



The General Conference
Sabbath School &
Personal Ministries



FOR
THE

PERSONAL MINISTRIES LEADER

SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH 

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THE WORK OF THE PERSONAL MINISTRIES LEADER

Exciting Work

The work of the Personal Ministries leader is exciting! There is no greater work. Why? Jesus will come when the work is finished. That will happen when the membership is mobilized in outreach, but not until then. “The work . . . can never be finished until the . . . membership rally to the work.”¹ “The aim of the department [of Personal Ministries] is to enlist every member in active soul-winning service for God.”² There is no greater privilege than to work with the Holy Spirit in inspiring, organizing, training and assisting God’s people in the joy of sharing Jesus.

This work is not easy. You can never do it alone. But when relying totally and continually on the God of the impossible, there is nothing too hard for Him (Jeremiah 32:17). There can be no failure. Success is assured.

Making Your Work Easier

Personal Ministries is a spiritual work. Understanding (and leading your members to understand and respond to) the following biblical concepts will make your work easier. It will both motivate and enable witnessing.

The membership personally and corporately needs to be led to realize and understand the following:

Three Biblical Concepts

1. Everyone must recognize the honor of his/her holy calling. “. . . for you have been chosen by God Himself . . . so that you may show to others how God called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9, *Living Bible*). The reason they have been called from darkness to light is that they might both reveal by their changed lives the light of God’s love and tell others about their experi-

ences. They have been called to be witnesses. “Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men.”³ Awesome responsibility? Yes, but more so, a delightful privilege and honor to be chosen by the empowering and enabling God of the universe. Instead of giving members a guilt trip for what they are not doing, successful leaders always stress and illustrate the privilege first, and then, if needed, the responsibility.

2. Every one of the members must recognize that they are important in the plan of God for someone else’s salvation, just as Philip was the vital one in God’s plan to reach the seeking eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). Today members are needed by specific people seeking for the light, peace, and joy that those members have in Christ. They may be the only bridge to eternal life for some people within the circle of their influence. They may be the only mouthpiece to whom some people will listen.

Furthermore, God could have sent an angel to the eunuch, but to thrill Philip with the joy that can only come from leading others to Him, God sent Philip. Today He longs to thrill willing members, so He sends them that they may be blessed. “And he who seeks to give light to others will himself be blessed. . . . ‘He that watereth shall be watered also himself’ Proverbs 11:25. God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy, —the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice, —we must participate in His labors for their redemption.”⁴ “The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christ-like loveliness to the character, and brings peace and happiness”⁵ Conversely, “. . . the Christian who will not exercise his God-given powers not only fails to grow up into Christ, but loses the strength that he already had.”⁶ The more we share, the more we have. What we do not use in sharing we lose.

3. The members must believe in the ultimate success of their work because it is the work of God, who has unlimited

power. Jesus promised, “All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, . . .” (Matthew 28:18, 19, KJV). God has provided all the power and wisdom (James 1:5) to bring success. “Our heavenly Father requires no more nor less than He has given us ability to do. He lays upon His servants no burdens that they are not able to bear. . . . All that He claims from us we through divine grace can render. . . . when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure.”⁷

At times, both you and your members may feel inadequate and unable to do God’s work. It is important to feel that way. That feeling drives one to a more complete dependence on the power and wisdom of God, which is the ultimate secret of success.

Not Limited to a Few—Aim for Total Involvement

As stated above, every member is called to be a witness. “Everyone is a minister performing some ministry for which he or she has been specially gifted. . . . Every church member should be matched with an appropriate ministry as part of the congregation’s overall mission strategy.”⁸ This means that as the Personal Ministries leader your work is not limited to a few members. Your challenge and privilege is to involve every member in some form of witnessing—to aim at total involvement. “Wherever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in missionary work.”⁹

In Jesus’ illustration in John 15 every branch is to bear much fruit, not just a few of the branches. All do not have the same talents and abilities. All may not be able do the same things, but their talents and abilities will grow as they utilize them and continue to abide in the Vine, relying on His strength and wisdom. “The humblest worker, [even with few talents and abilities] moved by the Holy Spirit, will touch invisible chords, whose vibrations will ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody through eternal ages.”¹⁰

When the public sees an abundance of branches laden with the beautiful fruit of the Spirit they will desire and be drawn to partake—to become another productive branch united to the living Vine. When the whole church works, God moves in a mighty way to bring an abundant harvest of souls. It may take time; but plan (trusting fully in the enabling power and wisdom of God) to aim at total membership involvement.

Barriers in Mobilizing Members—and Solutions

1. Fear of failure

This can be remedied by leading members into the vital continual Vine-branch connection with Christ, who longs to work through them. A deep love relationship with Jesus will remove the fear. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18, KJV). David said, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in thee” (Psalms 56:3, RSV).

2. Abrasiveness:

The blunt, bold, abrasive, insensitive must be led to connect with the gentle Shepherd. “The religion of Jesus softens whatever is hard and rough in the temper, and smoothes whatever is rugged and sharp in the manners. It makes the words gentle and the demeanor winning. . . . A kind, courteous Christian is the most powerful argument that can be produced in favor of Christianity.”¹¹ This method will produce “one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.”¹²

3. “My life is a witness:”

Some say, “I don’t have to say anything; my life is a witness.” Could someone who saw an accident and was called into court as a witness declare, “I don’t have to say anything; my life is a witness?” Again, connection with the Vine is the solution. “All who receive the gospel message into the heart will long to proclaim it. . . . It is unnatural for any to keep these things secret, and those who are filled with the love of Christ will not do so. In proportion as the Lord has made them the depositaries of sacred truth will be their desire that others shall receive the same blessing.”¹³

Definition of a witness:

The Bible definition of a witness is very specific. Matthew 24:14 says that the gospel will be preached as a witness. The meaning of the word “preach” is “verbal communication.” A Christian witness is one who tells what he/she knows from his/her own experience. John said, “That which we have seen and heard [and handled] declare we unto you” (1 John 1:3, KJV). “As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we have tested His promise, and found the promise true. We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing.”¹⁴ “Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. . . . These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.”¹⁵ Notice that there must be a balance. The life of the “telling” witness must support or be in harmony with the words spoken.

4. “My members are not ready to witness:”

The above emphasis on spiritual preparation needed by members to be motivated to witness definitely makes your work easier. If, through an intimate relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit impels them to share Jesus, you do not have to twist arms and use all types of manipulation techniques to force them to do outreach. However, you may say, “My members do not have the relationship with Christ that is needed. Am I to take years nurturing them before they begin witnessing?”

The answer is a resounding No! Help them begin where they are in their spiritual journeys and reach out. The best nurture is witnessing. Often when members lacking in spirituality are just led to surrender to Jesus and begin sharing what little they have to share, God richly blesses their efforts. When they see that God uses them, they are thrilled. They sense their need and immedi-

ately begin seeking that deeper relationship that they may improve their witness. Here is a wonderful promise:

“He who begins with a little knowledge, [no doubt this includes knowing Jesus] in a humble way, and tells what he knows, while seeking diligently for further knowledge, will find the whole heavenly treasure awaiting his demand. The more he seeks to impart light, the more light he will receive. The more one tries to explain the word of God to others, with a love for souls, the plainer it becomes to himself. The more we use our knowledge and exercise our powers, the more knowledge and power we shall have.”¹⁶

5. “I don’t have the gift:”

The doctrine of spiritual gifts should enhance witnessing, but sometimes it limits outreach as members use it as an excuse to not witness. They shrug and say, “I don’t have the gift.” You must not let that teaching limit anyone in what you expect of them. Encourage each member to witness within his/her personality and spiritual gifts.

Illiterates plant churches. A pastor was asked by an illiterate layman to dedicate two churches in one day that he, in partnership with God, had planted successfully. He had been the only one who had not started a Bible study at a training session, but he persisted.

Gifts may be dormant and unrecognized at first. Many do not know what their gifts are until they begin and continue using what seems to be very limited ability.

Some great evangelists and successful pastors were painfully shy at first. Some found it impossible to speak in front of even a small group. Yet as they prayed and practiced, God enabled them to overcome their impediments, improve their talents, and become, through the power of the Holy Spirit, exceedingly successful.

A great evangelist, who has spoken to larger groups than almost anyone and won many thousands for Christ, was a straight A student. But he got a C in speech. He was so nervous in the class his teacher feared he would never succeed. When he stood to speak, his legs, arms, and notes shook. He prayed and prayed

and practiced and practiced, and he succeeded far beyond anyone's expectations. It is often said, "Practice makes perfect."

"There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God."¹⁷ "If set to work, the despondent will soon forget their despondency; the weak will become strong, the ignorant intelligent, and all will be prepared to present the truth as it is in Jesus."¹⁸ "The Lord imparts a fitness for the work to every man and woman who will co-operate with divine power. All the requisite talent, courage, perseverance, faith, and tact will come as they put the armor on."¹⁹ They become prepared as they move into action.

As the chosen Personal Ministries leader of your church, God will grant you great success as you work in accordance with the above principles and depend on Him fully day by day for wisdom and guidance.

History Inspires

In addition to the above principles, you have encouragement from history. You have two thousand years of success on which to build! You have the model of thousands of successful men and women—beginning with the primary model, the personal ministry of Jesus Himself. Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Philip, Stephen, Timothy, and John Mark all figure prominently in church history. They worked tirelessly and effectively to win new converts to Jesus Christ, causing the first century church to grow. That pattern has continued through the centuries to our day.

Here is a brief history of the Department of Personal Ministries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

As soon as the Seventh-day Adventist Church came into existence, the Department of Personal Ministries became a natural part of this living and witnessing church. First, in 1869, it was called "The Vigilant Missionary Society" (a goal even more relevant now that we are 140 years nearer to Christ's return!). A year later, as the activities expanded and the work grew, it became "The Missionary and Tract Society." In 1874, as part of the General Conference organization, it was named "The General Conference Tract

and Missionary Society of the Seventh-day Adventists.” The work then reached across the seas and continents, and in 1882 the name “The International Tract Society” was adopted.

At the General Conference session in 1918 the department was renamed “The Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.” The duties of leadership were described as promoting and building up the tract and church missionary work by: “(a) developing such practical plans and simple instruction as will unite all our churches in a general missionary movement. (b) The publication, through the medium of church and conference papers, and personal circular letters, of such missionary reports and experiences as will lead our people everywhere to appreciate their opportunities, and stir themselves to greater activities.”²⁰ (Sharing success stories was prominent. It is still one of the best ways to inspire and instruct.)

The Home Ministries Department became the Lay Activities Department at the 1966 General Conference session. In 1985, the Lay Activities Department became part of the newly formed Church Ministries Department.²¹ The Lay Activities part of the Church Ministries Department gradually began to be called Personal Ministries. Then, in 1995 the Church Ministries Department was dissolved and Sabbath School and Personal Ministries became one department at the Conference/Mission/Union/Division/General Conference levels. However, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries function as two separate departments at the local church level.²²

So you are called to a noble heritage as you become involved in coordinating the outreach of your local church. Again, welcome to the most important task God ever assigned to church leaders!

Following is documentation on what you are privileged to do. We begin with the departmental job description.

The Personal Ministries Department and Leader

“The Personal Ministries Department provides resources and trains church members to unite their efforts with the ministry and church officers in the final proclamation of the gospel of salvation in Christ. The aim of the department is to enlist every member in active soul-winning service for God.”²³

“The Personal Ministries leader is elected by the church to lead in training and directing the church in active outreach (missionary) service and is chairperson of the Personal Ministries Council. The Personal Ministries leader may need assistants who would coordinate the Bible correspondence school, Bible evangelism, literature distribution, Ingathering, small group ministries, member training, and other means to enhance soul winning. It is the leader’s duty to present to the church, in the monthly Sabbath Personal Ministries service and in the church business meetings, a report on the total outreach (missionary) activities of the church.”²⁴

Cooperating With All Church and Conference Leaders

As outreach leader for the entire church, you should be the exemplification of cooperation in its broadest sense. You will deal with the entire church and mingle with leaders of all departments. You should not only demonstrate true cooperation in your own contacts but must be able to secure cooperation from fellow workers, thus forming a highly efficient organization.

Not only are you, as the Personal Ministries leader, placed in the church to carry out the program of the local church, but you will also be called upon to cooperate with the conference in carrying out the plans of the denomination. This will involve close cooperation with the director of the Department of Personal Ministries of the conference/mission. You will want to recognize that the conference/mission director is especially interested in your work. There should be real teamwork between the two of you. Where such unity exists, both church and conference will be strengthened.

The Personal Ministries Council—Its Areas of Activities and Its Duties

The church leaders with whom you will have the pleasure of working as the council chair person are included in this *Church Manual* (page 102) description of the Personal Ministries Council. Some of the various areas of activity with which you may be involved, along with your church members, are included.

“The Personal Ministries Council guides the outreach (missionary) efforts of the local church and works under the direction of the church board. The council should meet at least once each month. This council shall consist of the following: Personal Ministries leader (chairperson), Personal Ministries secretary, Publishing Ministries coordinator, pastor, an elder, church treasurer, Dorcas Society leader, Dorcas Society secretary, Adventist Men’s organization leader, Interest coordinator [Very vital. Note appendix.] Health Ministries leader, Communication secretary, Sabbath School superintendent, Youth leader, coordinator for Ministry to People With Disabilities, Children’s Ministries coordinator, Women’s Ministries leader, director of Community Services center or Community Services leader, Bible School coordinator, and other members as deemed necessary. The Personal Ministries Council may assign subcommittees for specialized tasks as deemed necessary. All subcommittees report to the Personal Ministries Council.”²⁵

“The duties of this council shall be the following:

- a. To arrange for the outreach (missionary) meetings of the church, to study its field of outreach (missionary) activity, and to enlist every church member in definite lines of service.
- b. To enlist the members’ involvement in outreach (missionary) activities sponsored by the Personal Ministries Department, such as:

- 1) Literature distribution and circulation of outreach (missionary) periodicals, including subscription magazines.
 - 2) Bible course enrollments.
 - 3) Community Services and/or Dorcas Society activities.
 - 4) Entry events, such as stop-smoking clinics, cooking schools, stress management seminars, etc.
 - 5) Outreach (missionary) activities, such as Bible studies and follow-up of contacts, public evangelistic meetings, seminar evangelism, and other outreach plans and projects.
- c. To be responsible for the planning and implementation of the annual Ingathering campaign where conducted.
 - d. To train and lead members in Christian witnessing, such as:
 - 1) Conducting or arranging for classes in how to give Bible studies, methods of personal witnessing, the operation of Community Services programs, and provision of disaster relief services.
 - 2) Giving practical demonstrations in how to do this work.
 - e. To encourage reporting through the Personal Ministries secretary.
 - f. To supervise the Community Services activities of the church and serve as the governing committee of the church's Community Services center.
 - g. To cooperate with the Personal Ministries Department of the local conference/mission/field in carrying out its program.
 - h. To authorize disbursement of local church Personal Ministries funds.
 - i. To plan for and conduct the weekly and monthly Personal Ministries meetings as called for in the church calendar."²⁶

Developing a Plan and Strategy With Specific Goals

As coordinator of outreach for the entire church, you will need to work closely with the pastor, Personal Ministries Council, Sabbath School Action Units, and with the church board for final approval of an overall coordinated outreach plan and strategy with specific goals. Here are three points to consider in strategizing:

1. Focus on areas with the greatest potential.

Ask yourself what activities will have the greatest results. What will be the most productive in terms of finishing God's work? As a leader you want to be balanced and strive to include and support every ministry and associate leader. But you should still have an opportunity to lead them to contribute to that which is most productive towards the finishing of the work. It is easy for the most vital areas to slip through the cracks and be lost in a multitude of activities.

2. Utilize traditional methods.

Some are tired of and opposed to traditional methods of evangelism. We realize other methods need to be used as well to reach those which traditional methods do not. But, as a focus, can anyone demonstrate by results a more productive way than that which includes: cultivation of friendships, meeting felt needs in your community, sowing through personal or small group Bible studies, and a harvesting evangelistic campaign?

There are many types of cultivation/entry events that you can employ, of course. And all members should be encouraged to choose and participate with one or many of these methods of getting close to the heart. But once the mind and heart are entered there must be seed sowing or there will be no harvest. Often it doesn't take long to find the way to the heart. A three to five minute encounter door-to-door with a religious survey very often helps the individual to sense a need for personal Bible studies. If the Bible study-sowing-the-seed-series is followed by a harvesting campaign where the truths studied in the Bible are reviewed and strong appeals are made, it often doesn't take long until a baptism occurs and this new convert will be able to

immediately join his/her teacher as a Bible worker trainee. By the end of three months, or in less time, you will have a new successful soul winner.

3. Help members set their own goals.

Although your strategy will include a broad and comprehensive plan, its foundation should be built on the aspirations and goals of the individual members. Experience has shown that if you first present ideas and plans that work, and then give the members the opportunity to make their own plans and set their own specific goals, they will own them. Plus, their goals will always be larger than if the Personal Ministries leader or pastor sets them and requires the members to reach them.

People take care of their own babies better than someone else's. Members will follow their own plans and strive to reach their own goals better than yours. And it is far more productive and exciting for you to hold seminar training or personal one-on-one training to assist them to reach their goals than for you to give the training you think they need. It is better for them to ask for help from you or the pastor than for you to ask them to attend a seminar that may not fit their needs.

Where Do You Begin? With the Whole Church or With a Few?

Where do you begin in your endeavor to reach your goal of every member actively witnessing for Jesus? We suggest two options:

1. Move the whole church at once or,
2. Begin with a few who are on fire for God.

Which do you choose? It depends on the spiritual condition, vision, willingness, and expertise of the pastor, elders, department leaders, and membership as a whole.

Number one is definitely the best if the whole church is united and ready. Jesus longs for this objective to occur: "The entire church, acting as one, blending in perfect union, is to be a living, active missionary agency, moved and controlled by the Holy

Spirit.”²⁷ And notice this exciting promise: “If Christians were to act in concert, moving forward as one, under the direction of one Power, for the accomplishment of one purpose, they would move the world.”²⁸

Only the Lord knows for sure if your members are ready to move together as an army of workers. Seek Him in earnest prayer for wisdom. Listen for attitudes and request advice from the pastor, elders, and the Personal Ministries Council. You may want to pass out a survey to the membership that will indicate their degree of interest in doing something great for God. Solicit their ideas for witnessing and ministry and ask about their willingness to devote time to cooperate with God in making their ideas happen. You could suggest in the survey large plans, such as planting a church or churches in the area or forming a number of small groups from which a new church may develop. You might also suggest two evangelistic reaping meetings per year. Ask how many would like to devote time in cultivation and sowing in preparation for these harvests (and suggest some ways of doing that).

If only a few are ready to move forward together, we will discuss later a possible long range approach. However, if immediate united action is possible here are some suggestions as to how you might proceed.

Beginning With the Whole Church

Spend time in prayer with the pastor and then with him/her and the elders. Become acquainted with the community which your church serves.²⁹ Make visionary suggestions to your pastor and elders and solicit their input as to what they would like to do. Come to a consensus. Then present this to your Personal Ministries Council. Get input from every individual. Discover what each leader would like to do. Do your best to come up with a plan and goals that all would be thrilled to support and make happen. Discuss it with the conference/mission Personal Ministries leader and get that person’s advice, support, and promise of help in giving training if needed. Inform the pastor and elders of any adjustments and get their support for the final plan.

Ask the pastor to preach a strong soul winning sermon based on the love of Jesus for the lost and how He longs for everyone to

share in the privilege of working with Him to save the lost. The pastor may interview new converts and those who worked with them to demonstrate the joy of witnessing.

Join the pastor in leading the congregation in prayer, preferably two by two, for all who want to pray, and in making a strong appeal utilizing a commitment survey that includes all activities needed. Have the deacons pass this out after the prayer. Go through it with them point by point and get them to select every activity in which they would be willing to participate. They may underline their first choice. After sufficient time is given, have the deacons collect all the surveys.

You now have a united base from which to build. The pastor and the council may assist you in choosing and assigning personnel equipped with a job description that is based on the members' wishes. Training may begin where needed. Share results every week that will inspire others to become a part of the total church plan that will soon be a reality.

You will be excited! You will praise God for progress. Just remember, God brought you to this starting point. Don't forget the need for all involved to be engaged in continual prayer. "Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good."³⁰

The Sabbath School Action Unit Alternative

Here is an alternative and very effective way to start. It may not involve the total congregation at first but it has a stabilizing continuity the above approach does not have. You will also have the advantage of having leaders to assist you in carrying it forward and making it happen. This will add tremendous strength.

It is built on this inspired statement: "The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err."³¹

One of the best ways to begin aiming at involving the total membership in forming a strategic outreach plan for the entire church is to utilize Sabbath School Action Units with classes of six to eight. You, the pastor, and selected members can prayerfully study the local community needs,³² and the potential outreach pos-

sibilities in which to involve the membership before arriving at a plan. Then, along with a captivating sermon on the love of Christ for the lost and inspiring stories of success, you could present your potential plan at a Sabbath School Action Unit planning session on a Sabbath afternoon.

After much prayer together, you would ask the units, led by their missionary leaders (Care Coordinators) to, considering the basic plan you presented, make and write out their own one-year plans that incorporate the vision, expertise, and desire of each unit member. Each written plan should have specific goals, such as listing the names of individuals they plan to reach for the Lord, what need(s) of their local community they plan to address, the number of Bible studies each member would plan to give, and the baptismal goal of the unit, etc.

You and the pastor should be given a copy of each unit plan. This will enable the two of you to monitor progress and assist where needed to help them reach their chosen goals.

Regular Care Coordinator leaders meetings with you and the pastor are essential. In these encouragement meetings, successes are shared and discussed, and lessons are learned from each experience. Then you deal with challenges. (The Sabbath School Leaflet *Keys to Sabbath School Action Units*,³³ has the details of exactly how to do this.)

Experience has shown that the results of this type of planning session where each member can own his/her plan will be far greater than leadership would expect. And carrying out the plans will also be exciting.

With the Sabbath School Action Units you have an assistant Personal Ministries leader (the Care Coordinator) in each class. You can encourage, train, work with, and pray with this individual to obtain results. Again, continual prayer is the key to success.

Before we discuss how best to keep up the momentum once plans and goals have been made by a church that is working together willingly, let us consider how you would mobilize your church if the pastor and congregation are not interested in witnessing; if your church is a Laodicean church, in which there seems to be no passion for the lost.

If this is the case, we would recommend option number 2 above: “Begin with a few” who are on fire for God.

Beginning With a Few

Pray. Listen. God has told us, “Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin.”³⁴ Here is how to find the “many.” Find one or two who are interested, for example, in giving Bible studies. Take some Bible lessons. Visit them in their homes. Explain what you plan to do in starting a study, and pray together. Say, “Come with me. You don’t need to say anything. If you can walk and smile, I will help you.” Help them get started. When you have a good experience, your trainee will immediately think of other friends who would love this work. Visit them and help them start.

Share the good experience in church next Sabbath during the praise time, or better, during the ten-minute Personal Ministries time. (We will discuss the details of this time later.) If your trainee is excited and thrilled about the experience and able to speak before the church, interview him or her. If not, tell the story yourself. The enthusiasm will be contagious. At the end of the interview ask your student in training if he or she plans to continue in this work and why, and if he or she thinks others would enjoy doing it. Build on the positive response. Make an appeal. Ask for everyone who is interested in giving Bible studies to meet you after church in a particular location. Set a date during the week to take them out to start studies.

On-the-Job Training Class

After you have started a few, gather together all whom you have started and begin a three-month “On-the-Job Training Class” that meets once a week. This is a proven plan that works. We have been instructed, “Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts.”³⁵

Three months allows you to take the trainees through the series of Bible lessons in the homes or offices of people, demonstrating and educating them to meet most challenges. The class should run for three hours, often from 6:30 to 9:30 pm, and include:

1. 10-15 minutes in devotional study and prayer, giving everyone the opportunity to pray.
2. 20-30 minutes in practical instruction and role-playing geared to that day's or week's activity. If everyone starts studies together, instructions can be given on the Bible lesson being taught that week.
3. 1-2 hours working door-to-door with trainer-trainee. This most important time must be protected. The devil hates it. He loves to see you just talk about witnessing.
4. 20 minutes in afterglow learning from experiences received. It is a thrilling time and you can teach related lessons from every experience, whether it is "good" or "bad." You can discuss how the experience could have been improved. Trainees can remember the lessons much better from actual experiences than from mere lectures.

If you are the only one who is able to train and you have several people anxious to be trained, think of it as a great blessing. God will help you to adjust schedules or whatever is necessary. Share your dilemma with your pastor and ask the pastor to join you as a trainer. You may be able to find others who have had experience in the past who, when hearing of the good response, will be able to be trainers. What a blessing that will be!

Some of your trainees will be able to become trainers before the three months end. Start out by letting them watch you and then give them more and more of the study step-by-step until you are watching them and they are able to become trainers. Team them up with other trainees.

God has and will continue to greatly bless this approach to total-membership witnessing that begins with only one or two. Remember, "Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and encouraged."³⁶

How to Keep It Going and Growing

There are a number of ways to promote witnessing and keep all plans going and growing. But nothing succeeds like success. Telling success stories in every possible venue is an unsurpass-

able method. If these stories are told by the ones who experienced them, they have greater impact to inspire others to have a part in the joy of witnessing. Stories told by new converts are even more impressive than those told by the ones who participated in their conversion.

You as the Personal Ministries leader have the privilege of sharing success stories during the ten-minute personal ministries period every Sabbath, the monthly personal ministries Sabbath service, at all church boards, and at business meetings as part of your report of the total outreach activities of the church. You should keep the pastor, elders, and communication director informed at all times of success as it happens.

Remember to explain how the stories relate to the overall witnessing outreach plans and goals of the church so they will be a means to instruct and inspire others to become involved.

The communication director should be urged to publicize activities and progress in the union paper, *Adventist Review*, church newsletter, church bulletin, on the bulletin board, and when appropriate, in the local newspaper, on the radio, and on television.

Utilizing Special Meetings

Let us now discuss each of the above-mentioned sharing/discussion venues and emphasize how you might utilize them in an effective way to help produce greater results.

First, how vital are such meetings? Upon what authority do they rest? Under the section entitled “Church Outreach (Missionary) Meetings,” the *Church Manual* states: “The Saviour’s commission lays upon the church the task of heralding the gospel to all the world. This also places upon each individual member the responsibility of giving the message of salvation to as many others as possible. The Saviour ‘gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work.’ He appointed a meeting with His eleven disciples after His resurrection for the purpose of giving them counsel and encouragement, and at that time He gave the gospel commission to the disciples and to the assembled church, numbering more than five hundred brethren. That was the first outreach (mis-

sionary) meeting of the Christian church; it was certainly not to be the last.

“As a permanent and definite part of the services of the Christian church, the outreach (missionary) meeting bears the divine endorsement for all time. Through the Spirit of Prophecy we are told: ‘God has committed to our hands a most sacred work, and *we need to meet together* to receive instruction, that we may be fitted to perform this work.’—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 32. (Italics supplied).”³⁷

These meetings are vital now. It should be evident that the nearer we approach the Second Coming, the more important meetings related to sharing the message should be. Yet there is an alarming neglect of such in many of our churches. In many places there is a focus on sermons formulated to meet the needs of the congregation only. Witnessing is rarely mentioned; yet it is the reason for which the church exists! We are told emphatically that we are to allow nothing else to absorb our attention.³⁸ We must never forget the urgency of that directive in full: “In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light-bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import,—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”³⁹

The *Church Manual* says there should be “Personal Ministries meetings at various times, as best suited to local conditions.”⁴⁰ Here are examples of very important congregational meetings:

The Ten-minute Missionary Service

This meeting is held each Sabbath, usually following the close of the Sabbath School and just preceding the preaching service. Where its importance is valued the most, it is held at the beginning of the worship service when everyone is present.

Some provision should also be made in the children’s divisions during or after Sabbath School for a missionary service adapted to their age and interests.

The ten-minute weekly missionary service has been endorsed by the General Conference, and in the 1966 session it was voted that every church conduct the ten-minute missionary service each Sabbath. It was reinstated at the 1996 General Conference Annual Council.

During this service it is your privilege to emphasize the activities that are the focus of the church's outreach. Make it an exciting and brief time. The pastor's support is important. Work with him/her if possible. Review briefly the plans, goals, and target dates of the church and demonstrate with visuals, if you are able, the progress being made. Incorporate crisp, brief interviews of successful witnesses and challenge the membership to increase their participation.

Give essential brief training that is pertinent to that week's activity. You may pass out printed guidelines. Utilize as much as possible visual demonstrations using members to participate with you or, better, have successful members demonstrate from their experience. For example, you may have members show how to share a tract or make an ingathering visit or another visit.

Make sure every part of the program is concise and to the point. Don't go over time. No one will be disappointed if you fail to take the full ten minutes. Be certain it is not boring. Plan well. Seek God's help and He will bless.

The Church Outreach (Missionary) Sabbath

"The first Sabbath of the month is generally recognized as Church Outreach (Missionary) Sabbath. The worship service of this Sabbath is focused on lay evangelism, but other departments besides the Personal Ministries Department may also have opportunity on these special days to present their interests. This will be done, however, by careful counsel with the departments concerned."⁴¹

It would be wise for you to, if possible, have the assistance of the Personal Ministries Council in carefully planning to make this service an occasion for spiritual revival, motivation, and practical training that will help the church attain their outreach objectives.

Long-range planning that inculcates the broader aspects of all departmental outreach vision and activities would contribute to making these regularly scheduled monthly meetings exciting, inspiring, and informative.

Many of the techniques used in the above-mentioned Ten-Minute Missionary Service can be used effectively at these meetings as well. Remember to work with the pastor, or an elder if the pastor is unavailable.

This is a worship service. One must avoid making it just a promotional occasion or one where the membership is criticized for what they are not doing. Yet at the same time, the joys of sharing Jesus can be presented in a worshipful way, praising God for His goodness in working through His humble instruments. Success stories given by ordinary members can make God very real and inspire others to desire and decide to work together with Him to enjoy a similar experience.

You may have the Personal Ministries secretary give a varied and impressive report on the missionary work God has enabled the church to do during the preceding month and to share objectives for the coming month. The local church missionary offering should be emphasized if needed and a generous response called for. It is wise to plan ahead so that there are sufficient funds available for emerging opportunities.

Midweek Training

An “On-the-Job Training Class” with actual field work as described above is the best, but “Midweek Training” is an alternative with merit. The *Church Manual* describes “A midweek meeting combined with the weekly prayer meeting. On this occasion, the first part of the service may be given to a devotional message, followed by a season of prayer, remembering that worship is vital in spiritual growth and preparation for service. The remainder of the meeting time may then be devoted to a training period for lay evangelistic service. Instruction in soul-winning methods is presented, and the members are given opportunity to present for general discussion problems they have met in lay evangelism.”⁴²

We would suggest, in addition to this, that it is always best that the meeting begin with success stories and ends with challenges that are being faced. (We prefer the word “challenge” instead of “problem”. People are often bowed down with problems, but every challenge can be met through the power of the Holy Spirit.)

The Church Board

The support that can be given you by the church board is tremendous. You are not alone in your endeavors to mobilize the church in witnessing. Here are directives from the *Church Manual* that indicate your duties toward the board and the support you should be able to expect from it:

“The Work of the Board—

1. Planning evangelism in all of its phases. Since evangelism is the primary work of the church, the first item on the agenda of each church board meeting is to relate directly to the evangelization of the outreach (missionary) territory of the church. In addition, once each quarter of the year the entire church board meeting can well be devoted to plans for evangelism. The board will study local field committee recommendations for evangelistic programs and methods. It will determine how these can best be implemented by the church. The pastor and the church board will initiate and develop plans for public evangelistic campaigns.
- “2. Coordinating outreach programs of departments. The church board is responsible for coordinating the work of all church departments. This includes the outreach programs of Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, Children’s Ministries, Youth, Health Ministries, and Education. Each of these departments develops its plans for outreach within its own sphere. To avoid conflict in timing and competition in securing volunteer helpers, and to achieve maximum beneficial results, coordination is essential. Before completing and announcing plans for any program, each department should submit its plans to the church board for approval. The departments also report to the church board on the progress and results of their outreach programs. The church board may suggest to the departments how

their programs can contribute to the preparation, conduct, and follow-up of a public evangelistic campaign.

- “3. Encouraging and helping the Personal Ministries Department of the church to enlist all church members and children in some form of personal outreach (missionary) service. Training classes should be conducted in various lines of outreach ministry.
- “4. Cooperating with the Interest coordinator of the church to ensure that every reported interest in the message, aroused through whatever source, is personally and promptly followed up by an assigned layperson.
- “5. Encouraging each department to report at least quarterly to the church board and to the church membership at business meetings and/or in Sabbath day meetings.
- “6. . . . The church roll should be studied, and inquiry should be made into the spiritual standing of all the members, and provision made for visiting any sick, discouraged, or backslidden member.”⁴³

The Church Business Meetings

By working with the Personal Ministries secretary you will be prepared to present a report at business meetings of success in the past and plans for the future. The *Church Manual* directs that reports may comprise the following activities: “A report from the Personal Ministries leader, giving a statement of outreach (missionary) activities, including Community Services activities, together with any plans for future work. This should be followed by a report from the Personal Ministries secretary.”⁴⁴ Sometimes you may want to request an action on a specific part of your plans.

God will help you to utilize these meetings effectively and to assist all your members in becoming involved in the joy of sharing Jesus. Here is a wonderful promise: “When church members put forth earnest efforts to advance the message, they will live in the joy of the Lord and will meet with success. Triumph always follows decided effort.”⁴⁵

Encouraging Counsel

We invite you to ponder prayerfully the following as you perform your duties, when things are going well and when things aren't moving forward as you had wished. God needs

Leaders of Prayer. "Nothing is more needed in our work than the practical results of communion with God. We should show by our daily lives that we have peace and rest in the Savior. His peace in the heart will shine forth in the countenance. It will give to the voice a persuasive power. Communion with God will ennoble the character and the life. Men will take knowledge of us, as of the first disciples, that we have been with Jesus. This will impart to the worker a power that nothing else can give. Of this power he must not allow himself to be deprived."⁴⁶

Leaders of Faith. "God's workers need faith in God. He is not unmindful of their labors. He values their work. Divine agencies are appointed to cooperate with those who are laborers together with God."⁴⁷

Leaders of Courage. "Hope and courage are essential to perfect service for God. These are the fruit of faith. Despondency is sinful and unreasonable."⁴⁸ "Courage, energy, and perseverance they must possess."⁴⁹

Leaders of Action. "The cause of God demands men [and women] who can see quickly and act instantaneously at the right time and with power. If you wait to measure every difficulty and balance every perplexity you meet you will do but little....It is even more excusable to make a wrong decision sometimes than to be continually in a wavering position, to be hesitating, sometimes inclined in one direction, then in another."⁵⁰

Appendix

The Interest Coordinator

In addition to the Personal Ministries secretary, the Interest coordinator is of vital importance. Here is the description found in the *Church Manual* page 64:

“It is important that the many interests developed through the church’s missionary outreach be cared for promptly. To this end, an Interest coordinator, who may be an elder, should be elected at the time of the election of church officers. . . . This person is a member of the church board and the Personal Ministries Council and works directly with the pastor and chairperson of that council. The duties involved in this office include:

1. To keep an organized list of all interests received by the church from every source, such as Community Services, Ingathering, public evangelism, Bible studies, lay preaching and witnessing contacts, outreach (missionary) magazines, Sabbath School evangelism, literature evangelism, temperance and health evangelism, radio-TV, and church outreach (missionary) literature.
2. To assist the pastor and chairperson of the Personal Ministries Council in the enlistment and recruitment of qualified laity for follow-up service.
3. To render to the church board a monthly report on the number of interests received and the number followed up. When an interest is sufficiently developed, it should be shared with the pastor.”

Endnotes:

- ¹ *Gospel Workers*, p. 352.
- ² *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, Revised 2005, 17th Edition. (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 2005), p. 101. (Hereafter, *Church Manual*.)
- ³ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 110.
- ⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 142.
- ⁵ *Steps to Christ*, p. 80.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- ⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 362, 363.
- ⁸ *Church Manual*, p. 67.
- ⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 296.
- ¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 823.
- ¹¹ *Gospel Workers*, p. 122.
- ¹² *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 189.
- ¹³ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 125.
- ¹⁴ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 340.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 347.
- ¹⁶ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 354.
- ¹⁷ *Christian Service*, p. 254.
- ¹⁸ *Evangelism*, p. 356.
- ¹⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 333.
- ²⁰ Adapted from Lay Activities Leaflet No. 2, *The Lay Activities Leader*, (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Lay Activities Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1976), pp. 4, 5.
- ²¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, p. 327.
- ²² *Personal Ministries Handbook* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002), pp. 5-6.
- ²³ *Church Manual*, p. 101.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 134.
- ²⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 47.
- ²⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 221.
- ²⁹ For basic information on how to become acquainted with your local community and its needs, see the Personal Ministries Leaflet *Keys to Adventist Community Services* (AdventSource, 2008), pp. 25, 26. For more details, see *Understanding Your Community*, by Monte Sahlin, (available from adventsource.org.)
- ³⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 362.
- ³¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 21, 22.
- ³² See *Keys to Adventist Community Services*, pp. 25, 26. For more details, see *Understanding Your Community*, by Monte Sahlin.

- ³³ Available from adventsource.org.
- ³⁴ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 149.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 149.
- ³⁶ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 149.
- ³⁷ *Church Manual*, p. 88.
- ³⁸ *Evangelism*, p. 120.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 119,120.
- ⁴⁰ *Church Manual*, p. 99.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 99.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 92.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- ⁴⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 30.
- ⁴⁶ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 512.
- ⁴⁷ *Christian Service*, pp. 233, 234.
- ⁴⁸ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 164.
- ⁴⁹ *Gospel Workers*, p. 39.
- ⁵⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 497.

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