there are those who simply have a passion for them. It is the responsibility of the church to be on a look out for such potential individuals who have these gifts and channeled them into Children's Ministries.

While the pastors and elders are looking out for gifted and talented people to work with children, they must also screen volunteers to ensure the safety of children. Children must be protected from individuals who harm them physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Gift-oriented ministry involves tasks like recruiting, screening and managing volunteers.



## **A. RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS**

Recruiting volunteers is never an easy task, but it is an essential task for Children's Ministries. Children need a lot more supervision, assistance, and guidance by adults in all children's programs. Thus, recruiting volunteers should be an ongoing process as the coordinator and the Children's Ministries committee search for new individuals to equip them for ministry.

### **Criteria for Selecting Volunteers**

- Choose individuals who have the following character traits:
  - Demonstrate love and commitment to God and to the church
  - Uphold high moral and ethical excellence
  - Have leadership abilities and experience
  - Have a passion for children

### **Responsibility of Recruiter**

- constantly looks for volunteers
- keeps a current file of likely volunteers
- has a description for each job
- has a supply of ministry application forms

### **Steps in Selecting Volunteers**

- Pray about the individuals you need.
- Share your vision with others.
- Advertise the need for volunteers by using any of the following methods:
  - Announcements in the bulletins or from the pulpit
  - Telephone invitation
  - Volunteers recruiting another volunteer
  - Nominating committee of the church
  - One-to-one invitation
- Identify the volunteer roles that are needed:

- Teacher
- Craft coordinator
- Music leader
- Story teller
- Puppet coordinator
- Team coordinator
- Determine the length of service for each position.
- Provide a job description where expectations and accountability are explained.
- Make the search for volunteers an ongoing process.

*Like an archer who*  
**WOUNDS EVERYONE**  
*so is he who*  
**HIRES A FOOL**  
*or who* **HIRES**  
*those who* **PASS BY**  
*Proverbs 26:10*

## **B. SCREENING VOLUNTEERS**

- Why screen volunteers?
  - to find out whom God has called to ministry
  - to match a person's gifts to ministry
  - to gauge their interest
  - to protect children
  - to protect the church from liability
  - to establish agenda harmony
- Who does the screening?
  - the Children's Ministries Coordinator
  - the leader of the ministry
  - the church screening committee
- The roles of screeners

- the Children’s Ministries Coordinator
    - accepts applications
    - consults with ministry leader
  - the ministry leader
    - casts a vision
    - shares a mission
    - applies the 7 C’s
  - the screening committee
    - does background checks and interviews
- The Seven C’s
    - calling to ministry
    - character—God’s screening
    - chemistry—attitude, willingness
    - competency—training, experience
    - consistency/congruence
    - commitment
    - condition—mental, physical, spiritual
  - Committed volunteers say with David: “I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” II Samuel 24:24.
  - “The best predictor of future performance is past performance.”
  - “When volunteers fail, the fault lies with the recruiter/screener not with the volunteer.”

## **C. ADVENTIST RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SCREENING VOLUNTEERS.**

Sample guidelines provided by Adventist Risk Management for Children’s Ministries coordinators and other children’s leaders. You can use them when screening volunteers, and in some places you may want to adapt them to suit your needs. A sample Volunteer Application Form and Reference Check Form are also included.



## **ADVENTIST RISK MANAGEMENT, INC.**

*The risk management service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide*

- Children will be supervised by adult(s) at all times. Children's programming will be conducted on an abuse free no-harassment tolerated basis at all times

### *Safeguarding Children's Ministries Volunteer Management - Best Practices*

#### **FOCUS ON MISSION**

- Always keep your MISSION the primary focus
- Volunteer orientation is Mission driven
- Volunteer practices and policies are Mission focused
- Volunteer dismissal is in support of your Mission

#### **OPPORTUNITY FOR BEST PRACTICES IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES**

"The local church should take reasonable steps to safeguard children engaged in church-sponsored activities by choosing individuals with high spiritual and moral backgrounds as leaders and participants in programs for children." *Church Manual Revision - 2000 Page 120*

#### **CHURCHES ARE VULNERABLE**

- Community of Trust
- Ignorance of Facts concerning Child Abuse
- Lack of Safeguards to protect children
- Numerous Opportunities to work with children
- Easy Access to children without screening requirements
- Constant Need for Volunteers to work in Children and Youth ministries

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Duty to Protect all Children from Harm
- Safe Participation in Church or School Activities
- That all Activities are properly supervised by trained employees or volunteers
- Proper Maintenance of Facilities to limit opportunities for Harm
- Duty to Exercise Reasonable Care in Staffing that will include:



- Careful Selection of Employees and Volunteers
- Appropriate Training of staff members and volunteers
- Proper Supervision of staff members and volunteers
- Appropriate Action when it is necessary to remove staff members
- Duty to Report all incidents of suspected child abuse in accordance with the law

## **RESPONSIBILITY TO CHILDREN & ADULTS**

- Adults with known prior acts of child abuse or other inappropriate conduct will not be allowed to participate in church-sponsored children's ministry programs
- Appropriate steps will be taken to avoid the suspicion of adults involved in supervision through the use of the following protective measures:
  - The Six month rule will be used to get acquainted with new volunteers
  - Two Adult rule will be practiced at all church sponsored activities
  - Require all adult volunteers to participate in an annual child abuse awareness program
  - All allegations of inappropriate conduct will be promptly investigated by the church and appropriate corrective measures taken
- If allegations are made against an adult for inappropriate conduct with a child we will respect the individual's rights and treat all matters involving the situation on a confidential basis
- We have a duty to conduct all activities in harmony with the counsel of Matthew 7:12

## **SIX MONTH RULE & VOLUNTEER SELECTION**

- Adopt the practice that no adult will be considered for a volunteer leadership role in a church sponsored children's ministry program until they have been a member of the congregation for a minimum of six (6) months
- Require all adult volunteers to complete a Volunteer Service Information Form in order to be considered as a candidate for volunteer service at your church
- Appoint a small committee (3-5 members) Volunteer Service Review Committee to conduct the evaluation of all volunteer applicants for children's ministry programs.
- Determine the appropriate level of volunteer screening required for all volunteer positions involving children's ministry programs



- Conduct a basic level of screening for all adult volunteers that would include the following elements:
  - Personal interview of the volunteer applicant by the leader of the children's ministry department i.e. Sabbath School department leader, Pathfinder Director, Adventurer's Director etc...
  - Completion of the required Volunteer Service Information Form in full and signed by the adult volunteer
  - Personal reference checks by the Volunteer Service Review Committee
- If additional level of screening is warranted for the volunteer position it should be completed before the adult is allowed to work in the program
- The Volunteer Service Review Committee will notify the appropriate leader and the adult volunteer when their application for volunteer service has been approved
- All information received and the Volunteer Service Information Form will be maintained by the local church on a confidential basis and kept in a locked file

## **LEVELS OF SCREENING FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE**

### **BASIC - All Volunteers**

- Personal interview of volunteer applicant
- Completion of Volunteer Service Information Form w/signature
- Personal reference checks by screening committee

### **INTERMEDIATE - Volunteers with high level of interaction with children including the involvement of off-site activities**

- All of the element of Basic screening plus
- Home visit and Observation
- State Criminal History check and State Sex Offender Registry check - this may require finger printing and the written permission of the applicant to obtain access to this information from law enforcement agencies

### **COMPREHENSIVE - Volunteers with direct one-on-one personal interaction with children i.e. Big brothers, In-home or over night care etc...**

- All of the elements of Basic & Intermediate screening plus
- FBI Criminal History check



- National Child Abuse Registry check
- Psychological Evaluation

*Effective screening of volunteers requires considering the mission of the organization and the activities of volunteers necessary to accomplish that mission. Designers of effective screening must also consider the willingness of volunteers to give up some of their privacy for a greater good. Screening must be thorough enough to impact child abuse, but should not intrude on the privacy of volunteers more than required for the safety of the children with whom they work. Every youth-serving organization should understand that even well screened volunteers may still pose a threat to the children with whom they work.*

**Source:** The National Assembly of National Volunteer Health & Social Welfare Organizations - National Collaboration for Youth - Screening Guide for Volunteers

## **RESOURCE TOOLS FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE**

- Volunteer Service Information for Children's Ministry (Church Model)
- Child Protection Policy & Procedures Guidelines (Church Model)
- Children's Ministries Staff Volunteer Service Information Form - North American Division - Children's Ministries Department

## **A CARING MINISTRY ~ MINIMIZING RESISTANCE TO ACHIEVE COOPERATION**

- Always keep your FOCUS on your Mission
- Invite adults to apply for the privilege of volunteering in your children's ministry program and conduct an orientation program to acquaint interested individuals in your ministry
- Jesus placed a very high value on the protection of children (Matthew 18:1-6), therefore child protection is an essential element in all children's ministries and adults will be expected to conduct themselves at all time in accordance with Biblical principles in their dealings with children at your church
- Set the example by having all children's ministries leaders participating in the screening program even if they have been a volunteer for many years at your church
- Resist becoming involved in a prolonged discussion of why screening of volunteers is a mandatory requirement at your church. Handle these types of questions in a private meeting with the individual who is raising the objection to the screening process



- Carefully review all Volunteer Service Information Forms to be sure that they are completely filled out including a the signature of the applicant
- Personally invite a volunteer applicant to complete any missing information and resubmit their form for consideration. Any objections to specific questions on the form should be addressed and the applicant encouraged to participate in the screening process in order to maintain the integrity of your program. Keep the FOCUS on your mission.
- Don't short cut the screening process. All volunteers need to complete a minimum basic level of screening
- If the applicant continues to refuse to cooperate with your established screening process they should not be allowed to serve in a volunteer position involving children.

### **KEY ELEMENTS FOR VOLUNTEER TRAINING**

- Education on the Mission of your Children's Ministry program
- Understanding of the expectations, code of conduct and rules that will be followed in your program in relating to and interacting with children
- Awareness education on child abuse (physical and sexual) and what steps your church has taken to prevent the occurrence of child abuse incidents in your program
- Good Touch – Bad Touch education and training on how to affirm children in an appropriate manner
- Education on how to determine the appropriate level of supervision to conduct your program in a safe manner at all times
- Make it clear that failure to comply with the established code of conduct and rules may result in the volunteer being asked to no longer participate in your program
- Use professional members (teachers, physicians, attorneys, social workers etc...) of your church family and invite them to help you conduct the training of volunteers in order to bring creditability and support for your child protection efforts

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# CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES VOLUNTEER PURPOSE AND POLICY STATEMENT

## (PURPOSE STATEMENT)

The congregation and staff of the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church are committed to providing a safe environment to help children learn to love and follow Jesus Christ. At this time, the disturbing and traumatic rise and recognition of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation, our society and this church. Churches with programs for children are not insulated from those who abuse kids.

Therefore, the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that it is vital to take decisive steps to ensure that the church and its programs, to the best of its ability, are safe and provide a joyful experience for children and youth.

The following policies have been established and reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children when they are attending any church sponsored programs or activities at the \_\_\_\_\_ Church.

## (POLICY STATEMENT)

- I. Volunteer who work with children and youth are required to:
  - a) Be an active member of this congregation for a minimum of six (6) months, unless an exception is granted by the Volunteer Services Review Committee and approved by the Church Board.
  - b) Must complete and sign a Volunteer Service Information Form and submit it to Volunteer Services Review Committee for screening and approval.
  - c) All applicants for volunteer service will provide personal references that will be reviewed by the Volunteer Services Review Committee.
  - d) All volunteers are expected to support and comply with the rules of conduct established for volunteer service at the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- II. All workers interacting with children must observe the "two person" rule which means that workers must avoid one-on-one situations with children at all times.



- III. All children and youth programs must provide no less than two adults to supervise the activities of children and youth.
- IV. Adult survivors of childhood physical or sexual abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. Individuals with such a history must discuss their desire to work with children and youth with one of the pastoral staff, in a confidential interview, prior to receiving approval to work in these areas.
- V. Individuals who have committed physical or sexual abuse and those under investigation, whether or not convicted, may not work in any church sponsored activity or program involving preschoolers, children or youth.
- VI. Opportunities for training in the prevention and recognition of abuse of children will be provided by various ministry areas of our church. Workers in these areas will be expected to participate in such training.
- VII. Workers must immediately report to the pastor or church administration any behaviors or other incidents, which seem abusive or inappropriate. Upon notification, appropriate actions will be taken. These actions may include following the guidelines and policies of the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference office, the operating protocols established by this Church and the applicable compliance with state and federal laws.
- VIII. Guidelines for volunteers who work with children and youth will be provided to each volunteer.

Voted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Board

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Southeastern California Conference

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# SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## (A BEST PRACTICES MODEL)

**MISSION:** Our mission is to provide a safe, spiritual and abuse-free environment for every child who attends programs and activities of the \_\_\_\_\_ Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**OBJECTIVES:** It is our objective to prevent any form of child abuse, physical, emotional or sexual and to protect employees and volunteers from false allegations of such acts.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Child** – Nursery through Primary

**Older Child** – Junior through Earliteen

**Child Abuse** – is any treatment of a child that threatens the child's safety or leaves the child's life with physical or emotional scars. It constitutes any inappropriate physical contact, sexual contact or communication by any adult through the use of their authority over a child. Abuse can also occur between two children. Even if a child out of ignorance, innocence or fear may cooperate, it is still abuse.

**Physical Abuse** – is any injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury that appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.

**Emotional Abuse** – is any verbal communication that harms a child, such as degrading, belittling, disparaging name-calling, demeaning terminology, violent or obscene language, etc.

**Sexual Abuse** – violates a child's sexual privacy whether by fondling, visual stimulation or by verbal remarks. It includes fondling of any intimate parts of a child's body, oral, genital and/or anal penetration by any foreign object, and oral, genital or anal intercourse, telling or asking a child to masturbate, exhibiting



or showing any genital parts to a child, allowing a child to witness or watch any forms of sexual activity, showing any pornographic materials, etc...

## **PROCEDURES:**

- All employees and volunteers, who work with children, must complete a Children's Ministries Staff Information Form. No changes are allowed on this form without the consent of the Church Board and legal counsel.
- All employees and volunteers agree to comply with the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- New members who desire to work with children and youth must have been an active member of the local church for a minimum of six (6) months before they are allowed to work with children.
- Adults shall supervise children's programming and activities at all times.
- All workers shall observe the two person rule in children's programming. This means there will always be a minimum of two (2) adults supervising any function in order to avoid the following situations:
  - Workers will avoid being alone with a child at all times. This protects both the child and the adult from possible harm and allegations.
  - A child shall not be assisted in using the restroom unless there is a second adult near the area who understands the reason for the assistance.
  - No child shall be disciplined unless in visual contact with another adult who is aware of the situation that requires discipline. Any form of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden.
- No "child" (see definitions) shall be released to go to the restroom unless a parent, guardian or two adults accompany them.
- It is recommended that all children's activities be conducted in classrooms or offices that have windows for easy supervision. All other rooms should be kept locked at all times.
- Any church sponsored activity or program involving minor age children conducted off-premises must have the approval of church leadership.
- The church board must approve all overnight activities or trips in advance. All minor age children participating in these activities must have a signed parental permission slip for each trip as well as an emergency medical treatment release. Parents and/or guardians will



be informed of the adults who will be responsible for the supervision of the activity or trip.

- Any behavior which seems to be abusive or inappropriate shall be reported to the church administrator or pastor for investigation.
- ☒ Members who know of any individual who has been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest, or admitted to committing physical or sexual abuse and regularly attends services should advise the pastoral staff of this information. Church leadership will be responsible to carefully monitor said individual's involvement at church functions.
- ☒ Individuals who have been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest, or admitted to committing physical or sexual abuse may not work or volunteer in any church sponsored children's ministry, earliteen, youth or senior citizen program or activity.

Voted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Board \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**SOURCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**  
Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Potomac Conference

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**ADVENTIST RISK MANAGEMENT, INC.**

Providing Solutions ... To Minimize Risks

# **SAMPLE VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's license number: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of children and ages, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Desired position: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's program: \_\_\_\_\_

Age level: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous ministry experience (program, age level, position)

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Church membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of your church: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been attending this church? \_\_\_\_\_

Membership date: \_\_\_\_\_

Write a brief statement of your Christian beliefs: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please provide two non-family personal character references (these people must be from outside our church):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been arrested, convicted, or pleaded guilty to a criminal act?

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If so, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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*I affirm to the best of my knowledge that the information provided on this application is correct. I authorize any reference or church listed on this application to supply any information that may pertain to my character and fitness to work with children. I hereby release any organization or individual from any liability from any damages that I may incur.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# SAMPLE REFERENCE CHECK FORM

Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How well do you know the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comment on the applicant's family background. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comment on the applicant's personality and character. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Comment on the applicant's spiritual journey. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

From your assessment, how well is the applicant suitable for working with children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend this applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

with no reservation     with some reservation     not at all

Name of reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Position or Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Referee's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **D. HOW PASTORS AND ELDERS CAN HELP WITH SCREENING VOLUNTEERS**

- Appoint a screening committee
- Assist with screening volunteers
- Do the reference check of volunteers
- Support the ruling of the screening committee

### 3. PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY

The ultimate goal of all children's programs is to nurture children in their spiritual growth as they develop a loving, serving relationship with Jesus. Developing spirituality is the work of both the church and the family. In the church, children's Sabbath Schools are organized to provide religious education for children to study the Bible and be involved in activities that will lead them to decide to accept Jesus as their friend and Savior. It is vital that pastors and elders encourage families to invest in Bible lessons for their children.

#### A. THE GRACELINK CURRICULUM

In the year 2000, a new Sabbath School curriculum called GraceLink was developed for children of the world church. These Bible lessons teach the concept of grace, using the active learning approach to involve children in experiencing the Bible lesson, and applying them to their lives. The greatest challenge local churches face is to train all children's Sabbath School teachers on how to teach with these new lessons. It is beneficial for pastors and elders to acquaint themselves with this new curriculum even though they may not be directly involved with the teaching of it. Examine the following pages that will give you a glimpse of GraceLink.

#### HISTORY OF GRACELINK

The new Sabbath School curriculum for children is a result of careful market research conducted among children's leaders across the United States and Canada (1995), which was later confirmed by research in other parts of the world. These leaders told us they wanted an "Adventist" curriculum, Bible-based and doctrinally specific. They specifically wanted lessons that actively engaged children in the learning process, that taught the concept of grace, and that led to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

When Church administrators learned that the religious education of a growing number of Adventist children was being entrusted to non-



Adventist publishers' materials, they voted to find the necessary resources to develop something new. In 1996, the GC World Curriculum Committee accepted a proposal for a new curriculum.

The twelve years curriculum for children from birth through 14 includes 624 lessons. The development of the core curriculum and dynamics was contracted to the John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry at La Sierra University, headed by Dr. Bailey Gillespie and Stuart Tyner. The General Conference Sabbath School department, under the direction of Dr. Patricia Habada, identified and supervised specialists representing every world division to write the new lessons and program activities. Both the Review and Herald and Pacific Press Publishing Associations fully committed their resources to produce brand new, four-color artwork for each age level, which they made available to all world divisions without charge.

A new generation of Adventists now has the opportunity to focus on the four aspects of a growing Christian experience--Grace, Worship, Community and Service. Children will be constantly challenged to apply Bible teachings to everyday life. Teachers and parents can feel confident that children will celebrate the distinctive Adventist teachings in a positive, inclusive learning environment that encourages their active role as members of their Church and responsible citizens of their world.

### **The mission of the GraceLink curriculum is to:**

Help children joyfully experience God's grace and respond by

- Showing love to God (worship)
- Showing love to family and friends (community)
- Serving others in their world (service) as productive members of God's family now and always.

### **The goals of GraceLink are to:**

- Foster a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- Instill a grace orientation
- Ground children in the Word of God
- Instill moral responsibility
- Welcome diversity
- Involve children in unselfish service
- Stimulate a natural and winsome witness
- Encourage high self regard as sons and daughters of God

## PHILOSOPHY

Four dynamics of a growing Christian experience provide the framework for GraceLink. These dynamics are:

**Grace: *Jesus Loves Me.*** He has taken the initiative to pay the price for my sins and offer me eternal life as His child, fully empowered to grow into His likeness.

**Worship: *I Love Jesus.*** I turn my entire life over to Him in gratitude for what He has done for me. Not only do I pray and worship Him, I also obey His commands because I know He wants what is best for me.

**Community: *We Love One Another.*** God calls us to love and honor our biological and our church families. We accept our place among them, and we respect everyone else's role and inclusion.

**Service: *Jesus Loves You, Too.*** True joy comes from serving others, and from taking the good news of Jesus' love to the whole world.

## DIVISION CYCLES

**BEGINNER:** The Beginner curriculum consists of a two-year cycle recommended for use from birth to age two. This creates the possibility of some repetition. However, due to developmental and cognitive changes, the lesson will mean something entirely different at age 22 months than at 2 months. Instead of studying a new story each week, the Beginners study one story per month.

**KINDERGARTEN:** Kindergarten children also have a two-year cycle of lessons recommended for use from ages 3 to 5. Once again, 5-year-olds will not mind hearing again a story they studied at age 3.

**PRIMARY:** The Primary division has a four-year cycle, recommended for children ages 6 to 10. Parents are expected to study with younger children. Some of the daily study questions will be too difficult for younger children and may be omitted by the parents. Because the Sabbath School time is activity-based, everyone in class can be involved.

**JUNIOR:** The Junior division also has a four-year cycle. It is recommended that churches cycle through the complete four-year sequence—whether the Junior division is split into two groups—Juniors and Earliteens\*—whether Juniors and Earliteens meet together.

\* *Real-Time Faith* is a new set of materials specifically for Earliteens (ages 12 to 14) when they meet separately from Juniors.

## **SABBATH SCHOOL FORMAT**

- A. Introduce the lesson on Sabbath.** The children review and apply the principles studied, with the help of their parents and Bible study guides, during the week. In this way, the lessons learned in Sabbath School become a vital part of the child's growing faith experience. Memory verses, which are also learned in Sabbath School, are reviewed and reinforced during the following week, connected in the child's mind with the interesting learning activities they have already experienced.
- B. Focus the entire Sabbath School time on one message.** Each Message relates to one of the four dynamics of a growing faith experience: grace (God loves me), worship (I love God), community (we love each other), and service (God loves you, too).
- C. Reach each child in the way he/she learns best.** Each teaching plan is based on the natural learning sequence. By following this sequence, students will be connected with the message for the week in a way that will capture each one's attention and imagination.
- D. Give students active learning experiences so they can more readily internalize the truth presented.** These experiences are to be followed by debriefing sessions in which questions are asked which lead the children to reflect on what they experienced, interpret the experience, and apply that information to their lives.
- E. Involve the adult Sabbath School staff in new and flexible ways:**
- One adult can manage a small Sabbath School.

- A larger Sabbath School can be managed by one leader/teacher, with other adult volunteers to facilitate the small group interaction.

## TOTAL HOUR LEARNING AND THE NATURAL LEARNING SEQUENCE

With GraceLink, the entire Sabbath School hour is devoted to the lesson. The four segments include: 1. readiness activities; 2. the Bible lesson; 3. applying the lesson; and 4. sharing the lesson.

**Readiness Activities.** These activities are designed to give children hands-on experience.

They introduce the point of the lesson in a creative and fun way, helping to connect the child's thoughts and emotions with the point of the lesson. At least 2-3 activities are suggested for each lesson.

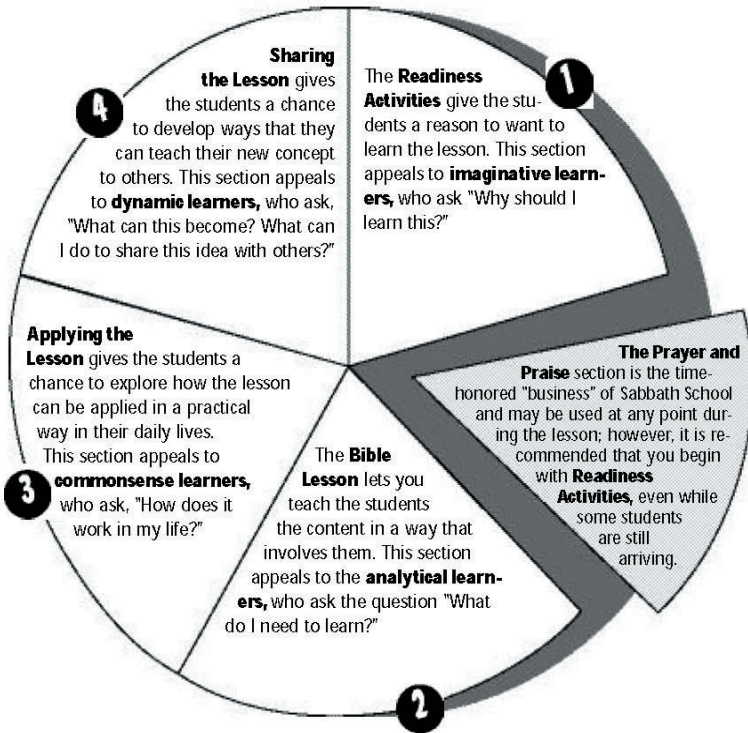
- **Debriefing.** After each activity the children are given an opportunity to say how the activity made them feel and allow them to draw the spiritual meaning out of both the activity and the Bible story to which it is tied.
- Leaders and teachers should ask three important types of debriefing questions:
  - Reflective—how do you feel about what we just did?
  - Interpretative—what does it mean to you?
  - Applicable—what are you going to do about it?

**The Bible Lesson.** This is the time for children to be involved in experiencing the Bible story. The Bible is used to help children learn the main lesson, learn the memory verse, and listen to God's word.

**Applying The Lesson.** This is the opportunity for children to look at the lesson and examining it to see what God is trying to tell them. They then learn to apply the lesson to their daily lives.

**Sharing The Lesson.** This is the time for children to respond to the lesson. They can plan a group response project, teach someone else what they have learned, or make something to share the memory verse.

## DIAGRAM OF THE LEARNING CYCLE



## B. SPIRITUAL MENTORING OF CHILDREN'S LEADERS

Apart from helping children develop their spirituality, pastors and elders play an important role in mentoring children's leaders in their spiritual growth. Being a spiritual mentor to young and less experienced leaders yields great dividends in the long run. The church will have strong, spiritual leaders in the years to come. A healthy church is in the making.

### Why be a Mentor?

- Young and inexperienced leaders need mentors



## **Reasons to Mentor**

- Instills values in mentees
- Develops their leadership skills
- Creates opportunities to share faith
- Improves mentee's self confidence
- Allows counseling on life issues
- Provides a model for service and stewardship
- Decreases self-centeredness for mentor
- Opens minds to wider possibilities
- Inspires mentee to develop a personal devotional life

## **Mentoring Develops Spiritual gifts**

- Observe the mentee to identify specific spiritual gifts
- Provide opportunities for mentee to use those gifts
- Encourage mentee to use spiritual gifts for service

## **Who Can Be a Mentor?**

- Anybody can who is willing to ...
  - Be vulnerable
  - Share of themselves and their time
  - Be loving
  - Be non-judgmental and supportive
  - Be a coach
- Pastors and elders can

## **Ideas for Getting Started**

- Pray about it—this is ministry
- Be a friend to teens and children
- Affirm them—by name
- Ask God to send you a teen to mentor

## **Equip and Train**

- Provide resources they can read to grow spiritually
- Demonstrate the task
- Have them try it, teaming up with you
- Have them try it alone
- Affirm and offer a suggestion or two
- Take them to training events

## **C. HOW PASTORS AND ELDERS NURTURE PASSIONATE SPIRITUALITY**

- Encourage families to conduct regular family worships and study the Sabbath School lessons with their children.
- Promote the importance of investing money in purchasing Bible lessons for children
- Encourage parents to buy good Adventist books for their children
- Help to teach a lesson or two in the children's division occasionally.

## **4. FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURES**

A healthy church works within the structures of the world church. According to our organizational structure, the local church is responsible and accountable to the conference, and the conference to the union, the union to the division, and the division to the General Conference. The relationship works both ways. The higher organization supports the conference with training and resources.

### **A. WORKING WITH CONFERENCES**

Children's Ministries works within this framework of the church structure. Hence, the Children's Ministries coordinator works with the conference Children's Ministries director, performing the following tasks:

- Invites conference Children's Ministries director to conduct training for teachers.
- Consults conference director for ideas and suggestions in programming.
- Sends regular quarterly reports of activities to conference Children's Ministries director
- Attends in-service training programs organized by the conference Children's Ministries director
- Invites conference Children's Ministries director to make presentations at major children's programs.

## **B. WHAT PASTORS AND ELDERS CAN DO TO SUPPORT CHURCH STRUCTURES**

- Appoint Children's Ministries coordinators to organize nurturing programs for children in your church
- Notify the conference of the name, address, and contact number of the Children's Ministries coordinator
- Support conference-wide Children's Ministries programs by sending the coordinator and the children as delegates to these training events

## **5. INSPIRING WORSHIP SERVICES**

A fifth characteristic of a healthy church is the organization of inspiring worship services for all ages. The entire church will be vibrant with life, excitement, and joy when worshippers feel valued and are involved. The Children's Ministries coordinator works with the pastor to plan worships that meet the needs of the children in the church.

### **A. SPECIAL CHILDREN'S WORSHIP PROGRAMS**

- Child-Friendly Church—the sermon, the songs, the furniture and other equipment are suitable for children
- Children's Sabbath—third Sabbath in October celebrated by the world church, whereby children participate in the worship service or they take charge of the entire worship service
- Children's Church—a separate church service for children in a different venue, which takes place once or twice a month.
- Children's Story in church service

### **B. WHAT PASTORS AND ELDERS CAN DO TO INSPIRE WORSHIP**

- See the church through a child's eye

- Learn to know children by their names
- Prepare sermons that involve children in response and participation
- Make efforts to introduce new ministries for children
- Incorporate 1-2 children's songs in the worship service
- Involve children in worship, such as prayer, scripture reading, or collecting of offering.

## 6. HOLISTIC SMALL GROUPS

Children's small group is another way of nurturing the spiritual development of children. Like the adult small group, the children's small group also meets once a week in designated places in the vicinity of the children's homes.

Children come together for prayer, Bible studies, and fellowship. These small groups form a base for outreach to non-church children when they are invited to join in the activity. The Children's Ministries coordinator must not overlook the value of these small groups, and should encourage the organization of them.

Today, children's small groups have added on functions other than that of nurturing spiritual growth. Small groups may serve as support groups for children who are hurting and in pain. It is a meeting of hearts where children are given emotional nurture as they are directed to Jesus.

### A. TYPES OF SMALL GROUPS FOR CHILDREN

#### Children's Discipleship

- Launch the KID (Kids in Discipleship) program
- A school or a church can be the KID site where parents come together with their children to be trained for discipleship. Parents receive separate training on how to disciple their children while the children learn how to work together with their parents as a team
- Parents and children interact, ask questions, and have Bible studies

## **Children's Prayer Group**

- Children meet in the middle of the week for prayers
- They pray for the sick, their friends, and their personal needs
- They learn to praise God for answered prayers
- Usually the session starts with a short Bible verse

## **Rainbows**

- This is a support group for children who are hurting and grieving, due to death of a loved one, parental divorce, a parent or sibling with a terminal illness, or other pain.
- Children meet once a week with a Rainbow facilitator when they share their feelings, fears, and hurts
- They get involved in an activity that is therapeutic, such as drawing out their feelings, writing it down, or coloring
- Children learn that these events happen not because they are at fault, but rather they are things beyond their control
- Children learn that sad things will pass away and at the end there is still a rainbow. Life is still worthwhile, especially when they have Jesus as their guide and friend.

## **C. WHAT PASTORS AND ELDERS CAN DO FOR SMALL GROUPS**

- Provide a budget for running the Rainbow program or other support group programs.
- Send individuals for Rainbow training.
- Support the children's leaders who are running these small groups.
- Participate occasionally in children's small groups

## 7. NEED-ORIENTED EVANGELISM

Jesus' commission for the disciples to bring the gospel to "every kindred, tongue, and people" undoubtedly includes bringing the gospel to children as well. Ellen White reminds us that:

*"When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages,--to officers of the church, ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, "Suffer them to come"; as if He would say, They will come, if you do not hinder them." -Evangelism, p. 580.*

Recent research has also supported this fact that children below the age of 14 are most susceptible to accepting the gospel. Hence, the church needs to seize this opportunity to reach out and actively share the Gospel with children who have never heard about Jesus. Christ saw the importance of reaching out to children:

*"In the children who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw the men and women who should be heirs of His grace and subjects of His kingdom, and some of whom would become martyrs for His sake. He knew that these children would listen to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer far more readily than would grownup people, many of whom were the worldly-wise and hardhearted. In teaching, He came down to their level. He, the majesty of heaven, answered their questions and simplified His important lessons to meet their childish understanding. He planted in their minds the seeds of truth, which in after years would spring up and bear fruit unto eternal life." Evangelism, p. 579.*

So the mandate is clear and we need to get to work in planning evangelistic outreach programs for children from all walks of life. Ideas for outreach programs are as many as your creative minds can produce. Remember, the end goal of reaching out to children is to help them know Jesus so that they will develop a loving relationship with Him.

### A. TYPES OF EVANGELISM

#### Child Preachers' Evangelism

This evangelistic series lasts for seven nights with children preaching the message each evening. These evangelistic meetings are organized

primarily for children, with the goal of having children reaching children. However, it is also possible to have a series with children preaching to reach the adults, too.

The nightly speakers are child preachers who have undergone training and are selected to participate. Other children also participate in presenting simple health talks, leading song service, and greeting the people at the door.

## Friendship Evangelism

This approach is found to be one of the most effective methods in evangelizing children. All children have friends and when a friend invites them to church, they are more likely to go than when they are being invited by a stranger. Relationship is paramount in the lives of children!

Children are taught skills on how to make friends and how to invite friends.

**Friendship Skills.** Teaching children skills in making friends and keeping them is valuable in friendship evangelism.

- How to Greet Someone – Shake hands with a newcomer or a friend and say: “Good morning. Welcome to our Sabbath School (or Bible Club, camp). So glad you came.”
- How to Keep Someone Company – Show your friend to a seat and sit down with him. If there are two or more friends visiting, show them to the seats. Then let them know that you will come by to sit with them later after greeting other friends who might be coming.
- How to Introduce a Friend – Have the child who brought a friend stand up and introduce him/her. The child could say, “I’m really happy to introduce my good friend (or classmate, neighbor.), Tony Bacchus. Then turning to Tony, the child can say, “Thanks for coming, Tony. Do come again.”
- How to Make Friends – Children can learn to take the initiative to befriend others in the neighborhood, at school, or at an adult gathering. The Bible encourages us to do so in Proverbs 18:24: “A man that has friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.”

- Greet the other child and introduce yourself saying, “Hi! I am Jeff. I am in the fifth grade.”
- Ask for the name of the other child saying, “What’s your name? Where do you live? Which school do you attend?”
- Get contact information like, “So do you come to this community center often? How do I see you again? Any phone number? Address?”

**Invitation Cards/Postcards.** Have postcards ready for children to send out to keep in contact with these new friends. Encourage them to write and draw on it too. Give them cards to invite friends to special programs like a day camp, Vacation Bible School or music festival.

**Keep a Directory.** Make sure the names of your children’s friends and acquaintances are recorded in a directory. This directory is vital for future programs and activities as well as for visitations.

**Follow-up.** There should be a strong follow-up on the children who have attended one or more of the children’s programs of the church. Organize the children who have brought their friends into groups and have them visit these new friends. Have other social activities to draw them in.

## **GraceLink Daily Study Sharing Time**

Encourage children to practice their GraceLink study section, “sharing the message” with their friends. Each week they are to share the message with someone through a specific project or service.

## **B. HOW PASTORS AND ELDERS CAN HELP WITH CHILD EVANGELISM**

- Feature reports of evangelistic outreach activities.
- Schedule the week of evangelism on the church calendar.
- Allow children who got involved in evangelism give testimonies upfront.
- Support the children and their leaders by attending some of the meetings.
- Provide a budget for child evangelism.



## 8. LOVING RELATIONSHIPS

Children sing one of their favorite songs, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so... Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me...” The love of Jesus is the foundation of the gospel and children respond positively to such love when shown genuinely. Thus, love must pervade all our ministries to children. We must love children! We must be passionate for children!

### A. DEMONSTRATING LOVING RELATIONSHIPS

- Affirm children and their parents publicly.
- Children’s leaders and teachers are loving and kind to one another.
- Correct children patiently and be willing to give them a second chance.
- Remember their birthdays.
- Give special time to children for sharing their gifts and talents.

### B. WHAT PASTORS AND ELDERS CAN DO TO DEMONSTRATE LOVE FOR CHILDREN

- Schedule children’s story during worship service.
- Collect special “lambs’ offering” for children’s projects.
- Have special children’s features in church programs and sermons.
- Allow children to participate in church, such as serving as junior deacons, greeters, and ushers; collecting offering, or giving special music.